

Enterprising models of large-scale outreach to parents and communities on early care and education issues

Implementing outreach programs to parents on early care and education issues is going to require a bottom-up approach. Organizing at the neighborhood-community level is critical in order to involve parents and communities on early care for our zero to three constituents. Community organizing for reform on early care is important work at the neighborhood level. It is important to develop one-on-one relationships, in order to mobilize communities and neighborhoods to rally around the importance of early care and education issues. These one-on-one efforts to engage home-base programs, as well as the center-base programs to improve provider-child interactions are hypothesized to contribute to early care in child development. I have been involved at the community-level to organize neighbors and members of the community to rally around education issues, as well as community issues. It does work! Research confirms the positive effects on early care programs on future school success. Organizing involves many entities such as civic clubs, churches, neighborhood clinics, neighborhood centers, pediatrician's offices, neighbors, and stay-at-home parents. This systemic bottom-up approach is important in order for our zero – three constituents to have the level of quality early care, as it relates to their child development and early childhood educational experiences. In closing, I would like to leave you with phrase from Alberto Rodriguez research monograph article title. .We can't forget to *Count the runners who don't have shoes.*

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Felita Wiggins



Texas Association for the Education of Young
Children
PO Box 4997
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To: Texas Early Learning Council members
From: Texas AEYC
Subject: Progress Report T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood ® TEXAS

In May of 2012, we received \$100,000 in funds to expand T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood statewide. Specifically, these funds were to provide scholarships to 20 Teachers and 10 Directors in Center-based programs, 10 Family Child Care Scholarships and 15 Child Development Associate (CDA) Assessment Fee Scholarships. We are happy to provide you with some preliminary statistics of the progress of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood ® Texas thanks to funds from the Texas Early Learning Council:

As of September 1st, we have awarded the following:

18 Scholarships to Center Based Teachers
8 Scholarships to Family Child care Providers
19 CDA Assessment Fee Scholarships

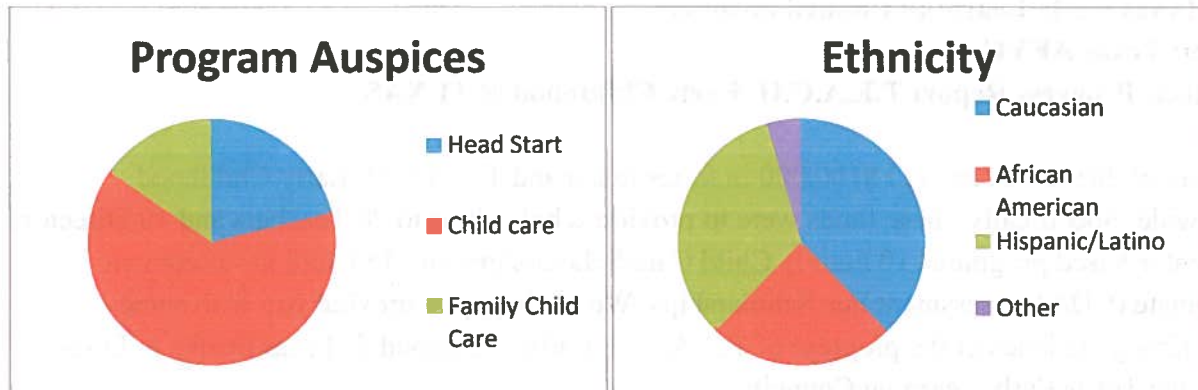
With the remaining funds, we can provide an additional 14 Associates Degree scholarships. We do have some of these awarded but they will be starting school in the spring semester. We have provided more than we had anticipated for CDA Assessment Fee Scholarships. We have not awarded any scholarships to Center Directors as of September 1st. We feel this is primarily due to this being a new scholarship choice and statewide awareness of its availability, however, word is spreading and we anticipate awarding some soon.

Below provide you some of the statistics on Scholars supported by the Texas Early Learning Council:

- Teach Scholars are now located in **17 counties across the state**. This increases our reach by almost 400%
- Scholars are enrolled in Associates degrees programs in **12 community colleges** across the state. This is an **increase of 300%** from previous colleges.
- The 26 Associate degree Scholars (Teachers and Family Child Care Providers) are collectively enrolled in **99 hours of college** for the Fall semester.

