

PRE-K: SETTING KIDS UP FOR SUCCESS

The relationship between school success and economic status is present as early as kindergarten, and unfortunately, kids who start behind tend to stay behind. Low-income kids consistently lag behind their non-low income peers in the four areas of child development (social-emotional, language and communication, early literacy, and mathematics) that define kindergarten school readiness. Well-funded, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs have been shown to substantially shrink the school readiness gap, giving our most vulnerable kids a greater chance to succeed.

Currently, Texas school districts offer half-day, voluntary pre-K for four-year-olds who are low income, have limited English proficiency, are in foster care, or meet other measures of need. Studies show that kids who attend high quality pre-K have higher high school graduation rates, lower rates of teen pregnancy, and fewer run-ins with juvenile justice. They also routinely do better on standardized reading and math tests. Benefits of pre-K also extend well into adulthood—adults who attended pre-K earn more, are less likely to be arrested for violent crimes, and have higher rates of employment.

Investing in pre-K benefits kids, and it financially benefits the state in the long run. A recent study shows that for every dollar invested in high-quality pre-K, \$3.50 is saved by the state of Texas, while another study indicated a 7 to 10 percent annual return on investment in pre-K. These returns are linked, in part, to kids who are better prepared for their K-12 education (e.g. lower retention rates), a lower crime rate, and decreases in participation in public programs.



*LOW INCOME KIDS WHO ATTENDED PRE-K ARE **2.1 TIMES MORE LIKELY** TO BE SCHOOL READY THAN LOW-INCOME KIDS WHO DID NOT.*



EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN PRE-K SAVES TEXAS A MINIMUM OF \$3.50.

Texas missed the mark on 8 out of 10 Pre-K quality standards.

- Teacher BA
- Teacher specialized pre-k training
- Asst. teacher: Child Dev. Assoc. credential
- Class size ≤ 20
- Staff-child ratio $\leq 1:10$
- Health screenings/referrals
- Min. 1 meal/day
- Reg. site visits by state/local agency
- Comprehensive early learning standards
- Teacher in-service ≥ 15 hrs/yr

However, to get the highest return on investment, pre-K must meet the level of quality our kids deserve. Unfortunately, Texas is ranked last in the nation in terms of pre-K quality. Pre-K funding can help improve quality by providing smaller class sizes and highly trained teachers.

WE DARE TEXAS!

By sufficiently investing in our public schools, we ensure that more kids have a better shot at success in school and in life. Investing in students now means a happier, healthier, and better prepared Texas workforce in the future. We dare Texas to fund public education at a level adequate to meet student need and Texas constitutional requirements.

WE (DOUBLE) DARE TEXAS!

Access to high-quality pre-k is essential for helping Texas kids grow up happily and successfully. We dare Texas to expand half-day pre-k to full-day pre-k for low-income and other eligible kids, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn. We dare Texas to plan long-term, and enrich kids' minds now so that they can grow into thriving adults in the future.

