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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Lack of Progress in Delaware State Expands Pre-K Access to 3-year-olds but Enrollment, Funding Stall

New Brunswick, NJ—Delaware has made little progress in expanding enrollment and funding for high-quality pre-K, despite expanding eligibility to include 3-year-olds for the first time, 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. 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.

Delaware expanded eligibility to include 3-year-olds but funding remained flat. Delaware requires state pre-k lead teachers to have a BA and provides salary parity with K-3 teachers only for pre-K teachers working in public schools.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Delaware is leaving many young children without access to high-quality pre-K. To make progress, state leaders must increase investment to expand access and enhance quality.”

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

Enrollment has more than doubled nationally 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.

Delaware 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 845 children, an increase of 14 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$6,149,300, an inflation-adjusted decrease of \$211,224 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$7,277, compared to \$7,654 (inflation-adjusted) in 2016-17

Requires a BA and K-3 salary parity only for pre-K teachers in public schools

National rankings:

- 38 in access for 4-year-olds
- 20 in access for 3-year-olds
- 10 in state spending per child

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