- The 45 Scholarship recipients (Associates and CDA) collective care for **512 children** in their classrooms.
- **69%** of those enrolled in Associate degree programs are **first generation college students**.

The charts below show the diversity we are reaching with regard to ethnicity and location of scholars:



Texas AEYC is proud to be able to offer this wonderful program to help raise the level of Quality of those who work with young children and we could not do what we do without the generous investment the Texas Early Learning Council has chosen to make in the Early Childhood Workforce in Texas. Since securing this funding from the Texas Early Learning Council, we have received investments from the Simmons Foundation, Central Texas Workforce and Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments. We continue to advocate for additional funding and are submitting grant requests to foundations, corporations and other to make this program a true public/private partnership.

Thank you again for your support and we will be happy to provide additional details if requested.



TEXASPBS.ORG

Written Public Testimony to the Texas Early Learning Council

Given September 28, 2012

**Kierstan Schwab
Executive Director
Texas PBS**

Good Morning. I am Kierstan Schwab, executive director of Texas PBS. Texas PBS is a non-profit association of the 12 public television stations in Texas and we serve more than 24 million Texans through free, educational television that doesn't require cable. You will probably recognize us as the television stations that bring you Elmo, Big Bird, Curious George and of course are newest spokesman Daniel Tiger. PBS is all of those educational and engaging television shows but it is so much more – it is America's largest classroom – and in that spirit I have come to collaborate with you today.

I have read with interest your 2012 Annual Report and I think there is an opportunity for Texas PBS to partner with the Council to reach out to Texas children and families. We are already working to make parents more aware of the importance of school readiness and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council on its latest outreach initiative. Texas PBS has worked with the Council on its outreach to caregivers through Beginning Education: Early Childcare at Home (also known as BEECH) and we have a track record of working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on outreach campaigns. The most recent was a campaign to make parents, teachers and kids more aware of the learning resources in the eLearning platform called Project Share. I hope we can work together to develop an effective and efficient strategy of outreach to all Texas families with young children but to specifically target the growing number of low-income and at-risk families.

No other media outlet with a focus on early learning is available to all Texas children, including those who can't attend preschool. By leveraging the tremendous power of media, PBS KIDS opens up the world to children in an age-appropriate way. PBS KIDS treats its audience as citizens, not consumers, upholding public media's essential mission to the American public and setting itself apart from commercial broadcasting. PBS is a trusted guide for families of all income levels and is recognized as the number one source of media content for preschool teachers and the number one place parents turn to for preschool video online and on television. Independent research confirms that research-based PBS content helps young children develop critical academic skills, showing that children from economically disadvantaged families benefit most of all.

It is for these reasons that I ask this council to consider a partnership with Texas PBS for Parental Outreach and Communication – one of the key initiatives for the third year of this council. The materials for a successful campaign are already in place through the work of TEA's "Start Early Finish Strong" campaign. Under your direction, we have the ability to tweak that campaign with your targeted message and to air those messages on broadcast television that is available for free and is accessible to 98 percent of Texas homes. With the guidance of the

needs assessment and the campaign that has already been developed, Texas PBS Stations are uniquely positioned to provide an effective outreach initiative to Texas families and caregivers.

Each year, Texas educates more than half a million children from birth to age 5. I know that your goal is to enhance Texas' ability to prepare more children for school. Texas PBS is the best partner to assist the Council with a multimedia and multilingual outreach campaign that can reach all Texans. Texas PBS will work with the Council to determine how we can cost-effectively target the key audiences the council hopes to reach.

Why is PBS a Key Partner in this Initiative?

