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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Minimal Progress in Texas State Pre-K Enrollment Increases but Funding Cut Hampers Quality Improvements

New Brunswick, NJ—Texas preschool access exceeded the national average, with nearly half of all 4-year-olds in the state and 8% of 3-year-olds enrolled; but a \$67.7 million dip in state funding has stymied efforts to enhance quality standards, according to new research by the National Institute of 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. Nationally, state funding failed to keep pace, as spending per child *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers. Texas requires salary parity only for pre-K teachers in public schools.

Texas increased enrollment by 3%, but spending per-child decreased; and the state fared poorly on minimum quality standards, meeting 4 of 10 benchmarks.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Texas is not moving in the right direction. It is difficult for the state to address quality issues with such a reduction in resources.”

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

Texas 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 4 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 231,485 children, an increase of 7,371 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$823,908,971, a decrease of \$67,736,584 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$3,559, compared to \$3,979 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 10 in access for 4-year-olds
- 12 in access for 3-year-olds
- 35 in state spending per child

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