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## **Vermont Makes Progress Providing Services for Preschool Children State Further Improves Access Ranking For 3-Year-Olds**

**NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ** — The COVID-19 pandemic is putting pre-K education at greater risk, including in Vermont, which enrolls 78 percent of its 4-year-olds and 65 percent of its 3-year-olds in pre-K, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Vermont is among the nation's leaders in both 3- and 4-year-old pre-K enrollment. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

The state continues to provide access to a higher percentage of preschoolers than almost every other state, and in 2018-2019 improved its access ranking for 3-year-olds from 3 to 2. Vermont could not report 2018-2019 pre-K spending.

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."

Vermont met seven of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education, but was not able to provide 2018-2019 spending information overall or per child. 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.

"Vermont is holding steady as a national leader for public preschool access," said Barnett. "It is concerning that the state could not report their spending."

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](http://www.nieer.org).*

### **VERMONT: 2018-19 FAST FACTS**

Met seven of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 8,962 children, an increase of 147 from 2017-18.

Vermont's national rankings:

- 2nd in access for 4-year-olds
- 2nd in access for 3-year-olds

Vermont was not able to provide state pre-K spending information for the 2018-2019 school year.