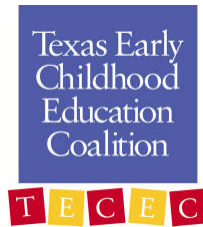


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## **ENHANCED PRE-KINDERGARTEN VISION FOR TEXAS RELEASED COMPONENTS OF PLAN HAVE ALREADY BECOME LAW**

AUSTIN, TEXAS – July 26, 2005 – As a result of the growing body of research on brain science, as well as studies linking investments in early childhood to economic development, a national movement to expand pre-kindergarten programs is growing.

The state of Texas is taking a unique approach to expanding access to families who desire pre-kindergarten. For the first time at the state level, hundreds of diverse stakeholders are coming together to help build an enhanced pre-kindergarten system where all early childhood education providers including Child Care, Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten coordinate their efforts to meet the needs of children ages birth to five.

Today, the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) and the Texas Program for Society and Health (TPSH) of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University release **The Texas Plan: A Statewide Early Education and Development System (Texas SEEDS)**. This ten-year public policy vision for a comprehensive early childhood education system was created through extensive statewide collaborations over a two-year period.

**“The Texas Plan** does not promote a one-size-fits-all model, but instead seeks to enhance the existing diverse delivery systems to allow parents to choose which program best meets the individual needs of their child” explains Karen R. Johnson, President of United Ways of Texas and TECEC Co-Chair.

**The Texas Plan** outlines a statewide family-preference system that is high quality, widely available, and engages parents and communities. The Plan’s goal is to ensure that all Texas children by entry to Kindergarten have the skills necessary to be successful in school. The document includes 50 policy recommendations derived from a set of overarching guiding principles that call for:

- Inclusion of ALL children ages birth to five
- Inclusion of ALL early childhood education providers (Head Start; Child Care; and Pre-Kindergarten; corporate-sponsored; faith-based; and home-based)
- Affordability for every family regardless of income
- Parent driven decisions for enrollment and choice of provider
- High quality standards and assessments applied equitably to all providers
- Commitment to build a public-private initiative using all existing systems

“Access to high quality preschool programs including Child Care, Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten could be the single most effective mechanism to improve the outcomes of our state’s public schools,” states Dr. Alvin Tarlov, retired Executive Director of the Texas Program for Society and Health and an architect of **The Texas Plan**.

Recent economic research shows that every dollar invested in high quality early childhood education yields between \$7 and \$17 in economic returns. These returns are realized through higher educational attainment, improved health, higher incomes, and lower crime and welfare participation rates.

“Business leaders recognize the direct connection between early childhood education and a sustainable, productive workforce that will allow Texas to compete on a national and global scale”, remarks Sandy Dochen, IBM Corporate Community Relations Manager and TECEC Co-Chair.

“Privately owned child care centers, most of which are small businesses, provide the majority of child care in Texas. We have been concerned about public Pre-Kindergarten expansion efforts when they come at the expense of Child Care providers. This new and bold **Texas Plan** recognizes the unique role that all players in the child care industry play in meeting the needs of children and parents in Texas,” says Steve Sanders, President of the Texas Licensed Child Care Association.

Despite the 79<sup>th</sup> Regular Legislative Session ending without public school finance reform, legislators did address the early educational needs of our state’s youngest citizens in a bipartisan effort. As a result, three bills consistent with **The Texas Plan** were passed and signed into law by Governor Rick Perry including Senate Bill 23 (Zaffirini/Kolkhorst), House Bill 2808 (Morrison/West), and House Bill 2048 (Uresti/Ellis).

Kaitlin Guthrow, Executive Director of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC), states, “175 child interested organizations across Texas have contributed to and are energized by joining forces in the development of **The Texas Plan**. We are now all working together to adopt legislative priorities for a 10-year implementation timeframe. A statewide Pre-K movement including all service providers is building. Come the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session that begins in January 2007, we will all be knocking on the Capitol doors with one voice speaking on behalf of the children of Texas!”

The Texas Plan document and a visual graphic demonstrating the positive effects of quality early childhood education are available online at <http://www.tecec.org/files/Cascade.pdf>. To view bill analyses of Senate Bill 23, House Bill 2808 and House Bill 2048 please visit our website at [http://www.tecec.org/pages.php/Passed\\_Legislation.html](http://www.tecec.org/pages.php/Passed_Legislation.html).

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*The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) comprises a statewide network of more than 170 diverse member organizations committed to systems-level change to ensure that every child in Texas has access to high quality early care and education.*

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