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2018 State of Preschool Report Reveals Lack of Progress in Arkansas ***State decreases preschool spending, little change in access***

New Brunswick, NJ—Arkansas preschool funding decreased slightly but enrollment increased, serving 32% of 4-year-olds and 19% of 3-year-olds, 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.

Arkansas met 8 of NIEER’s 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks. Only lead teachers in public schools are required to have a BA and the state does not require salary parity for preschool teachers with K-3.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Like most of the nation, Arkansas made little progress last year toward expanding enrollment or raising quality.”

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

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.

Arkansas 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 20,618 children, an increase of 333 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$114,000,000, an inflation-adjusted decrease of \$812,767 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$5,529, compared to \$5,660 (inflation-adjusted) in 2016-17

No requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 17 in access for 4-year-olds
- 5 in access for 3-year-olds
- 19 in state spending per child

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