

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Some Progress in Tennessee State Pre-K Meets More Quality Benchmarks but Funding, Enrollment Decline**

*New Brunswick, NJ*—Tennessee adopted new policies to enhance state pre-K quality, but invested less and shrank access to just 22% of 4-year-olds and less than 1% of 3-year-olds – below the national averages, 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. Tennessee requires salary parity between for pre-K teachers and K-3 teachers for those teaching in public school classrooms.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Tennessee is moving in the right direction by changing policies to support quality. However, more funding is needed to expand access and continue progress.”

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

### **Tennessee 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 18,354 children, a decrease of 286 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$85,062,422 a decrease of \$4,098,484 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,635, compared to \$4,783 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 29 in access for 4-year-olds
- 28 in access for 3-year-olds
- 22 in state spending per child