

**Resolution in Support of Legislative Efforts to Expand Access to Quality
Pre-Kindergarten Education**

Building upon the Greater Houston Partnership's *Resolution of the Executive Committee on Preschool Funding in Public Education* (June 18, 2003), *Resolution of the Board of Directors on Public School Finance Reform* (March 3, 2004) and *Resolution of the Executive Committee Supporting Public School Finance Reforms* (December 15, 2004), the Partnership continues to support legislation that will improve the quality of and expand access to pre-kindergarten ("Pre-K") where it remains voluntary for parents.

In order to ensure that all public and private dollars spent on pre-kindergarten achieve the greatest impact possible, the Greater Houston Partnership supports specific strategies that should be considered as ways to improve quality and expand access to Pre-K:

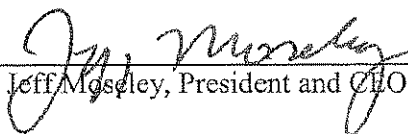
1. **Teacher Training, Mentoring:** *Expand the Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development's Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) in Pre-K classrooms within all systems of early education* (ISD Pre-K classrooms, licensed child care classrooms and Head Start classrooms) to improve teacher training and child outcomes.
2. **Staff-to-Child Ratios:** *Establish a staff-to-child ratio in Pre-K classrooms of no more than 22 children per staff person. Additionally, increase the average daily attendance rate for Pre-K children by 15% in school districts that lower the ratio to 18 children per staff by using federal and local resources or that partner with community-based child care centers to expand access to Pre-K.* Currently, there is *no cap on enrollment* in Pre-K classrooms in public schools. Eighty percent of the 38 states that offer Pre-K require a ratio of 10 students per teacher or less.
3. **Expand Community Partnerships:** *When school districts do not have adequate space to serve all eligible Pre-K children, require that school districts partner with community-based early education providers to deliver Pre-K programs* as long as they have the capacity to deliver a high quality program (degreed teacher, utilizes one of the state approved curriculums, follow Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines).

We strongly support Governor Perry and the Legislature as they assign budget priorities that will positively impact primary and secondary educational programs. While the Partnership is studying other early childhood education strategies, based on funding we believe the three strategies listed above have the greatest probability for success during this session.

Expanding access to quality early childhood education programs will guarantee that the most at-risk Texas children have the opportunity to acquire the basic building blocks for the subsequent development of an educated work force.



John D. Hofmeister, Chairman



Jeff Moseley, President and CEO



Daniel J. Wolterman, Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 7, 2007

FROM: Lori Veters, Chairman, Education and Work force Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of Legislative Efforts to Expand Access to Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education

RECOMMENDATION:

Building upon the Greater Houston Partnership's *Resolution of the Executive Committee on Preschool Funding in Public Education* (June 18, 2003), *Resolution of the Board of Directors on Public School Finance Reform* (March 3, 2004) and *Resolution of the Executive Committee Supporting Public School Finance Reforms* (December 15, 2004), the Partnership continues to support legislation that will improve the quality of and expand access to pre-kindergarten ("Pre-K") where it remains voluntary for parents.

In order to ensure that all public and private dollars spent on pre-kindergarten achieve the greatest impact possible, the Greater Houston Partnership supports specific strategies that should be considered as ways to improve quality and expand access to Pre-K:

1. **Teacher Training, Mentoring:** *Expand the Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development's Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) in Pre-K classrooms within all systems of early education* (ISD Pre-K classrooms, licensed child care classrooms and Head Start classrooms) to improve teacher training and child outcomes.
2. **Staff-to-Child Ratios:** *Establish a staff-to-child ratio in Pre-K classrooms of no more than 22 children per staff person. Additionally, increase the average daily attendance rate for Pre-K children by 15% in school districts that lower the ratio to 18 children per staff by using federal and local resources or that partner with community-based child care centers to expand access to Pre-K.* Currently, there is *no cap on enrollment* in Pre-K classrooms in public schools. Eighty percent of the 38 states that offer Pre-K require a ratio of *10 students per teacher or less.*
3. **Expand Community Partnerships:** *When school districts do not have adequate space to serve all eligible Pre-K children, require that school districts partner with community-based early education providers to deliver Pre-K programs* as long as they have the capacity to deliver a high quality program (degreed teacher, utilizes one of the state approved curriculums, follow Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines).

We strongly support Governor Perry and the Legislature as they assign budget priorities that will positively impact primary and secondary educational programs. While the Partnership is studying other early childhood education strategies, based on funding we believe the three strategies listed above have the greatest probability for success during this session.

Expanding access to quality early childhood education programs will guarantee that all Texas children have the opportunity to acquire the basic building blocks for the subsequent development of an educated work force.

