

Increase school success.



The things known to work in helping kids get ahead in school need our investment and attention. Strategies such as strong pre-kindergarten offerings and student supports that look at the whole child so that children can succeed academically are key in ensuring success for tomorrow's Texas.

Giving all children the opportunity to succeed, with tools to become productive, contributing members of society, is a goal that's both worthy and attainable. A growing body of research shows how education and soft skill-development in children occurs in concert: kids learn the most when they develop cognitive and social-emotional skills in an integrated way in classrooms. Starting from very early in life into the years when we focus most on preventing high school students from dropping out, Texas' approach to education can stay relevant for the times we live in by helping kids develop *all* the tools they need for later success.

What to Know

- Right now, Texas falls behind the rest of the nation in educational attainment. Among states, **Texas has the lowest percentage of residents with a high school diploma** or GED.¹ Persistently high dropout rates are a threat to the state's economy in the future.²
- A contributing factor to our dropout rate is that many children in Texas miss out on early experiences linked to later success. **Texas has the eighth-highest**



percentage of children growing up in poverty nationwide.³ For these children to break into the middle class and thrive in later life, education is essential.

- Economists and social scientists have proven that **quality early education is one of the most cost-effective ways to support children's future success**; it can have the effect of leveling the educational playing field for disadvantaged children.⁴ Early child development reaps economic benefits in the future. Giving a solid foundation for learning helps children grow into productive and contributing members of society.
- Early education and public education have long attracted bipartisan support, but more recently Texas moved in the wrong direction. With the nation's third-lowest per-pupil education spending, **Texas' legislature in 2011 eliminated full-day pre-kindergarten and cut public education overall by \$5.4 billion**, representing a 15% reduction in services, compared to the prior budget.⁵
- **Full-day pre-kindergarten helps children grow up primed for success**, as do other services that met cuts. These included reading, math, and science initiatives; physical education and fitness programs; and proven school-based drop-out prevention efforts, like the Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program and the Limited English Proficiency Student Success Initiative. Services for students with limited English proficiency, as well as many of the student support services that are critical to students' wellbeing and academic success, met setbacks in the budget.

*Focusing on Early Opportunities & Success
Preventing dropout and failure.*

- These choices will result in displacing costs to local communities, and they carry a high price tag in future budgets. A study by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University found that **the cost to Texas of a single year's class of high school dropouts is up to \$9.6 billion annually** due to lost revenue and outright expenses over their lifetimes.⁶ Critical, cost-effective investments in education, including early education now, would prevent later costs that result from having too many Texans under-educated.

How to Make it Happen

- **Restore funding of the Pre-Kindergarten Early Start (PKES) grant program** to ensure Texas' eligible children have access to the school-readiness preparation they need.
- **Count costs responsibly:** Texas should continue to fund school-based services and pilot programs shown to improve student retention and provide the necessary support to struggling students. The state should engage in forward-thinking budgeting when it comes to preparing our future workforce and should restore funding cut from the public education budget last legislative session.

For more on this strategy: <http://tinyurl.com/whyPreK>

Thinking About Costs

According to a report by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, high quality pre-kindergarten education in Texas returns over **\$3.50** for every **\$1** it requires, thanks to reductions in delinquency and increased earnings and workforce participation. A more recent long-term study of a publicly funded preschool program in Chicago demonstrates consistent and enduring benefits for children who began preschool at age 3 or 4. Higher educational levels, incomes, socioeconomic status, and rates of health insurance coverage—and lower rates of substance abuse and criminal justice system involvement—occurred as a result of having attended preschool. The study's lead researcher found that the returns to society over the lifetime of the child were close to **\$11** for every **\$1** society invests.

Sources

"Thinking about Costs"

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- 2 Gary Scharrer, "Report: Poverty, dropout rates threaten Texas' future," Houston Chronicle Online, June 20, 2010, <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Report-Poverty-dropout-rates-threaten-Texas-1698327.php>.
- 3 U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey; Statistics are for 2010; rankings do not include Washington, D.C.
- 4 Find multiple published works and primers on this subject by Nobel-Prize winning economist James Heckman at <http://www.heckmanequation.org/>.
- 5 Eva DeLuna Castro, Undermining the Texas Economy: The 2012-13 Texas State Budget, The Center for Public Policy Priorities, December 2011, <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=1161>.
- 6 "Dropouts Cost Texas \$9.6 Billion, Finds Texas A&M Study" the Bush School of Government and Public Service, August 25, 2009, <http://bush.tamu.edu/news/index.php/story/69>.

