

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 17, 2019

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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Mixed Progress in Nebraska *State Ranks High for Pre-K Access but Falls Below National Average for Investment***

*New Brunswick, NJ*— Nebraska reduced state spending on preschool while enrolling more children compared to last year and ranks near the top in access for both 4-year-olds and 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.

Nebraska enrolled 16% of the state 3-year-olds and 33% of 4-year-olds. However, state funding has been declining, reducing spending per-child and hampering implementation of minimum quality standards. Nebraska requires state pre-K teachers to have a BA but does not provide them compensation 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. “Nebraska has been increasing enrollment, but also needs to increase funding. The state falls below average in state spending and that is impeding efforts to enhance quality.”

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

### **Nebraska 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 13,938 children, an increase of 1,074 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$24,796,908 a decrease of \$1,118,482 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$1,779, compared to \$2,015 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 16 in access for 4-year-olds
- 7 in access for 3-year-olds
- 43 in state spending per child

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](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