



**Testimony for Senate Education Committee
Submitted by Carol S. Shattuck
Collaborative for Children
March 12, 2009**

Good morning. My name is Carol S. Shattuck and I serve as President and CEO of Collaborative for Children, a nonprofit organization serving a 13-county region in the Texas Gulf Coast area. The mission of Collaborative for Children (CC) is to build a strong educational foundation for young children to succeed in school and life. To this end, we work with the people who most influence the lives of young children – parents and families, early education teachers and community leaders. CC is a nationally accredited child care resource and referral agency, providing parents with a comprehensive information on early education programs in the Texas Gulf Coast. CC also partners with early education programs to improve the quality of education through assessment, professional development, scholarships, on-site mentoring and modeling with teachers, and classroom equipment grants. Last year, Collaborative for Children served 78,369 children, families and educators in the Greater Houston Area.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Education Committee today. I am here today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 21. This bill, if passed, will significantly improve the quality of prekindergarten in Texas. According to several national studies¹, there are certain characteristics of early education programs that are highly correlated to positive outcomes for children:

- Teacher education and training (BA trained teachers as lead teachers)
- Small teacher to child ratios (1 to 10 or less)
- Small group sizes (20 children or less)
- Research-based curriculum
- Engagement of families in a child's education.

Texas prekindergarten gets an A+ on teacher education and training as well as strong marks on curriculum. Where the Texas PreK system falls short is its silence on teacher-to-child ratios and class sizes. Senate Bill 21 would establish, for the first time, meaningful **teacher-to-child ratios** and **class sizes** in prekindergarten classrooms. National organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, recommend teacher-to-child ratios of 1 to 8 and 1 to 10 and class sizes of 16 and 20 respectively. 80% of state prekindergarten programs meet or exceed this standard.

¹ National Institute for Early Education Research, www.nieer.org

Senate Bill 21 recommends teacher-to-child ratios of 1 to 11 and a maximum class size of 22, a significant step in the right direction, bringing Texas prekindergarten into closer alignment with national standards and practices. Currently, Texas prekindergarten classrooms have *no upper limit* on the number of 4-year olds in a classroom. While 4-year olds have a tremendous learning capacity, they also need more physical care, attention and supervision than older children. Providing adequate staffing for prekindergarten classrooms will result in safer, improved learning environments for young children, thus enabling Texas children to achieve the gains that national longitudinal studies have documented when standards of low teacher to child ratios and group sizes are in place.

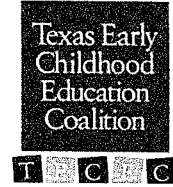
In this challenging economic environment, it is natural to focus on the short-term fiscal note of this bill which is the result of a higher Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) for prekindergarten students to cover the cost of the teaching assistant and another component of the bill, expanding a half-day program to a full school-day program. Equally important is to look at the amount of funding that Texas is currently spending on children who enter kindergarten and first grade unprepared for school and are having to repeat a grade, thus significantly increasing the cost of education to Texas taxpayers. In 2006-2007, Texans spent over \$365,000,000 on 1st – 3rd grade student retention.² School failure represents a huge hidden cost to taxpayers that only grows over time when children fall further and further behind, drop out and have limited means for self-support.

Three landmark longitudinal studies (Carolina Abecedarian Project, Chicago Parent Child Center, Perry Preschool Project) have documented significant economic benefits of participating in early education programs -- to the student as well as to the community. Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate from University of Chicago, has reviewed this data and has confirmed that every \$1 spent on a high quality early education program returns \$7 to the community. The Texas A&M Bush School of Government took a more conservative approach but still determined that high quality early education would return \$3.50 for every \$1 invested in the program.

