

NIEER Pre-K Data Snapshot:

State Pre-K Policies: Salary Parity Varies with Teacher Qualifications and Setting

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An all too common complaint in the early childhood field is that low salaries for preschool teachers and lack of pay parity with K-12 teachers in the public schools creates serious problems. These include low morale and difficulty recruiting and retaining strong preschool teachers. State policies can contribute to or resolve these problems in state-funded pre-K programs. This report sets out basic information about policies for teacher qualifications and pay parity using data from the *2018 State of Preschool* survey.

Data for this snapshot come from special a supplement on policies supporting teaching staff in state-funded preschool programs. This 2018 report provides information about teacher qualification requirements and teacher compensation in both public schools and private provider settings. Of the 62 state programs (some states have more than one) in the *2018 State of Preschool*, 51 serve children in both public and private settings, three serve children only in private settings, and eight only in public settings. Although adequate pay is a concern for all teachers, pay parity with K-12 is an issue only for teachers with the same qualifications.

Teacher Qualifications

Teacher qualifications vary across and within state-funded pre-K. In 2018, 78% of state-funded preschool programs serving children in public schools required all teachers to hold at least a bachelor's degree (BA). Of those that do not require lead teachers to hold a BA, some specify a lower degree requirement for all teachers (i.e. an associate's degree or Child Development Associate (CDA)); others vary degree requirements by setting and/or some other aspect of program operation. For example, Florida's program requires only teachers in their intensive summer session to hold a BA.

Just over half (56%) of the 54 state-funded preschool programs serving children in private settings require all lead teachers to hold a BA. The others vary, with some having lower qualifications required of all teachers and some requiring one teacher per building to hold a BA (e.g., the "head" teacher in Vermont), while all others hold a lower qualification. In some states the minimum teacher qualification is an AA, but in others it is a CDA or less.

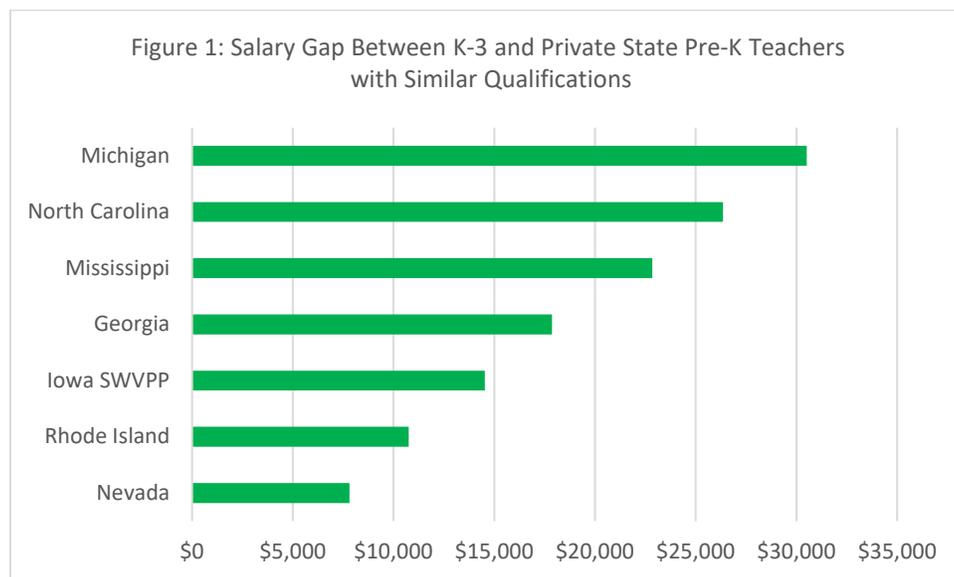
In 75% of the 51 state-funded preschool programs where children are served in both public school and private settings, teachers have the same degree requirements regardless of setting. Within this group of programs, 33 (65%) require all teachers to hold a BA and teaching certification (see Table 1). In these 33 states, preschool and K-3 teachers have equal qualifications with preschool teachers fully qualified to teach in the early grades. It is these 33 programs to which we turn to examine pay parity.

Salary Parity Policies

In the 2018 Yearbook survey, states were asked whether they have policies to support salary and benefit parity between preschool teachers and their similarly credentialed K-3 peers in public schools. States provided responses about whether state preschool teachers' starting salaries and salary schedules matched K-3 teachers. In this report, we define salary parity as requiring that both starting salaries and salary schedules are the same between state preschool and K-3 teachers.

