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April 22, 2020

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Utah is One of Six States without State-Funded Pre-K in 2018-19 *State launches new Pre-K program in 2019-2020*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — Utah was one of the last remaining states to deny its youngest children the benefits of a high-quality state-funded preschool education during the 2018-2019 school year, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

“Children who receive high-quality pre-K are better prepared for kindergarten,” said Dr. Steven Barnett, NIEER’s senior co-director and founder. “For many children in Utah, that can put them on a path to higher achievement throughout school and greater social and economic success beyond school. Preschool-aged children in Utah deserve the same advantages as children in most of the country. We look forward to including Utah in next year’s report with its new School Readiness Amendments that passed during the 2019 legislative session.”

NIEER’s *The State of Preschool 2019* annual report finds states are 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. Families will struggle even more to provide a good early education and inequality will increase where states do not step up.”

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.