For the fourth consecutive year¹, the American public has named PBS the most educational media organization, the undisputed leader in children's programming and a trusted and safe place for children to watch television and visit online. Through content that kids, parents, teachers and caregivers value, PBS KIDS helps prepare children for success in school and in life. There are many reasons why PBS should be a key partner in the council's outreach efforts but I would like to quickly point out four important ones:

1. Texas PBS offers the only free television channel that doesn't require cable and broadcasts the most-watched television shows for children ages 2-5, their parents and their caregivers. In addition, kids who watch PBS don't watch other kids television series on commercial or cable television.
2. Texans and Americans trust PBS more than any other media outlet to provide research-based educational programs that teach children important literacy and math skills to prepare them for school.
3. PBS is available to all children. Not all children, particularly low-income children, have access to cable television. In fact, only 53 percent of low-income children subscribe to cable and finally
4. PBS is already a partner in the Council's goal and we also have a mission to prepare all children for success in school and in life.

The TEXAS PBS AUDIENCE

Texas PBS offers the only free television channel that doesn't require cable and broadcasts the most-watched television shows for children ages 2-5, their parents and their caregivers. Seventy-nine percent of all kids ages 2-11 watch PBS (Nielsen NPower, Sept. 18, 2011). For example, CURIOUS GEORGE ranks as the #1 highest-rated children's series on television it posts an impressive 5.0 rating with kids ages 2-5 (up +11% versus last season). CURIOUS GEORGE outperforms all series on Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Nick Jr., CBS, ABC, NBC and CW for kids ages 2-5.

It's also important to note that kids who watch PBS don't watch other children's series on other networks. It is a unique audience. Among Kids 2-5 that watch CURIOUS GEORGE, 69 percent do not tune into Cartoon Network, 68 percent do not tune into Nick Jr., 52 percent do not tune into Nickelodeon, 47 percent do not tune into Disney Channel.

PBS IS NUMBER ONE WITH MOMS

PBS outperforms other children's series on Nickelodeon, Disney, Cartoon Network, Nick Jr., CW, CBS, ABC and NBC with Moms. What differentiates PBS from our cable and network competitors is that parents often view PBS KIDS programs with their children. For example, CURIOUS GEORGE received greater than a 3 rating with women ages 18-49 with kids. It also posts an impressive 2.1 rating with Women ages 18-49 with kids (up 17 percent versus last season). CURIOUS GEORGE is tied as the #2 highest-rated children's series on television with Moms.

TRUST

Texans and Americans trust PBS more than any other media outlet to provide research-based educational programs that teach children important literacy and math skills to prepare them for school. According to a 2012 Study, PBS has been named the most trusted media organization for the ninth year in a row and the number one in public trust compared with other public institutions. Forty-four percent of Americans surveyed ranked PBS higher in public trust than commercial broadcast television, newspapers and even courts of law. Eighty-eight percent of adults surveyed said that PBS is a trusted and safe place for children to watch television (Harris Interactive Survey) compared to 36 percent trust in commercial television and 34 percent in cable.

PBS IS AVAILABLE TO ALL CHILDREN

Not all children, particularly low-income children, have access to cable television. Ninety-eight percent of lower-income children have a television, just 53 percent have access to cable or satellite programming. PBS reaches 98 percent of Texans giving nearly all Texas kids access to what is often the only source of educational television.ⁱⁱ

PBS MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN PREPARING KIDS FOR SCHOOL

PBS is already a partner in the Council's goal and we have a mission to prepare all children for success in school and in life. PBS is known to be the leader in educational attainment and getting kids ready for school both in terms of parent perception and through independent analysis. Parents say PBS helps prepare children for success in school and in life. In a Harris Interactive Survey, 80 percent of those surveyed said PBS helps prepare children for success in school and life. Only 37 percent thought cable was a partner in education and only 30 percent though commercial broadcast television was a partner.

It has been well-documented that more than half of America's children are not prepared to succeed when they enter kindergarten. Research shows that children living in poverty enter kindergarten at an especially high disadvantage, particularly in literacy skills. The 1995 Hart Risley study found that by kindergarten, a child in poverty has heard only 5,000 distinct words, whereas a child from a professional family has heard 20,000 words. The effect of this deficit continues as a child progresses through elementary school – studies show that if a child is not reading on grade level by the 4th grade, he or she will never catch up. Furthermore, 4th grade literacy rates are directly tied to high school dropout rates, which are the most cited predictors of crime, low-income, and reliance on social services. It is this need that led Joan Gans Cooney, who created SESAME STREET, and others who helped create PBS more than 40 years ago to focus on developing educational television that could move the needle and help disadvantaged children. Over the years and through much research, we have learned that our impact goes beyond preparing low-income and minority children, PBS helps all children prepare for school.

