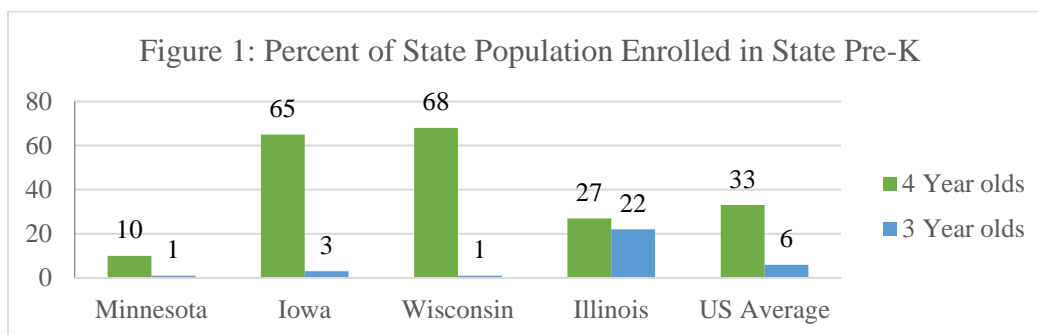


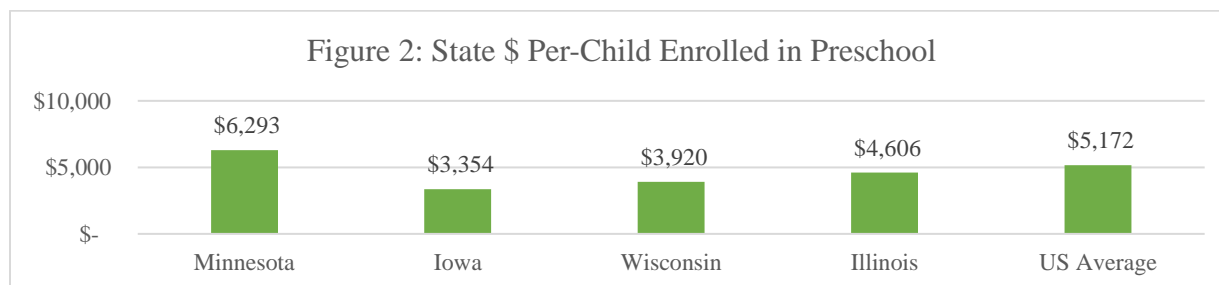
The State of Minnesota Preschool 2018: Increase Access to High-Quality Programs Based on Evidence of Success

Minnesota continues to lag other states, including its neighbors Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, in state-funded preschool access, according to data from the just-released National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) State Preschool Yearbook 2018¹. This long-standing pattern indicates an urgent need for action.

Low Access: Through the launch of Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program in 2016-2017 and the School Readiness Plus (SRP) program, Minnesota registered an increase in the percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled in state Pre-K programs from 1% in 2016 to 10% in 2018. However, despite this increase in enrollment, the state fares poorly in access when compared to neighboring states and the national average. Using all available federal and state funding, 23% of MN 4-year-olds are enrolled in public Pre-K compared to 75% for Wisconsin. Given established evidence that high-quality state Pre-K has sustained effects, low access reduces school readiness.²



High Expenditure Per Child: Minnesota recorded a slight drop in state spending per-child enrolled compared to 2016-17, adjusting for inflation. However, Minnesota spends a considerably higher amount per child enrolled than neighboring states and the US average. Relatively few children are enrolled thus limiting potential impact.



NIEER reported the performance of 60 state Pre-K programs (some states have >1) by setting benchmarks for 10 preschool policy standards (e.g. class sizes < 21). While the Minnesota Head Start Program met 8 benchmarks, the VPK program met only 6. Table 1 compares Minnesota’s rankings with the neighboring states. Despite relatively high resources, benchmarks met and access are lower. Since only high-quality programs have sustained effects, increased access must be for programs meeting key elements of effectiveness.³

Table 1: State Rankings (U.S Median for Benchmarks Met = 7.5)

	Access Rankings		Spending Rankings		Benchmarks Met
	4 Year Olds	3 Year Olds	State-level	All Spending	Standards
Minnesota	35 th	24 th	16 th	20 th	5.5
Iowa	7 th	19 th	36 th	40 th	7.9
Wisconsin	5 th	26 th	32 nd	28 th	3.1
Illinois	26 th	3 rd	24 th	32 nd	8

Conclusion: To achieve the state goal that all children are school ready, continued improvements in access and quality are needed. VPK/SRP have increased access to preschool, and along with Head Start, these investments should increase to achieve comparability with other states. Given increased funding priority, Minnesota is well-positioned for continued progress but only if investments yield benefits to children that can be sustained.

¹ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., et al. (2019). The State of Preschool 2018. National Institute for Early Education Research. ²Reynolds, A. J. (Chair). (2019). As the twig is bent...Sustained effects of contemporary public Pre-K programs (Oklahoma, Michigan, Chicago & Saint Paul). SRCD meeting presentations. ³/hcr.umn.edu/sustaining-gains/prek-elements-increase-third-grade-achievement.