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April 17, 2019

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## **NIEER Research Reveals Stalled Progress in Pre-K Access, Funding *Inadequate Funding Contributes to Low Teacher Pay and Benefits, affecting Quality***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—More children are attending state-funded pre-K programs across the US but state funding is failing to keep pace, resulting in low compensation for pre-K teachers that too often undermines classroom quality, according to a new report 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—virtually no change in years. State spending per child has *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation; and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

“We are disappointed by the lack of progress and concerned about how many children miss out on quality early learning experiences that can make a lifelong difference,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Some states are moving in the right direction, but many are standing still.”

The NIEER *State of Preschool 2018* yearbook is the only national report on state-funded preschool programs, tracking enrollment, spending, and policies to support quality since 2002. This year’s report includes a special section on policies affecting preschool teachers.

Early childhood education can help prepare children for greater success in elementary school and beyond – but quality needs to be high. Some of the state programs meeting few quality standards benchmarks serve the highest numbers of children. Quality also varies within state programs, as some states set different policies for pre-K classrooms within public schools and those in nonprofit or private centers.

Mark Shriver, senior vice president for Save the Children’s U.S. Programs and Advocacy, understands the difference quality pre-K can make.

“We know that investing in high-quality early childhood education is one of the most effective ways to break the pervasive cycle of poverty and ensure equal opportunity for all families in America,” Shriver said. “Effective pre-school programs are a long-term investment in our nation’s future and our most precious resource: our children. They provide the foundation and set the course for a child’s lifelong learning and success.”

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.

### **State of Preschool 2018 Fast Facts**

44 states, D.C. and Guam provide publicly funded preschool to almost 1.6 million children

10 states enroll 50% or more of their 4-year-olds in public pre-K

States spent \$8.1 billion on pre-K in 2017-18, a 3.5% increase from last year (inflation-adjusted)

State spending-per-child enrolled in pre-K decreased

3 states met all 10 quality standards benchmarks—9 states met fewer than half

Only 9% of children enrolled in state pre-K attend programs meeting 9 or 10 benchmarks

25 states require all lead teachers to have at least a BA and certification

5 states require all lead teachers to have salary parity with K-3

The State of Preschool 2018 yearbook was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org).

The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://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](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350