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April 22, 2020

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Nevada Lacks Progress Serving Preschool Children, COVID-19 Poses New Threat *Despite Reduction in State Funding, Some Improvements Made with Federal Dollars*

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

Nevada 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.

Nevada used its federal Preschool Development Grant to shift part-day slots to full-day and increase quality standards, but the state's investment in pre-K overall and per child fell.

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."

Nevada met seven of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$3,669 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.

"Nevada appears to be moving in the right direction by shifting part-day to full-day programs, which can better support child development as well as family work schedules," said Barnett. "However, the state will need to increase its investment to sustain the progress made using Preschool Development Grant funding."

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.

NEVADA: 2018-19 FAST FACTS

Met seven of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 2,139 children, a decrease of 32 from 2017-18.

Total state funding was \$7,848,995, a decrease of \$1,202,408 from 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$3,669, compared to \$4,169 in 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

Nevada's national rankings:

- 40th in access for 4-year-olds
- 32nd in state spending per child