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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Slowed Progress Nationally ***Utah remains one of six states not investing in preschool***

New Brunswick, NJ—Nationwide more children attend state-funded pre-K programs across the US, but Utah remains among the dwindling number of states not funding early education programs, according to *The State of Preschool 2018* report, released today by the National Institute for Early Education Research. Utah funds an on-line program for preschoolers, but this is no substitute for a real, in-person preschool program.

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. This year's report includes a special section on policies affecting the preschool teacher workforce, focusing on salary and benefit parity.

“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. “Children in Utah are missing out. An on-line program can only do so much. It may help develop simple, easily learned skills but cannot support language acquisition, creativity, and social-emotion or physical development like quality classroom experiences.”

Enrollment has more than doubled nationally since 2002—with almost 1.6 million children enrolled—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. 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.

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