BACKGROUND:

The Partnership affirmed that one of its stated education goals is *to improve the economic vitality of the community with a keen eye toward attracting a highly-skilled and well-educated work force.* Investment in quality early education is one of the most highly leveraged investments that Houston can make to achieve this goal. Dr. Stephen Klineberg of Rice University and Dr. Steve Murdock of the Office of the State Demographer make the case that early childhood education is crucial for Texas to be economically viable in the high-tech knowledge-based economy of the twenty-first century. They state that “expanded programs in early childhood education and development may be among the *most effective means available* to improve educational outcomes across the state and to narrow the educational gaps that divide Texans today.”¹

Economist and Nobel Prize winner, Dr. James Heckman, has completed extensive research comparing the economic “return on investment” in different types of educational expenditures. His report, “The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children,” speaks to the impact of quality early education on later productivity, particularly on the children of poverty or other factors that place children at risk. He argues that “cognitive and non-cognitive abilities are important for a productive work force, and gaps that emerge early are difficult to change.” He further states that “skills beget skills and, because skills are accumulated, starting early and over time, investing in young children is an investment in future productivity and public safety.”

Another recent study out of the Texas A&M Bush School of Government and Public Service states that investments in quality public pre-kindergarten would generate a \$3.50 to \$1 return on investment from a child’s early years through adulthood. Specifically, the report examined both the short and long-term benefits of investing in early childhood education and found that high quality preschool programs increased cognitive and social development, contributed to fewer special education referrals, reduced involvement in criminal activities, increased income and lifetime earnings for mothers, and improved work performance.²

Other studies focusing on the positive child outcomes of high quality preschool have shown that young children who attend Pre-K learn language, social and practical skills that increase their chances for future achievement.³ Eighty-five percent of the brain’s core structure (size, growth and hard wiring) is developed by age 4, yet less than 9% of public investment in education and development are made during that time.⁴ Increasing our investment during this critical period of brain growth and social/emotional development will pay significant dividends to our community.

Further, Texas is undergoing a rapid economic and demographic transformation. The growing child population is more ethnically diverse than the total population, with the majority being English Language Learners.⁵ Research shows Pre-K has significant benefits for children learning English. For example, the Oklahoma Pre-K program has shown that while children overall experienced a 52% gain in Letter Word recognition, Hispanic children experienced a 79% gain in Letter Word recognition. In addition, children overall experienced a 21% gain in the Applied Problems test score, while Hispanic children experienced a 54% gain in Applied Problems.⁶

¹ Steve Murdock and Stephen Klineberg. The Demographic and Related Economic Transformations of Texas: Implications for Early Childhood Education and Development. July 2004.

² Texas A&M, Bush School for Government and Public Service, “A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Universally Accessible Pre-Kindergarten Education in Texas,” May 2006

³ Pre-K and Latinos: The Foundation of America’s Future (Pre-K Now, 2006)

⁴ Early Learning Left Out: Closing the Investment Gap for America’s Youngest Children, April 2005

⁵ Texas State Data Center, Office of the Demographer, 2004

⁶ Crocus working paper #2, “The effects of Universal Pre-K in Oklahoma: Research Highlights and Policy Implications.” October 2003.

Investing in Pre-K can result in significant cost savings in the not too distant future. In 2005, 6.4% of first graders in Texas (21,496 children) were retained. Whenever a child is retained, this obviously doubles the amount the state and local school districts spend on educating that child for that grade. At \$8,600 per student, per year, Texas spent \$185,000,000 on first grade retention alone. When you include children retained in first through third grade in Texas for 2005, this hidden expense totaled \$376,000,600 per year. The Yale University Child Study Center conducted a meta-analysis of the impact of state pre-kindergarten programs on retention found that all seven programs that evaluated this outcome (which included Texas) found a statistically significant positive result for one or more grades.⁷ Reducing the retention rate in first grade alone by 15% would save the state of Texas \$27,750,000.

Dropout rates are strongly correlated to lower achievement rates in the earlier years, and are specifically linked to a lack of school readiness for children entering Kindergarten.⁸ Drop out rates at some schools in the greater Houston area reach 38-50%, and students who drop out of high school are eight times as likely to end up in jail. Currently, over 75% of those incarcerated in Texas prisons dropped out of high school.⁹ With the current prison population in the state of Texas at over 150,000 and at a cost of \$17,500 per prisoner per year, investments that positively impact high school completion and college participation are critical.