Another critical component of Senate Bill 21 is the partnerships it would create between independent school districts and community-based child care. Expanding the PreK school day from a half-day to a full school day, will make it a challenge to serve all eligible children when a single classroom in a school had been previously used for a morning *and* an afternoon PreK class and now it can be used for just one class. Full day PreK, while a positive step in order to expose young children to the broader curriculum addressed in the newly revamped Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, will create facility challenges unless the already existing capacity of community-based child care is viewed as a resource. As the bill outlines, such partnerships with child care programs (that have certain quality standards in place) will represent a cost-effective way to expand access to PreK without the costly facility expansion that would otherwise be required with a full school day program.

In summary, I want to extend my congratulations to Senator Zaffirini and others who have provided such strong leadership to championing quality early education in Texas. If Texas is going to succeed in the 21st Century economy and job market, it must focus its attention on ways to grow and build strong students from the ground up. A strong PreK – 16 education system, will contribute to a more highly-educated populace and a more competitive economy both now and in the future.

² Texas Education Agency, www.tea.state.tx.us



2009 TEXAS 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. One Voice is a network of public, private and nonprofit organizations in the Greater Houston area working together to ensure that the health and human service needs of all Texans are addressed in legislative, regulatory, funding and other public policy initiatives. Collaborative for Children (CC) serves a 13-county area in the Texas Gulf Coast and has a mission to build a strong educational foundation for young children to succeed in school and life. CC is a member of TECEC and serves on its Executive Committee and is an active partnership member of One Voice. TECEC has prepared its legislative agenda (which is supported by CC and One Voice) 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 school 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. 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 flat federal funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant and 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 24. 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.



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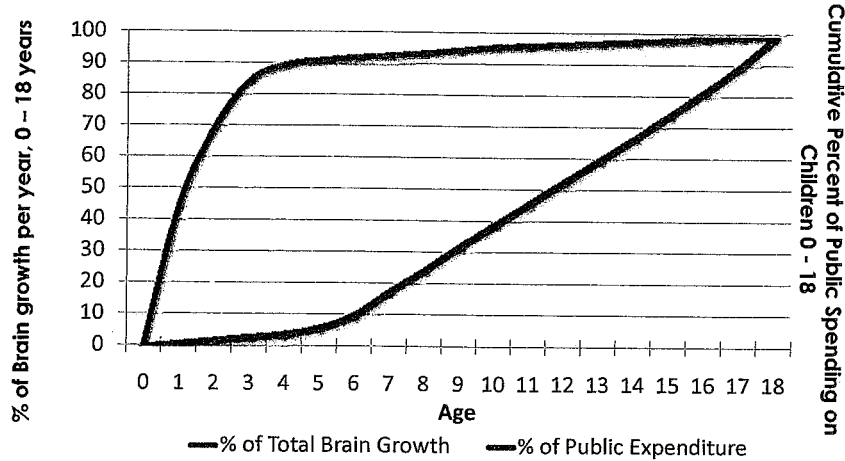


