Early childhood education has received increasing amounts of support in recent years. Why? Research indicates that quality early childhood education can lead to significant improvements down the road. The Brookings Institution published a report in April 2017 that provides summary and analysis on the effects of preschool titled *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects*. This report concludes that preschool has a uniformly positive impact on kindergarten readiness, as well as potential long-term benefits. The quality of the programming has a direct impact on the scale of these benefits, and the report recommends a continued investment toward improving preschool programs, so long as there is a high standard of quality being met.

The *National Institute for Early Education Research*, or NIEER, provides a useful tool for states to improve their programming for early childhood education in the form of an annual report. *The State of Preschool Yearbook* has been released by NIEER annually since the 2001-2002 school year, and it tracks the funding and quality of state-funded preschool program policies. NIEER aims to help states improve the quality of their programming by establishing Quality Standards Benchmarks, which they have revised in the past year in light of recent research. The report includes a summary for each state that analyzes state spending against the national average, grades the state program on number of benchmarks met, and provides summary spotlights on high-quality programs.

This year’s report has just been released and it allows a glimpse into national trends for early childhood education. States on average are growing in terms of access and spending for preschool. For the 2015-2016 school year, state funding rose by $564 million, with much of this increase concentrated in California and Texas, which saw a $200 million and $100 million increase, respectively. The average state spending per child increased to just under $5,000.

Despite this growth, NIEER reports a disparity among states in terms of improvement. While some states made significant gains by increasing the number of NIEER’S Quality Standards Benchmarks they met, others regressed. Seven states do not offer a state-funded preschool program.

As more research is done on the benefits of early childhood education, policymakers can use the tools provided by NIEER to construct effective preschool programs.