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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Louisiana Losing Ground *States reduces spending, enrollment*

New Brunswick, NJ— Louisiana reduced state preschool funding and enrolled fewer children compared to last year, ranking below national average on pre-K access for 4-year-olds, 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.

Louisiana has three state preschool programs, with various quality standards and spending per-child levels. Each program requires teachers to have a BA but does not provide state pre-K teachers salary or benefit 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. “Louisiana’s pre-K progress has stalled. The state needs to renew its commitment to expand access to high quality with adequate funding for all three state pre-K programs. But it is promising that the state convened the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission this year which made recommendations to ramp up pre-K investments through the state’s B to 3 plan.”

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

Louisiana 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 18,911 children, a decrease of 143 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$89,613,418, a decrease of \$3,131,792 from 2016-17, adjusted for inflation

State spending-per-child = \$4,739, compared to \$4,867 (inflation-adjusted) in 2016-17

Requires a BA, but no salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 20 in access for 4-year-olds
- 22 in state spending per child