The Partnership advocates to improve school readiness to ensure that children are prepared to graduate from high school enter higher levels of education and be successful in the workplace. The specific strategies to achieve this recommendation relate to improving the **quality** of Pre-kindergarten. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) identifies several indicators of quality for pre-kindergarten that have been positively correlated to child outcomes. Of the seven key foundations (listed below) necessary for quality Pre-K education, the Texas Pre-K system has four.¹⁰

**Comparison of State Policies and Benchmark Goals for Pre-Kindergarten
 (Greater Houston Partnership Recommendation noted by •)**

Policies Recommended by National Inst. For Early Ed. Research		NIEER Benchmark	GHP Rec.	TX	AR	OK	NC	IL	MD	CA	NY
1	Lead Teacher Degree	Bachelors Degree		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
2	Lead Teacher Certification	Specializing in Pre-K		✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
4	Teacher in-service	At least 15 hrs/yr	•	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Staff-child Ratios: (3 and 4 year olds)	1:10 or better	•		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Max. Class Size: (3 and 4 year olds)	20 or lower			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7	Assist. Teacher Degree	CDA or Equivalent			✓		✓	✓			

* In Texas, standards for early childhood teachers (Pre-K and K) changed in 2002. Prior to 2002, teachers were required to have an "endorsement" in Early Childhood to teach in a Pre-K or K classroom. After 2002, the certification to teach in Pre-K and K was rolled into a Pre-K – 4th Grade certification. This makes the certification more flexible but training less specific to early childhood development. As a result, the State Center for Early Childhood Development TEEM training and other professional development focused on early childhood education as important for Pre-K teachers.

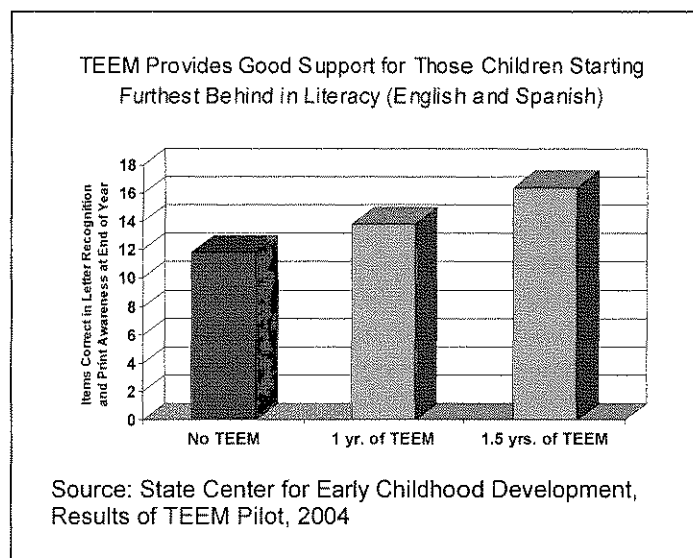
⁷ Yale University Child Study Center, "State Efforts to Evaluate the Effects of Prekindergarten: 1977-2003, April 2004

⁸ Center for Public Policy Priorities, 2006

⁹ Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Wyndham School District, 2006

¹⁰ National Institute for Early Education Research (<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf#page=144>)

Teacher Training and Mentoring: A teacher's formal education and continuing education and training are the most significant indicators contributing to student outcomes.¹¹ From the beginning of our state's history of offering pre-kindergarten in the mid-80's, teachers have been required to have a bachelor's degree. In-service training is also part of the investment that our education system makes to continue the education of teachers. The Pre-K teacher training that is a component of the State Center for Early Childhood Development's Texas Early Education Model has provided teachers with well organized, expertly delivered training (both in a classroom format and an e-training format) covering "best practices," language development, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, written expression, and print awareness. It has been piloted in over 2,000 classrooms throughout the state of Texas. In addition to the training, TEEM offers on-site mentoring and palm-pilot student assessment technology which gives immediate feedback to teachers on personalized instruction strategies for children. This model has shown dramatic results in improving child outcomes and should be expanded to another 2,000 classrooms.



Staff-to-Child Ratios: Based on limited resources (financial and facilities), Texas elementary schools have been allowed to enroll 22 or more Pre-K children in a classroom. In the mid-80s, Texas mandated class sizes of no more than 22 in Kindergarten through 4th grade, but class size in Pre-K was not addressed. The chart on page 5 indicates the recommended ratios for children of preschool age. Thirty-two states have a staff-to-child ratio in Pre-K of 1:10 or less.

Several studies have documented the positive impact of lower staff-to-child outcomes.¹² Absent state standards, some school districts have utilized Federal Title dollars, Head Start dollars and local tax base dollars to lower the teacher-to-child ratios. Cypress Fairbanks, Spring Branch and Aldine ISDs utilize local district dollars to lower ratios by adding a teacher's aide in the classroom. The state should, at a minimum, establish a maximum staff-to-child ratio of 22:1. Further, the Partnership recommends that the state create financial incentives for school districts to lower this ratio to 18:1 (or less) by increasing the Average Daily Attendance Rate by 15% for Pre-K students in districts that meet this lower ratio. This would leverage limited state dollars invested in early education.

