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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Minnesota State Launches New Program, Doubles Enrollment, Increases Funding

New Brunswick, NJ— Minnesota doubled enrollment in state early education programs compared to last year, launching the School Readiness Plus program, yet access remained below national averages at 10% of 4-year-olds and 1% of 3-year-olds, 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.

Minnesota launched the School Readiness Plus program, allowing districts to choose whether to offer it or the Voluntary Prekindergarten program. Minnesota does not require state pre-K teachers to have a BA, but does provide VPK lead teachers salary and benefits 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. “Minnesota is moving in the right direction, serving more children and increasing financial support. But the state is way below average for pre-K access and really needs to commit to improving to meet additional quality standards.”

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

Minnesota 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 5.5 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 7,672 children, an increase of 3,069 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$48,282,734, an increase of more than \$18 million from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$6,293, compared to \$6,513 in 2016-17

MN Voluntary Pre-K requires salary and benefit parity for lead teachers; but not a BA

National rankings:

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