

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2019

NIEER Contact:

[Michelle Ruess](#)

609-658-6873 Cell

848-932-4350 Office

2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Some Progress in West Virginia State Pre-K Exceeds National Average for Access, Quality Standards But Funding Falls

New Brunswick, NJ—West Virginia preschool access exceeded the national average, with nearly 70% of all 4-year-olds in the state and 5% of 3-year-olds enrolled; and state quality standards remain high despite a drop in state funding, 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.

West Virginia is a leader in pre-K access for 4-year-olds and quality standards. The state requires a BA for all pre-K teachers and starting salary 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. “West Virginia is on the right track regrading quality standards but the moving in the wrong direction on funding. More resources are needed to expand access, especially for 3-year-olds.”

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

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

West Virginia 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 15,101 children, an increase of 79 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$98,278,800, a decrease of \$3,095,056 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$6,508, compared to \$6,748 in 2016-17

Requires a BA and K-3 salary parity only for public school teachers

National rankings:

- 6 in access for 4-year-olds
- 17 in access for 3-year-olds
- 15 in state spending per child