

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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NIEER Contact:

[Michelle Ruess](#)

609-658-6873 Cell

848-932-4350 Office

## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Rhode Island *Rhode Island is a Leader on Quality Benchmarks but Access Remains Low***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—Rhode Island boosted spending and enrolled more children in state pre-K compared to last year, but access remains low with just 10% of 4-year-olds being served, 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.

Rhode Island is one of three states to meet all 10 quality standards benchmarks. The state requires preschool teachers to have a BA and provides salary parity for pre-k teachers with K-3 teachers.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Rhode Island is moving in the right direction, as one of only three states meeting all NIEER quality benchmarks. However, more work needs to be done so more children can benefit from this quality program.”

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

### **Rhode Island 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 1,080 children, an increase of 72 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$6,240,000 an increase of \$913,563 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$5,778, compared to \$5,284 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

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