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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Kentucky *KY Boosts Funding, Expands Access, Provides Salary Parity for Some Pre-K Teachers*

New Brunswick, NJ—Kentucky increased both state preschool funding and enrollment, compared to last year, expanding pre-K access to 29 percent of 4-year-olds and 10 percent of 3-year-olds in the state, according to new research from 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. State funding is failing to keep pace with even the slow increases in enrollment and state spending per child has *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

Kentucky increased pre-K spending by about \$1.2 million but failed to keep pace with growing enrollment, resulting in a 7 percent drop in spending per-child. Kentucky requires all state pre-K teachers to have a BA but only provides salary parity with 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. “Kentucky’s growing enrollment is a positive development, but increased funding is needed to maintain and improve quality.”

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

The National Institute for Early Education Research (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 848-932-4350

Kentucky 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 21,270 children, an increase of 1,835 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$96,011,951 an increase of \$1,226,477 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,514, compared to \$4,877 in 2016-17

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

National rankings:

- 23 in access for 4-year-olds
- 9 in access for 3-year-olds
- 26 in state spending per child