In Texas, the number of children under the age of six is growing and along with that growth we are seeing an increase in the number of children born into poverty.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, the number of children needing quality early childhood education and care is rising. We agree with the Council that in a state as large as Texas it is vital for all service providers to establish strong collaboration and coordination efforts.

The total population of Texas is 25,674,681,^{iv} of which 1,951,275 (7.6%) are children under five years of age compared with 6.5 percent of the U.S. population, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Of these children, most of them are receiving care in out-of-home settings, such as child care, Head Start/Early Head Start or Public Pre-Kindergarten. As the council reported in its original grant application, the cost of early education and care programs for children under five is a strong factor that can affect whether young Texans are being cared for in settings that do not promote their healthy development.^v Average fees paid for full-time care for an infant in a family child care home in Texas is approximately \$5,824 a year.^{vi} Only those families who are low income are eligible to receive child care assistance through the Texas Workforce Commission. Head Start and Early Head Start programs are federally funded, but the number of centers is small compared to the amount of demand for their services and they also have strict income eligibility guidelines. Public Pre-Kindergarten programs are state funded for those who qualify, but are only offered in 980 out of the 1,289 school districts in Texas, according to Council data.

Ethnicity and primary language also play key roles in a child achieving success in school, according to Council reports. Overall, Hispanic children are less likely to demonstrate cognitive and literacy readiness skills than white, black, or Asian/Pacific Islander children.^{vii} In Texas, 1,139,854 children under the age of five are Hispanic (almost 50 percent of the total number of Texas children under the age of five)^{viii} and this population has increased over 30 percent since 2000, this being the highest numeric population increase in Texas.^{ix}

In recognition of this growing need in Texas and across the nation, PBS stations have launched a national initiative called PBS KIDS Raising Readers. The goal of this initiative is to surround children ages 2 to 8 with research-based literacy content, with a special focus on children living in poverty. This initiative includes an innovative blend of media across all platforms – television, online, mobile and more – and related community engagement activities designed to help young children learn to read. A 2009 study conducted by Education Development Center Inc. (EDC) and SRI International tested the impact of immersing children and their teachers in PBS KIDS content. The study took place in 80 preschool classrooms with 398 children from low-income families, and combined teacher training with video and online games from SESAME STREET, BETWEEN THE LIONS and SUPER WHY! The study found that preschoolers from low-income communities who participated in the PBS KIDS curriculum outscored their peers who did not participate in the curriculum on all tested measures of early literacy, such as naming letters and knowing their sounds. Furthermore, children who started out with the lowest literacy skills gained the most, learning an average of 7.5 more letters than children in the comparison group.^x Ultimately, the study showed that using PBS KIDS content for both kids and teachers helps build critical literacy skills to better prepare children from low-income communities for success in kindergarten.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has funded the development of the following series: SUPER WHY! MARTHA SPEAKS, THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, and WORDWORLD along with their companion websites. The grant also supported SESAME STREET. These programs were specifically designed following input from the 2000 National Reading Panel and integrated into a literacy framework to address all of the critical skills needed to achieve literacy.

Since its debut in 1969, SESAME STREET has helped children develop early language and literacy skills such as letter knowledge, vocabulary, and reading and writing fundamentals.

WORDWORLD a preschool series that focuses on a place where characters and objects, called Wordfriends, spring to life from the letters that spell their names. The series reinforces the pre-reading concept that letters (and their sounds) make words and that words have real meaning, as well as other literacy concepts such as sounding out letters and rhyming.

SUPER WHY! is an animated preschool series which offers interactive storybook adventures, featuring a team of superhero characters with literacy-based powers, who jump into books to look for answers to everyday problems. The program is built on critical literacy building blocks, including alphabet skills, word families, spelling comprehension and vocabulary.

Research demonstrates that PBS KIDS shows are effectively helping children build key literacy skills. A study by Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania found that viewing SUPER WHY! helps children acquire early literacy abilities that lead to reading

success.^{xi} Children who watched SUPER WHY! scored 46 percent higher on standardized tests than those who did not watch the show – indicating that the children learned from the show and were able to transfer and apply that knowledge.

