

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Washington State Funding, Enrollment Increase as Focus Shifts to Expanding Access**

*New Brunswick, NJ*—Washington increased funding for state preschool and enrolled more children compared to last year, but access remained below the national average, with just 9% of 4-year-olds and 5% of 3-year-olds attending state programs, 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. 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.

In Washington, after a year of flat funding, state investments in pre-K increased more than 10%, while enrollment also increased. Washington does not require salary or benefit parity for state pre-K teachers and early elementary teachers.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Washington is moving in the right direction, increasing investments in young children. More progress is needed for the state to meet its goal of serving all eligible children within the next five years.”

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

Enrollment has more than doubled since 2002—with almost 1.6 million children enrolled nationwide—but expansion has slowed in recent years. In Washington and other states, slow growth may be due to a shift from part-day to full-day programs, which can better support child development as well as family work schedules, but can also leave 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

### **Washington 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 12,491 children, an increase of 800 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$110,594,841, an increase of almost \$11 million from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$8,854, compared to \$8,522 in 2016-17

No requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 37 in access for 4-year-olds
- 16 in access for 3-year-olds
- 5 in state spending per child