

Pre-Kindergarten

The Texas Catholic Conference **supports increased access to public and private pre-kindergarten programs.**

Society has an interest in the education and the well being of our children. It is in everyone's best interest that future generations of Texans receive a good education that prepares them to be contributing members of society. Quality Pre-Kindergarten programs start children off on the right step – increasing their chances for high school and college graduation, and decreasing their chances of crime and poverty.

A Texas Bishop Speaks:

"Many Texas children begin school far behind their more affluent peers because they do not have the same access to the high-quality early learning experiences. This achievement gap starts before children enter school and only grows wider. We must make high-quality pre-k available to provide all Texas children an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life."



-Bishop James Tamayo, Diocese of Laredo

Church Teaching

- ★ The function exercised by the school in society has no substitute; it is the most important institution that society has so far developed to respond to the right of each individual to an education and, therefore, to full personal development; it is one of the decisive elements in the structuring and the life of society itself...Every school, and every educator in the school, ought to be striving to form strong and responsible individuals, who are capable of making free and correct choices, thus preparing young people " to open themselves more and more to reality, and to form in themselves a clear idea of the meaning of life. (*Congregation for Catholic Education Lay Catholics in School: Witnesses to Faith*)
- ★ Our nation was conceived as a place wherein all people could exercise their basic human rights in an atmosphere of freedom. Among these rights is equal access to educational opportunities and resources so that each person can fully develop his or her potential. (*Educational Opportunity for All, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops*)
- ★ During childhood and adolescence a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student's formation an when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, life-styles and day to day behavior." (*Congregation for Catholic education, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*)
- ★ The presence of the Church in the field of education is wonderfully manifested in the vast and dynamic network of schools and educational programs extending from the preschool through the adult years. (*Pope John Paul I, Address to Catholic educators in New Orleans, 1987.*)

Resources

- ★ **Early Childhood Initiatives** Texas Education Agency (www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=4696)
- ★ **The Children's Learning Institute** University of Texas Health Science Center (www.childrenslearninginstitute.org)
- ★ **National Institute for Early Education Research** Rutgers Graduate School of Education (www.nieer.org)

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

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Access to Pre-Kindergarten

Cascading Effect of Enhanced Early Childhood Education and Development: A Life Course Perspective

- Ready for kindergarten ▼
- Successful start in school ▼
- Fewer behavioral problems ▼
 - More rewarding interpersonal relationships ▼
 - More successful learning ▼
 - Less tobacco and drug use ▼
 - Less delinquency and truancy ▼
 - Less juvenile justice encounters ▼
 - Higher high school graduation rates ▼
 - Higher rate of entrance to and completion of college ▼
 - Higher inventory and flexibility of job skills ▼
- Better jobs ▼
- More durable family life ▼
- Higher income ▼
- More upward social mobility ▼
- Greater engagement in civic life ▼

Better Health and Well-Being

The Texas Catholic Conference recognizes the need for available high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for children in order that they achieve their full potential in adulthood and contribute to the growth and well-being of our society. In addition to meeting the TEA standards, we support limits to maximum class size of 20 or lower, a 1:10 or better staff-child ratio, and a requirement that assistants have a CDA or equivalent, and that sites receive regular visits.

Early Childhood Education¹

The learning experiences of the preschool years can influence the rest of a child's life. This early period in development provides a foundation that guides children academically, socially, and emotionally. The exposures, opportunities, and guidance a 3- or 4-year-old is given contribute greatly to the person he or she will become as an adult. A simple illustration of the cascading effects (chart right) of positive early childhood experiences demonstrates how such experiences can alter children's circumstances for the rest of their lives—in essence, it illustrates the positive change in a child's life trajectory.

Investing in Education

Investment in our young children's development can yield a high public return. In fact, the return on this investment has been described as "extraordinary, resulting in better working public schools, more educated workers, and less crime." The amount of funding needed to cover all unmet need may stagger both the mind and the pocketbook—but the alternatives are much more grim and much more expensive. According to some estimates, the national cost of failing to provide at least two years of early childhood education totals \$100,000 for each child born into poverty—a cost of roughly \$400 billion for all poor children

currently under the age of 5.

These estimates of "national cost" relate to the individual and social consequences of children left behind in the educational system. [Studies that] provide insight into how the benefits of early childhood education play out over the life course...estimate that for every dollar spent on early childhood education and development programs, \$7 to \$8 are returned to individuals and to society. Of the many possible categories of benefit, the most well-documented include higher individual incomes for participants, increased tax revenues, reduced school expenditures (due to reduced grade retention and special education), and reduced criminal justice expenditures. Keep in mind that not all possible benefits, such as improved health (reduced healthcare expenditures) or reduced welfare spending, for example, are accounted for. The \$7 to \$8 return likely is a conservative estimate. Additionally, benefits are calculated at age 21 of the participants, so the scope of benefits, such as increased earning potential and college attendance (many would not yet have graduated college), have not yet been fully realized.

(Last updated August 13, 2010, 82nd Legislative Session)

¹ Landry, Ph.D., Susan H. *Effective Early Childhood Programs: Turning Knowledge into Actions*. Rep. University of Texas Houston Health Science Center, Texas Program for Society and Health, The James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, 2006. Web. 13 Aug. 2010. <www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/documents/effective-early-childhood-programs.pdf>.