State preschool programs are far more likely to require salary parity for preschool teachers in public schools than in private settings. Half of the 33 programs requiring a BA and teaching certification have policies to support both starting salary and salary schedule parity for preschool teachers in public schools (see Table 2). Just seven programs (21%) in five states require parity for all preschool teachers regardless of setting, including two in which all teachers are considered public school employees (California TK and Oklahoma).

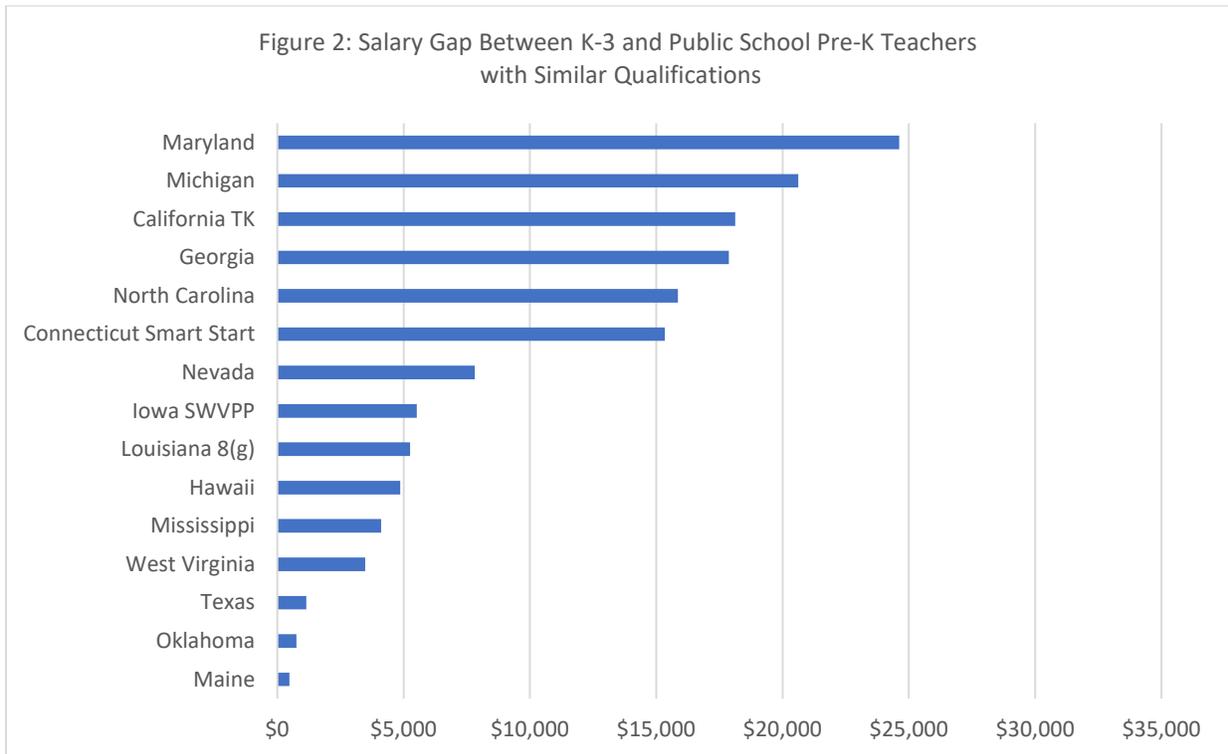
The lack of salary parity policies in all but a few states and programs has a clear impact on salary gaps between state-funded preschool teachers and public K-3 teachers. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the extent of these gaps for state preschool teachers in public and private settings for states able to provide the data.



The salary gap for private provider preschool teachers compared to K-3 teachers exceeded \$30,000 in some states. Of the seven states able to provide this data, only Rhode Island has salary parity for preschool teachers in private settings. Even with salary parity, teachers in private settings averaged lower pay than their public school peers, likely due to differences in years of experience. Nevada has the lowest salary gap among the states listed, because it reported exactly the same average salary in all preschool settings, suggesting that this is really an overall average that does not reflect actual differences across settings.

Many more states reported data on average salaries of preschool teachers in public settings. Preschool teachers in public schools experience gaps of over \$20,000 in some states, but more states reported much smaller pay gaps within public schools. The largest gaps were in states without parity policies (Maryland and Michigan) and the smallest gaps in states with them (Maine, Oklahoma, and Texas).

Figure 2: Salary Gap Between K-3 and Public School Pre-K Teachers with Similar Qualifications



Conclusion

State policies appear to make a difference in pay parity between preschool teachers and their K-3 counterparts. This starts with policies for qualifications as equal pay for equal work reasonably implies that education and certification requirements are also comparable. Yet, even when states require comparable credentials of preschool teachers, just half require parity within public schools, and even fewer have parity policies that apply equally to preschool teachers in private providers. Without policy change, many state pre-K programs will continue to face problems due to large salary disparities between preschool and K-3 teachers.

