

Written Public Testimony to the Texas Early Learning Council

Given March 30, 2012

Good Morning. My name is Aaron Carrara, and I am the President of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children. Texas AEYC is a professional organization with nearly 2,000 members who represent all areas of the field of early care and education across our state. We are an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which has more than 90,000 members across the nation and we are home to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] TEXAS Project.

For almost half a century our organization has provided high quality professional development opportunities for the state's early childhood community while broadening public awareness on early care and education issues affecting the lives of Texas children and their families. We are a committed organization that fully understands the significance ongoing training and education play in the development of those that work with young children and we are pleased with the direction in which the Texas early childhood workforce is headed. On behalf of the Texas AEYC Board and staff I would like to thank the Texas Early Learning Council and staff for the tremendous work they have done in facilitating the development of a high quality early childhood system to improve school readiness in our state. The time, talents and resources put forth by this group will serve our youngest Texans, their families and the early childhood workforce extremely well. Additionally I would like to thank the Council members for choosing to invest \$100,000 in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] TEXAS Project. For those unfamiliar with T.E.A.C.H., do not mistake it for a simple scholarship model. T.E.A.C.H. is in fact much, much more. It is an evidence-based initiative that offers a strategy for systematically improving the education, compensation and retention of the early childhood workforce. It helps early childhood practitioners get the most out of their careers by opening a door to higher education – a door that has remained closed, or at most only cracked for many, many years.

Thanks to the Council's investment in the initiative, T.E.A.C.H. will be able to offer scholarships to early childhood professionals on a statewide basis, as opposed to solely in the T.E.A.C.H. TEXAS startup area of Central Texas.

The Council's decision to invest will be one that has a lasting impact. It will allow us to award the following scholarships to the following audiences statewide: 20 Scholarships to center-based Teachers; 10 scholarships to family child care providers; 15 Child Development Associate Assessment Scholarships and for the first time, 10 scholarships to center-based directors. Essentially, educational requirements will be improved for a total of 55 early childhood professionals across the state of Texas.

Specifically, for those recipients awarded an Associate's degree scholarship, these monies will pay for 80% of their tuition and books, a \$75 travel stipend each semester, release time for the recipient to study and completion bonuses for successfully completing 9-15 hours of college credit in a contract year. Research on the T.E.A.C.H. model shows that the provision of release time for T.E.A.C.H. scholars is a vital and necessary component toward ensuring the successful completion of their educational goals. Therefore T.E.A.C.H. assists the sponsoring child care centers by reimbursing them for the release time recipients need for studying and other preparatory work. Part of the contractual agreement between a T.E.A.C.H. scholar and T.E.A.C.H. TEXAS involves the scholarship recipient agreeing to remain at their sponsoring center or home-based program for an additional year, after the completion of a 1-year contract. This component is critical because it helps reduce the immense turnover that plagues our industry. Nationally, turnover rates average around 40% but for those enrolled in the T.E.A.C.H. project, turnover rates have been reduced to less than 10% for 95% of T.E.A.C.H. recipients.

Upon receiving monies from the Early Learning Council, Texas AEYC and its T.E.A.C.H. staff are prepared to begin issuing scholarships to those currently on the T.E.A.C.H. waiting list, with the goal to have all scholarships awarded by the fall 2012 semester. Those receiving a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship will have one year to complete their educational goals, and a one year completion bonus will be issued by August 2013. Recipients will continue to be part of the T.E.A.C.H. process for an additional year after completing coursework

so that T.E.A.C.H. can track and evaluate the employment commitments made to their child care programs.

Like all resources, it is important to maximize them as much as possible. The Early Learning Council's investment will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$90,000 by a matching grant received by the Kresge Foundation, which provided start up moneys to Texas AEYC for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® TEXAS. This matching grant was awarded in January 2011 with 18 months allotted to secure matching funds. Collectively, these dollars along with other donations and fundraising dollars we have received, are improving the efficacy, preparedness and confidence of early childhood professionals while contributing to more meaningful learning experiences for young children in the classroom.

In closing I would like to read you an excerpt from a letter we received from Carla Ransom, TEACH scholar and director of *A Heart for the Children*, which is a licensed Family Childcare Home in Killeen, Texas.

"The TEACH Scholarship has afforded me the opportunity to improve upon my teaching skills and thereby help produce better students for both public and private schools. I am nearing the completion of my degree, and I have noticed that my ability to teach and reach my students has skyrocketed. I have learned techniques that allow me to convey my lesson plans to each of my students, no matter what their background is. I have learned how to bridge cultural gaps, language barriers, and learning disorders. None of my students will be left behind because T.E.A.C.H. did not leave me behind!"