Research shows that teachers and caregivers who serve low-income communities may themselves not have the training and resources they need to teach early literacy skills. Texas PBS met this challenge by working with the Council and the Children’s Learning Institute to develop the BEECH Course. PBS KIDS is also working on this issue by developing three online professional development courses that specifically address early educator needs (<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/classroom/prek/>):

- *Preparing Preschoolers for Success*
- *Ready to Read and Write with Digital Media*
- *Ready to Spark Word Power*

These courses empower teachers and caregivers to use media to build kids’ literacy skills, and research has shown them to be effective in changing teacher practices to better serve their students. In recent studies of the courses, participants demonstrated impressive gains in both specific skill acquisition and knowledge and understanding of key literacy objectives. For example, in a summative evaluation of Preparing Preschoolers for Success, teachers’ knowledge of early language and literacy development showed statistically significant increases. After completing Ready to Spark Word Power, participant comments indicated a positive impact on their students’ motivation and engagement.^{xii}

The Texas PBS Stations brought this experience in partnership with the Council, Dr. Susan Landry and her team at the Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) as well as WGBH, the station in Boston, to develop the online professional development tool for early childcare providers called BEECH.

The impact of PBS KIDS programs and initiatives has been enhanced greatly through other meaningful national partnerships, as well, with organizations such as Head Start, Teaching and Mentoring Communities, Reach Out and Read, WIC, the Library of Congress, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and many others. These relationships have helped increase access to literacy resources in low-income communities nationwide. PBS KIDS has also developed successful community engagement programs to leverage the initiative’s multimedia content. These activities, which included SUPER WHY! Reading Camps, MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies, PBS KIDS Library Corners, and the PBS KIDS GO! Writers Contest, have had proven impact on improving reading skills for kids.

PBS KIDS set out with a clear mission: to help America’s most-at-risk kids learn to read. Through research-based, engaging content for kids and resources for their parents and caregivers, PBS

KIDS has helped open up the world of letters and words to all children, giving them a greater chance to reach their full potential. PBS KIDS television, online and mobile content, along with teacher training, partnerships and community engagement activities, have led to significant gains, particularly among kids living in poverty. Research shows that this content moves the needle closing the achievement gap – with examples ranging from increasing vocabulary up to 31 percent through the MARTHA SPEAKS Dog Party app, to learning 7.5 more letters by integrating PBS KIDS content in the classroom, and scoring 46 percent higher on standardized tests after watching SUPER WHY!, to name a few. By leveraging the tremendous power of media across all platforms, PBS KIDS is achieving its goal, increasing the odds that more children succeed in school and in life.

I look forward to discussing how Texas PBS can help the council achieve its goals of developing a statewide campaign on school readiness.

ⁱⁱ The “Trust Tracker” study was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive from January 20-24, 2012 among 2,500 adults ages 18 and older.

ⁱⁱ Zero to Eight, Children’s Media Use in America. A Common Sense Media Research Study, Fall 2011, Common Sense Media

ⁱⁱⁱ Texas State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care Application Narrative, 2009.

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau. www.census.gov

^v Texas State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care Application Narrative, 2009.

<http://earlylearningtexas.org/PublicMeetingDocuments/SAC-Grant-Public-Comment.pdf>

^{vi} National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. 2009

^{vii} Child Trends Data Bank. Early School Readiness. www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/104

^{viii} Texas State Data Center. www.txsdcenter.utsa.edu

^{ix} U.S. Census Bureau. www.census.gov

^x Education Department Center Inc. and SRI International, “Summative Evaluation of the Ready To Learn Initiative” 2009.

^{xi} Linebarger, Deborah L., Deborah K. Wainwright and Katie McMenamin, Annenberg School for Communications at the University of Pennsylvania “Summative Evaluation of SUPER WHY!” 2008.

^{xii} Goldenberg, Lauren B. et al. Education Development Center, Inc. “Impact of Raising Readers Online Professional Development Courses on Caregivers and Educators,” 2010.