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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Mississippi State Increases Pre-K Enrollment 40% Despite Reduced State Spending

New Brunswick, NJ—Mississippi reduced state preschool funding and enrolled more children, yet state pre-K access remains far below national average at 5% of 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. Mississippi requires state pre-K teachers have a BA but no 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. “Mississippi is moving in the right direction by expanding enrollment. But the state needs to commit to expanding access and increasing spending to sustain high 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 Mississippi 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

Mississippi 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 1,840 children, an increase of 530 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$3,976,431, a decrease of \$160,966 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$2,161, compared to \$3,158 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 40 in access for 4-year-olds
- 42 in state spending per child