



# Great Start. Great State. Texas Children are Worth the Early Investment!

In 2003 the Texas Legislature passed one significant bi-partisan bill, Senate Bill 76. SB 76 mandated the creation of eleven early education and development demonstration projects. TECEC supports the continuation of this work and the expansion of the state's efforts to increase access to and the effectiveness of early childhood education programs.

## **Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition Legislative Priorities: 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session**

### **Expansion of Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) Project**

Support expansion of an integrated model of service delivery between Pre-K, Child Care and Head Start to increase access to full-day, full-year quality preschool services.

### **Financing: Early Childhood Education Blue Ribbon Committee**

Appoint a special blue-ribbon committee to study early childhood education and development resource needs and financing options to secure adequate funding and identify barriers to the integration of preschool delivery systems.

### **Improving Quality through Consumer Information and Professional Development**

Improve quality of programs through a state approved and locally determined menu of professional development options. Promote the School Readiness Rating System to ensure that parents are informed consumers of early education services and that standards are uniform and comprehensive across programs.

### **Single Point of Access for Families**

Create a single point of access for all families seeking early childhood education and development services so that no matter where a parent enters the system, he or she has access to knowledge about program eligibility and available care.

**TECEC** represents more than **130 diverse member organizations** from across Texas. This statewide network is dedicated to building a system of quality early care and education that prepares all children in Texas for success in their education and life.

# Great Start, Great State

## Background Information

**More than half of all children in Texas under the age of six have all parents in the labor force\*.** Quality preschool programs including Child Care, Head Start and Pre-kindergarten play an essential role in ensuring that children are safe and secure while their parents are at work, develop to their full potential, enter school ready to succeed, and complete their education and develop the skills required for success at work and in the family as adults. To secure the future social quality and economic vitality of this state, it will be critical for Texas to increase investments in early childhood education and development programs.

### Short Term Returns: Education Attainment and Success

- **Investments made in early childhood education now will pay off within a four-year term** of a Texas Senator by **increasing the number** of children who **successfully exit the third grade** and by **reducing the number** of children who receive **special education referrals**
- Children of upper income families begin school with a vocabulary of **20,000 words**, children of lower income families know only **4,000 words\*** while these disadvantages are not necessarily lasting, efforts to correct them during the middle childhood and adolescent years can be costly, and are not as effective as early childhood interventions\*

### Long Term Returns: Securing the Economic Future of Texas by Building a Strong Workforce

- It is estimated by 2040, **30% of the labor force** in Texas will **not have a high school diploma\***
- Every **\$1 invested** in quality early childhood education and development **returns** as much as **\$7** by increasing the likelihood that children will be literate, employed and enrolled in postsecondary education and less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity\*

TECEC commends state leadership for passage of **Senate Bill 76 (SB76)** during the 78<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, which has proven to be a significant step forward towards the integration of Head Start, Pre-K and Child Care in the state. Preliminary findings of the statewide demonstration projects present how a community partnership model of service delivery paves the way for decreasing waiting lists, improving school readiness of children, and serving more children in cost effective ways.

TECEC supports the preliminary focus of SB76 on low-income children as research demonstrates that children from this population make the most gains by participating in quality preschools. However, in the near future Texas should make early childhood education an option for children of all income levels and incorporate all providers of preschool programs into a unified statewide, coordinated system. With the help of our member organizations and experts from across the state and country, TECEC has developed **The Texas Plan, Statewide Early Education and Development System (Texas SEEDS)**, a ten-year public policy vision in order to accomplish just that. The TECEC Legislative Priorities for the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session are critical first steps in realizing this integrated system.

\*To review sources for the included statistics, additional facts and The Texas Plan, please visit our website at [www.tecec.org](http://www.tecec.org)