Quality Early Education



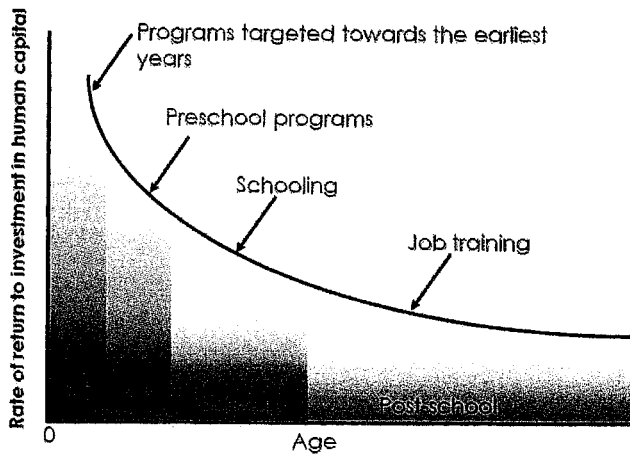
An Investment that yields high returns

Public Expenditures on Children 0 – 18 Compared to Early Brain Development



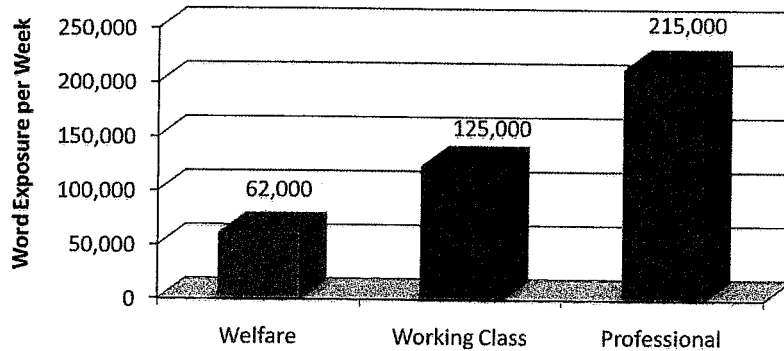
Source: R. Haveman and B. Wolfe, "The Determinants of Children's Attainments: A review of Methods and Findings," Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 33, December 1995, pp. 1829-1878. Updated in 2005.

High Quality Preschool Programs Offer Highest Rates of Return to Human Capital



10/15/07
Dr. James Heckman, University of Chicago

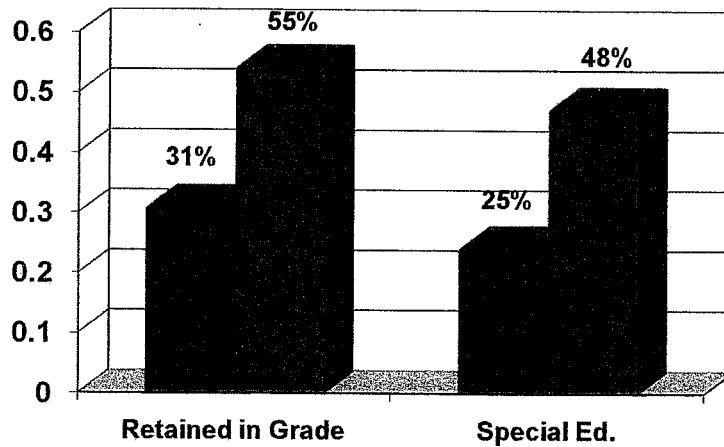
Children in Low Income Families have Significantly Less Word Exposure by Age 3



Children in poverty hear 24,000,000 less words by age 3 than children from higher income households.

Source: Hart & Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, 1995

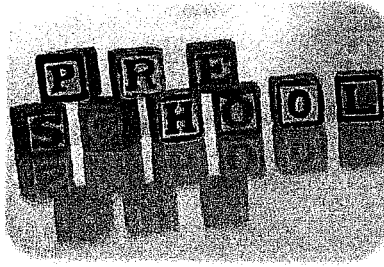
Children Experiencing High Quality Early Education do Better in School



Source: Abecedarian Project, Follow-Up at 21 Years, UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, 2007

■ Target ■ Control

Texas Pre-Kindergarten



- Texas spent \$533M on Pre-Kindergarten in 2007*
- Degreed Teachers
- Half-day program
- No teacher-child ratios or group size established

Source: Texas Education Agency

• Includes \$447M in funding from Foundation School Program and \$85M from the Expansion Grant Program

House Bill 130 would:



- Establish a meaningful teacher-to-child ratio in Pre-Kindergarten (1:11)
- Establish group size maximum of 22
- Extend program from half-day to full school day
- Continue to support partnerships between public schools, Head Start and private child care programs
- Companion in Senate: SB 21



What to Expect for Our Investment



- Children better prepared for kindergarten
- Significantly less money spent on children having to repeat a grade AND on special education
- Higher reading scores by the third grade, higher passing rates into middle school and high school
- Higher college/technical school participation
- More young adults employed at a living wage
- More young adults paying taxes to support community infrastructure

