

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2019

NIEER Contact:

[Michelle Ruess](#)

609-658-6873 Cell

848-932-4350 Office

2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Lack of Progress in Wisconsin *Spending down more than \$11 million; enrollment also drops*

New Brunswick, NJ—Wisconsin is a leader in access to state preschool—serving nearly 70% of 4-year-olds—but the state fails to invest adequately to expand enrollment or implement quality standards, 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.

Nationwide more children are attending state-funded pre-K programs than last year, but in Wisconsin, enrollment dropped by more than 3,000 children as state funding was cut \$11 million (6%) and spending per child decreased, remaining below the national average. The state requires teachers to have a BA but fails to provide salary parity for pre-K teachers and meets just 3 of 10 minimum quality standards.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Wisconsin needs to invest additional resources to improve enrollment and implement quality standards.”

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

Wisconsin 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met an average of 3.1 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 48,787 children, a decrease of 3,186 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$191,269,229, a decrease of \$11,322,655 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$3,920, compared to \$3,898 in 2016-17

No requirements for salary parity with K-3; Wisconsin 4K requires teachers to have a BA

National rankings:

- 5 in access for 4-year-olds
- 26 in access for 3-year-olds
- 32 in state spending per child

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