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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Montana *Montana launches new public preschool program, but will it continue?*

New Brunswick, NJ— Montana joined the list of states providing state preschool, providing \$2.5 million and enrolling 2% of 4-year-olds statewide during its first year, according to new research by the National Institute for Early Education Research. However, Montana is at-risk of losing this program rather than increasing access.

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.

Montana requires state pre-K teachers to have a BA and also requires salary parity with K-3 teachers for state pre-K teachers in public school classrooms.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Montana’s small step forward may be lost this year as legislation for preschool has stalled. Montana could expand most quickly by funding public schools to oversee the program while encouraging them to partner with private providers employing fully qualified teachers.”

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

Montana 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 6 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 306 children in its first year of implementation

Total state funding = \$2,573,914

State spending-per-child = \$8,411

Requires a BA and K-3 salary parity only for pre-K teachers in public schools

National rankings:

- 44 in access for 4-year-olds
- 30 in access for 3-year-olds
- 6 in state spending per child