¹¹ Barnett, S. *Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications*. New Brunswick, N.J.: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2003

¹² University of Colorado at Denver, "Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Team," 1995

National Recommendations on Adult-Child Ratios for Preschool Age Children

Organization	Adult-Child Ratio 4 year olds
Amer. Acad. of Pediatrics, Amer. Public Health Assoc.	1:8
National Assoc. for the Education of Young Children	1:10
National Research Council	1:7

Community Partnerships: Texas has a history of promoting local collaboration between licensed child care, Head Start and public pre-kindergarten programs to serve eligible children. Texas Senate Bill 76 (2003) and Senate Bill 23 (2005) required school districts to examine the potential for local collaboration with private child care and Head Start to improve access to Pre-K. Currently, in the 80th Legislative Session, Senate Bill 50 is being proposed to further strengthen these partnerships. Such private-public partnerships can be successful in leveraging resources so that services can reach a greater number of children.

PROS:

Improving the quality and expanding the eligibility of pre-kindergarten will increase the number of children who are school ready, reduce grade retention, increase high school graduation rates and college participation rates, among a long list of benefits. Children who reach kindergarten “school ready” will be much more likely to master reading and problem solving. They are also more likely to succeed in the higher level courses and thinking skills required by the jobs of the 21st Century economy.

CONS:

There will be a cost associated with the quality improvements and expansion of Pre-K at the state level until the benefits of this investment begin to be realized.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Expansion of the State Center’s TEEM pilot project is approximately or \$1,500 per child at a cost of \$27,000 per classroom.¹³ Expansion of TEEM is projected to be 2,000 additional classrooms (4,000 classrooms total) or higher. An additional 2,000 classrooms would cost \$54MM. The fiscal impact of establishing a teacher-to-child ratio of 1:22 children would be minimal, as most school districts follow this voluntarily. Providing financial incentives for school districts to lower the ratio to 1:18 by increasing the Average Daily Attendance rate by 15% to Pre-K children could be addressed by increasing the existing Pre-K Expansion Grant fund by \$50MM and having school districts apply to participate in this voluntary ratio reduction initiative. An additional \$5,000 per classrooms for the approximately 1,800 new classrooms that would have to be created as a result of the lower ratio would also assist with this transition and would cost an additional \$8.9MM. As an additional incentive to create community-based classrooms, the state could require that districts create at least 50% of the new classrooms in community-based child care centers to access the \$5,000 per classroom allotment. The fiscal impact together for TEEM and reducing staff-to-child ratios would total \$112.9 MM per year. **However, the fiscal cost of inaction is much higher.** The costs to society if Texas does not invest early in the education of our young children through higher criminal justice system costs (incarcerations), higher drug use, higher teen pregnancy rates, lower literacy

¹³ State Center for Early Childhood Development, TEEM Program cost estimate, 2007. (includes cost of materials and teacher training only)

rates, lost wages and higher health care costs put a financial strain (approximately \$50 billion a year) on all Texans and reduces the long-term earning potential of the state's work force.¹⁴

KNOWN OPPOSITION:

There may be opposition from private child care centers, which is why collaboration efforts between private child care, Head Start and public schools is critical. Most states have accomplished pre-kindergarten expansion through such partnerships as it utilizes an existing infrastructure while bolstering the quality of programs in center-based child care and Head Start with highly qualified teachers, curriculum and classroom resources. This should be a win-win.

IMPLEMENTATION:

There would need to be a reasonable phase-in time period (at least two years) to implement recommendations with the required additional teachers and classrooms. The Texas Education Agency has already required school districts to develop plans to implement partnerships with community-based child care and Head Start providers, so this will not be a new concept. Models for developing such partnerships would be available through the State Center for Early Childhood Development and local communities that have championed integrated service delivery models, including the greater Houston community.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

The most significant impact of these recommendations will be additional classrooms to implement the lower staff-to-child ratios and smaller class sizes. The recommendation for school districts to pursue community-based partnerships was already mandated by TEA this past year which would take advantage of an already existing infrastructure to assist with implementation. For other recommendations that have a fiscal note, a combination of state, federal (Title dollars) and local funding will be needed to implement these recommendations.

COOPERATION WITH ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS:

One Voice Houston
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
Texans Care for Children
Houston Area Association for the Education of Young Children

¹⁴ Valenzuela, Angela, Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas, comments at The Texas Dropout Crisis and our Children, October 6, 2006.