

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows New Progress in North Carolina *State Increases Investment and Expands Enrollment***

*New Brunswick, NJ*— North Carolina increased state preschool funding and enrollment, but access hovered at 23% of 4-year-olds—below national average, 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.

North Carolina boosted pre-K spending by nearly \$6 million during the 2017-18 school year, with plans to continue increased funding. North Carolina needs to both expand access and restore funding per child to pre-recession levels to help close the pay gap between pre-K and K-3 teachers with the same qualifications. North Carolina requires all state pre-K teachers to hold a BA.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress and concerned about the number of children missing the quality early learning experiences that can make a lifelong difference,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “North Carolina is moving in the right direction with increased investments and access for 4-year-olds to the state program.”

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

### **North Carolina 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 28,385 children, an increase of 1,366 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$154,072,222, an increase of \$5,726,682 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$5,428, compared to \$5,490 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 27 in access for 4-year-olds
- 20 in state spending per child