"I am definitely better equipped today as an educator. My arsenal is loaded with teaching techniques that enable me to produce well-rounded students. Why? Because I have been given the opportunity of a lifetime by the TEACH TEXAS Program. This scholarship has given me a brand new outlook on life and my career. I feel more confident than ever. I enjoy what I do and therefore pass my excitement on to my students. Because I am excited about teaching, my students are excited about learning. This has not always been the case. I just want to express my sincerest gratitude to all who have made T.E.A.C.H. a possibility for me.

Thank you again to the Council and to all of you for your support of T.E.A.C.H. Texas. We look forward to sharing more with you very soon.



Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® TEXAS Year 1 Outcomes – 2011

Texas AEYC was awarded the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project in October, 2010 and began issuing scholarships in spring 2011. Our initial budget was roughly \$50,000 from monies raised through fundraisers and donations. In January 2011, Texas AEYC received a matching grant of \$150,000 from the Kresge Foundation to be used for the start-up of T.E.A.C.H. in Texas. Our outcomes show the impact T.E.A.C.H. has in educating the Child Care Workforce in Texas.

CDA Assessment Fee Scholarships – 90% Success rate

Total awarded: 20

Total who received CDA credential: 18

Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree Scholarships – 79% Success rate

Total awarded in 2011: 24

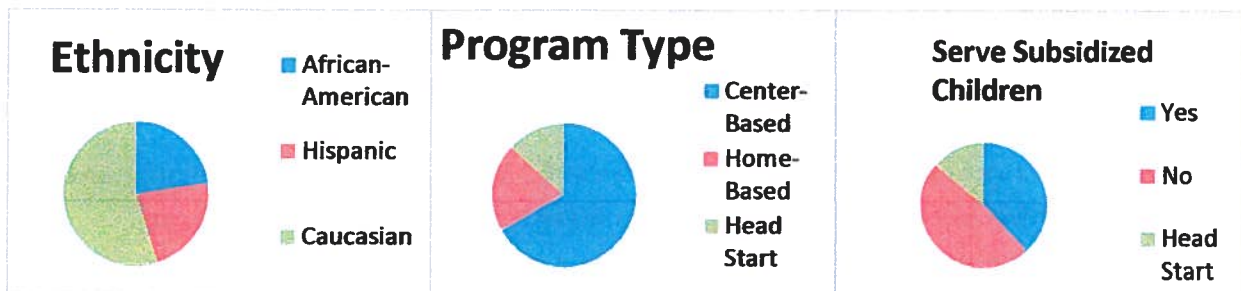
Total still active as of December 2011: 19

Total Number of college Credits completed: 154 Hours

Average GPA: 3.15

Average Hourly rate: \$7.61

T.E.A.C.H. reaches a diversity of people, programs and communities



For more information and to download applications, please visit our website at www.texasaeyc.org

What are our scholars and sponsoring centers saying?

First of all, I am **so excited and truly blessed** to have received the TEACH Scholarship. This scholarship has served to catapult me towards **SUCCESS!** I have always had a strong desire to go back to school to complete my degree; however, the desire was stronger than the ability to find the money that would enable me to do so. Now I am back in school and **feeling better about myself** than I have in a long time. **Everyone associated with me is being affected.** The children that I teach are reaping a magnificent reward because of all that I am learning in class. My family and friends are benefitting because **I am feeling more confident than ever**, and this makes me a better family member and friend. I can't say thank you enough for this blessing. **I would encourage anyone who takes the child care profession seriously to apply.**

~ Carla Ransom, Registered Home provider, Killeen

The classes taught me a lot more than I knew in how to work with children of all kinds. I would like to say Thank You for this opportunity that you have given to me. It has given me a whole **new start on my life and being able to help children as well as my own children.**

~ Melissa McLerran, Toddler Teacher, Cameron

The T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship has been very supportive to my education. The money from the scholarship and support from the T.E.A.C.H. Counselors have pushed me to be a better student. **Everyone should have the chance to receive a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship.** The **paid release time** has been the biggest help for me. As a mother of a young child it is hard to balance school, work, and spending time with my family. The paid release time helped me to get all of this done without having to miss out on something.

~ Sheila Combs, Infant Teacher, Temple

Jackie and Megan (T.E.A.C.H. Counselors) were important to my success. They correspond quickly to any questions and always were encouraging me to strive for excellence in my grades and studies. They represent T.E.A.C.H. with professionalism and care for their students. ~

Tina Contreras, Preschool Teacher, Waco

It is very exciting to have employees who value education.

~ Pamela Neely, Director, The Apple Tree Learning Center, Cameron

We are grateful for the opportunity to have our teacher(s) involved with the TEACH program. The commitment from our center and the teachers make it a terrific opportunity for an enhanced program for excellence in the early childhood learning environment.

~ Rhonda Reynolds, Director, Thomas Arnold Activity center, Salado

For more information and to download applications, please visit our website at

www.texasaeyc.org