

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Lack of Progress in Florida State Leads in Pre-K Access But Meets Few Minimum Quality Standards Benchmarks

New Brunswick, NJ—Florida ranks second in the US for state preschool access for 4-year-olds, enrolling more than three-quarters of all 4-year-olds in the state, but the program continues to rank at the bottom for spending per child and meets only 2 minimum quality standards benchmarks, according to new research by 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.

Florida decreased overall pre-K spending and spends less than \$2,200 per child, well below the national average. The state met two of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks and does not require salary or benefit parity with K-3 teachers.

"Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress," said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. "Florida has made pre-K available to all 4-year-olds but without adequate standards or funding to ensure programs can offer a quality education--and quality is key to producing pre-K's promised benefits."

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

The National Institute for Early Education Research 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

Florida 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 2 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 174,574 children, an increase of 322 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$379,969,502, a decrease of \$31,389,754 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$2,177, compared to \$2,361 in 2016-17

No requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 2 in access for 4-year-olds
- 41 in state spending per child