

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2019

NIEER Contact:

[Michelle Ruess](#)

609-658-6873 Cell

848-932-4350 Office

2018 State of Preschool Report Finds Alabama is a State on the Move State Leads Nation on Quality Standards, Supports Teachers, Expands Enrollment

New Brunswick, NJ—Alabama increased funding for state preschool, expanding enrollment and maintaining the highest 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 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.

Alabama increased state funding, enrolling 28% of 4-year-olds in the state while continuing to meet all 10 quality standards benchmarks. Alabama requires all state pre-K lead teachers to have a BA and provides salary them 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. “We wish more states followed Alabama’s example of expanding pre-k enrollment with adequate funding, high quality, and demonstrated effectiveness. Research finds the program yields long-term gains in achievement. If the state continues to invest, all Alabama’s young children can benefit in the near future.”

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

Nationally, 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

Alabama 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 16,051 4-year-olds, an increase of 2,019 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$77,462,050, an increase of \$10,785,777 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,826, compared to \$4,752 in 2016-17

Requires a BA and salary parity for all lead teachers and benefit parity for lead teachers in public settings

National rankings:

- 25 in access for 4-year-olds
- 21 in state spending per child