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2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress in Pennsylvania *PA Increases Investment, Enrollment but Access Remains Limited*

New Brunswick, NJ—Pennsylvania boosted spending and enrolled more children in state pre-K compared to last year, but access remains low with just 14% of 4-year-olds and 7% of 3-year-olds being served, according to new research by 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. Nationally, state funding failed to keep pace, as spending per child *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress and concerned about the number of children missing the quality early learning experiences that can make a lifelong difference,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Pennsylvania is moving in the right direction. However, the state needs to commit to improving quality standards for all of its programs and maintain spending per child levels.”

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

Pennsylvania 2017-18 Fast Facts

Met an average of 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 30,527 children, an increase of 1,694 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$240,085,217
an increase of \$23,741,761 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$7,865,
compared to \$7,503 in 2016-17

PA does not have requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 31 in access for 4-year-olds
- 14 in access for 3-year-olds
- 7 in state spending per child