Data Source

The [National Institute for Early Education Research \(NIEER\)](#) produces an annual [report](#) profiling policies of state-funded prekindergarten programs throughout the United States. NIEER's *State of Preschool* yearbook survey provides detailed information on enrollment, funding, teacher qualifications, and other policies related to quality. The *2018 State of Preschool* includes a supplemental report dedicated to state policies supporting teaching staff and how state preschool teachers fare in both public schools and private provider settings (i.e. Head Start agencies and other private child care centers operating state-funded preschool programs). State agencies were asked about policies for salaries, benefits, professional development, and other supports (e.g. bonuses, scholarships, loan forgiveness, etc.)

Included in the *2018 State of Preschool* are data on 62 state preschool programs across 44 states, Washington, D.C. and Guam. Six states did not fund a state preschool program, and 11 states had multiple programs. The information contained in this brief represents data for the 62 distinct state preschool programs. In some cases, policies differ between programs within the same state.

About NIEER

The National Institute for Early Education Research ([NIEER](#)) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, conducts independent, objective research to inform early childhood

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Table 1. State Policy Requirements Related to Pre-K Teacher Qualifications (2017-2018)

Program Requires All Pre-K Teachers to Hold a BA and Teaching Certificate

Yes	Public Schools Only	No
California TK*	Alaska	Alabama
Connecticut Smart Start*	Arkansas	Arizona
Georgia	Iowa Shared Visions	California CSPP
Hawaii*	Massachusetts UPK	Colorado
Illinois	New Mexico	Connecticut CDCC**
Iowa SWVPP	Pennsylvania RTL	Connecticut SRP
Kansas Preschool Pilot	South Carolina	Delaware
Kansas State Pre-K	Vermont	District of Columbia
Kentucky	Virginia	Florida
Louisiana 8(g)*	9	Minnesota HdSt
Louisiana LA 4*		Minnesota VPK & SRP
Louisiana NSECD**		Montana
Maine		North Dakota
Maryland		Ohio
Massachusetts Chapter 70*		Oregon HdSt
Michigan		Oregon Preschool Promise
Mississippi		Pennsylvania HSSAP
Missouri		Washington
Nebraska		Wisconsin HdSt**
Nevada		Guam*
New Jersey Abbott		20
New Jersey ECPA		
New Jersey ELLI		
New York		
North Carolina		
Oklahoma		
Pennsylvania K4 & SBPK		
Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts		
Rhode Island		
Tennessee		
Texas		
West Virginia		
Wisconsin 4K		
33		

*Program serves children in public schools only.

**Program serves children in private schools only.

Table 2: Starting Salary and Salary Schedule Policies for Certified Public and Private State Pre-K Teachers (2017-2018)

	Public Settings		Private Settings	
	Same Starting Salary	Same Salary Schedule	Same Starting Salary	Same Salary Schedule
Yes	17	16	7	4
No	15	16	19	22
Total Programs	32		26	

*Note, program totals differ because one program does not serve children in public settings and seven programs do not serve children in private settings.

Table 3. Salary Policies in State Pre-K Programs where Teachers Hold BA and Certification (2017-2018).

State Preschool Programs	Same Starting Salary	Same Salary Schedule	Full Parity
California TK*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connecticut Smart Start*	No	No	No
Georgia	Yes	No	No
Hawaii*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Illinois	No	No	No
Iowa SWVPP	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Kansas Preschool Pilot	No	No	No
Kansas State Pre-K	No	No	No
Kentucky	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Louisiana 8(g)*	No	No	No
Louisiana LA 4*	No	No	No
Louisiana NSECD**	No	No	No
Maine	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Maryland	No	No	No
Massachusetts Chapter 70*	No	No	No
Michigan	No	No	No
Mississippi	No	No	No
Missouri	Yes	Public Only	Public Only
Nebraska	No	No	No
Nevada	Yes	Public Only	Public Only
New Jersey Abbott	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Jersey ECPA	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Jersey ELLI	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	No	No	No
North Carolina	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Oklahoma*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania K4 & SBPK	No	No	No
Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts	No	No	No
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tennessee	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Texas	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
West Virginia	Public Only	Public Only	Public Only
Wisconsin 4K	No	No	No

*Program serves children in public schools only or all teachers are employees of a public school even if working in a private setting (Oklahoma).

**Program serves children in private schools only.