

Early Childhood Education: Support Early Childhood Professional Development

Position Statement Approved by One Voice: November 14, 2008

Issue/Concern: Child care and early education teachers play a critical role in providing care, education, and guidance to a child. Research clearly demonstrates that increased teacher education has a direct impact on child outcomes. The more qualified and experienced early childhood staff is, the more equipped and knowledgeable they are to effectively provide the needed care and learning environment that positively influences a child's growth. **Presently, Texas requires only 8 clock hours of pre-service training and 15 hours of annual training.** Given that a cosmetologist, or hair stylist, is required to receive at least 1,500 hours of pre-service training (Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations), the 8 hour pre-service training requirement is extremely low. Shockingly so, especially considering the responsibility of a teacher in an infant, toddler or preschool-age classroom and the complexity of the health and safety regulations required by the Child Care Licensing department. Highly educated and fairly compensated early childhood teachers and providers are more likely to develop strong, responsive, interpersonal relationships with their students, promoting children's motivation to learn, social competence and later, school achievement.

Specific Policy Recommendation(s):

- ★ Fund the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) and other professional development models.
- ★ Increase required child care pre-service hours to 40 and provide funding support.
- ★ Increase required annual child care training hours (currently 15) to 24 and provide funding support.
- ★ Fund professional development scholarships with incentives, ex. bonuses and wage enhancements, tied to college course completion or CDA (Child Development Associate).

How does this issue/recommendation relate to prevention and early intervention or maximizing federal funds for health and human services? Investments in quality early education reduce health and human service costs for all Texans. Whenever a family cannot access an early education program at all or must accept a low quality program, that family is at greater risk of needing a wide range of social services and that child is likely to enter Kindergarten behind by up to two years. This can result in additional costs associated with remedial education, criminal justice costs, lower high school graduation rates, and lower literacy rates.

Supporting Facts/Research/Resources:

- ★ The study, "Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications" by Steven Barnett, Ph.D, found that a teacher's formal education and continuing education and training are the most significant indicators contributing to positive student outcomes.
- ★ According to "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Universally-Accessible Pre-Kindergarten Education in Texas" by the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M, every additional dollar spent on raising teacher qualifications produces more gains in student achievement than any other single expenditure.
- ★ In their 2006 Child Care Workforce Report, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) stated that, "Improved training requirements for child care workers will enhance the status and satisfaction of child care professionals, reduce turnover, promote continued education, and facilitate the retention of administrators, teachers and assistants."

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