

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Mixed Progress in Oklahoma State Remains Leader in Access, Improves Quality But Invests Less Per Child**

*New Brunswick, NJ*— Oklahoma remained a national leader in preschool access for 4-year-olds and improved on policies related to 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 failed to keep pace, as spending per child *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

Oklahoma enrolled 74% of 4-year-olds statewide; however, state funding decreased by \$6.4 million (inflation-adjusted), causing a 3% reduction in per-child spending. The state does provide the same salary and benefits to pre-K lead teachers and K-3 teachers.

Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Oklahoma has been moving in the right direction with increased access to pre-K and improved quality standards, but increased funding is needed to sustain progress and 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 Oklahoma 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.

### **Oklahoma 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 39,807 children, an increase of 503 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$145,038,018  
an inflation-adjusted decrease of \$4,395,047 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$3,644,  
compared to \$3,802 in 2016-17

Requires a BA with K-3 salary and benefit parity for lead teachers

National rankings:

- 4 in access for 4-year-olds
- 34 in state spending per child

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](http://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](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350*