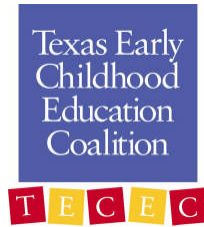


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Pre-k: The Long-term School Finance Fix

AUSTIN, TEXAS-April 17, 2006- As another special legislative session on public school finance convenes today, the question should be raised as to how Texas devises a long-term solution for investing in our public schools. The Texas Legislature will spend the next 30 days formulating a plan to fund public schools in ways consistent with the state's constitution. Then the real question becomes how to best use those dollars to ensure that Texas achieves high school graduation rates, improved college entrance and graduation rates, an educated and more highly skilled workforce, and a strong economy and consistent job growth in the future. One answer is through high quality pre-k programs such as Child Care, Head Start, and Public Pre-kindergarten.

Research demonstrates that children who participate in high quality pre-k programs are less frequently assigned to special education classes, have better attendance rates, perform better on standardized tests, and are less likely to drop out of school. According to Dr. Alvin Tarlov, M.D., formerly retired executive director of the Texas Program for Society and Health at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University and now Professor of Medicine at the University of Chicago where he continues his research and public policy formulations related to early childhood education and development, "Access to high quality pre-k programs including Child Care, Head Start and Public Pre-kindergarten has been shown by research to be the single most effective policy initiative to improve the outcomes of public schools."

Brain development during the first five years of a child's life occurs at a faster rate than any other subsequent period. "We must remember that the foundation for a child's success in school and life is built before a child walks through the school doors," said Kaitlin Guthrow, Executive Director of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). "As Legislators make these tough decisions on how to fund public school education, we ask that they keep in mind the critical role that quality pre-k programs play in student success in later years of schooling," she added.

"Texans want school finance reform that won't need to be re-visited in five years," remarked Jason Sabo, Vice President of Public Policy at United Ways of Texas. "If we use school finance reform to invest in high quality pre-kindergarten, we can help level the playing field for all kids. Otherwise, it's likely that the Texas Legislature will be engaged in another school finance battle sooner than any of us might like," he added.

To learn more about the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC), please visit www.tecec.org.

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The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) is a policy and advocacy organization comprised of more than 200 member organizations in 60 communities across Texas dedicated to building a movement for a high quality, voluntary, early childhood education system for children ages birth to five in Texas.