

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Ernest Landante, Jr.
elandante@nieer.org
848-932-0770

Delaware Lacks Progress Serving Preschool Children *Preschool Enrollment Remains Flat*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — The COVID-19 pandemic is putting pre-K education at greater risk, including in Delaware which enrolls five percent of its 4-year-olds and two percent of its 3-year-olds in pre-K, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Delaware trails the national average in 4-year-old pre-K enrollment. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

While preschool enrollment remains flat, Delaware is one of nine states that meets nine or benchmarks for pre-K quality. New in 2018, Delaware increased direct support to program administrators and their staff.

NIEER's *The State of Preschool 2019* annual report finds states investing more than \$8.7 billion in pre-K. But progress has been uneven, exacerbating inequality in early education opportunity and widening gaps between the best and worst states for educating young children. The expected recession will make progress more difficult.

"Even when the economy has been strong, progress providing state pre-K has been slow and uneven," said Dr. Steven Barnett, NIEER's senior co-director and founder. "With another recession likely, extraordinary state and federal action will be needed to ensure our youngest learners are not just protected, but better served."

Delaware met nine of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$7,277 in state funds per student. Ten states met fewer than half the minimum standards for quality. State spending per child varies by a factor of 10, from more than \$10,000 to less than \$1,000.

"Delaware continues to leave many children without access to high-quality pre-K," said Barnett. "To make progress and expand access, state leaders must increase investment."

Despite the economic outlook, pre-K can be protected and advance because politicians from both sides of the aisle and states with very different political leanings have found common ground in offering high quality education to young children.

"States that could not be more different politically, like Michigan and Alabama and Oklahoma and New Jersey, share a commitment to high-quality preschool education," said Barnett. "While there are issues dividing the country, our survey finds quality early childhood education is one where bipartisan agreement is possible."

The National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org) at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research.

The State of Preschool 2019 yearbook was supported with funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality, access, and funding, please visit www.nieer.org.

DELAWARE: 2018-19 FAST FACTS

Met nine of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 845 children, matching enrollment from 2017-18.

Total state funding was \$6,149,300, a decrease of \$219,917 from 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$7,277, compared to \$7,538 in 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

Delaware's national rankings:

- 41st in access for 4-year-olds
- 22nd in access for 3-year-olds
- 9th in state spending per child