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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Illinois *Illinois increases funding for pre-K, serves over 3,000 more children*

New Brunswick, NJ—Illinois increased state preschool funding and enrollment, compared to last year, and expanded pre-k access for 3-year-olds to 22%—exceeding the national average and ranking 3rd, 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.

Illinois has increased enrollment over the past two years, reaching 27% of 4-year-olds statewide. Illinois requires state pre-K teachers to have a BA but 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. “Illinois is making progress, serving more children and increasing funding after years of state budget troubles.”

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

Illinois 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 75,139 children, an increase of 3,132 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$346,097,978, an increase of \$31,330,320 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,606, compared to \$4,371 in 2016-17

Requires a BA, but no salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 26 in access for 4-year-olds
- 3 in access for 3-year-olds
- 24 in state spending per child