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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Some Progress in Arizona *Arizona lags far behind in enrollment and quality standards despite higher funding*

New Brunswick, NJ—Arizona increased state preschool funding compared to last year but the state served only 4% of 4-year-olds and 2% of 3-year-olds, well below national averages, according to new research from the National Institute for Early Education Research.

The State of Preschool 2018 annual report, based on 2017-18 academic year data, finds just a third of 4-year-olds and 5.5 percent of 3-year-olds enrolled in public preschool programs nationwide—virtually no change in years. State funding is failing to keep pace with even the slow increases in enrollment and state spending per child has *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

Arizona spent \$1.6 million more on its Quality First Scholarships program this year. Funding resulted in a 9% increase in per child spending, with enrollment remaining flat. Even with this increase, Arizona remains below the national average in spending per child and only meets 3 of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks.

"Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress," said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. "Arizona's increased state funding was a positive step. Now, more work is needed to expand access and improve quality standards that create the minimum conditions for effectiveness."

This year's report includes a special section on policies affecting the preschool teacher workforce, focusing on salary and benefit parity. (*see box for Arizona specifics*)

Enrollment has more than doubled since 2002—with almost 1.6 million children enrolled nationwide—but expansion has slowed in recent years. In some states, slow growth is due to a shift from part-day to full-day programs, which can better support child development as well as family work schedules, but nevertheless leaves many children unserved.

Arizona 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 3 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 5,256 children, a decrease of 29 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$21,307,301 an increase of \$1,682,864 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,054, compared to \$3,713 in 2016-17

Arizona does not have requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 41 in access for 4-year-olds
- 21 in access for 3-year-olds
- 28 in state spending per child

The *State of Preschool 2018 yearbook* was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality, access, and funding, please visit www.nieer.org.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess mruess@nieer.org 848-932-4350