



2009 TECEC LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) is comprised of more than 250 member organizations statewide, and works to build a high-quality, integrated early childhood education and development system for children ages birth to five. Through widespread community and bi-partisan legislative support, TECEC has supported the creation of high-quality initiatives in local communities aimed at preparing children for school entry. TECEC has prepared its legislative agenda for the 81st Legislative Session which includes the following **five (5) priorities**:

Support Full-Day High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs with an Emphasis on Local, Integrated Community-Based Partnerships

Support voluntary expansion of existing half-day pre-k programs to full-day with required quality supports in place, such as a maximum class size limit and teacher to child ratios. In addition, support the establishment and sustainability of partnerships between Pre-k, Child Care and Head Start programs under the direction of local communities while supporting parents who work full-time.

Increase Reimbursement Rates Paid to Child Care Providers

Increase payment rates to child care providers serving our highest need children in quality settings. The child care subsidy program, managed by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) serves the most vulnerable children in Texas and is critical in supporting families making the transition from welfare to work. Unfortunately, due to state level funding decisions mandating higher levels of direct child care services, local workforce development boards have been forced to offer providers reimbursement rates that do not cover the cost of providing services.

Support the Development of Early Childhood Professionals

Expand the pre-service training hours of child care providers from 8 to 40, and annual hours from 15 to 30. Currently, child care professionals in Texas are only required 8 hours of pre-service training while a hairstylist requires 1,500 hours. In order to ensure a well-trained workforce it is essential to increase the training hours for early education professionals with the option of these hours leading to college credit.

Maintain Support for Existing Quality Programs throughout Texas

Support existing, high quality early education programs in local communities such as the Pre-k Expansion Grant Program (now known as the Early Start Grant); the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM); the Texas School Readiness Certification System (SRCS); and the Texas Rising Star (TRS) Program.

Establish a Pilot Early Childhood Behavioral Consultation Program in Texas

Support the creation of an Early Childhood Behavioral Consultation Program. Two thirds of child care providers in Texas report caring for young children with a behavioral or emotional difficulty, leading to these children being removed from care. The failure to appropriately respond to the challenging behaviors can result in these children being retained in school and/or entering more restrictive and costly programs (i.e. alternative education, mental health, or juvenile justice systems). Early childhood behavioral consultation is a proven method for keeping children in early childhood education programs through technical assistance, screenings/assessments, parent education, resource and referral, and training.