



News Release

For Immediate Release
September 25, 2007

Contact: Holly Barnes Higgins, 202.862.9863, hhiggins@preknow.org
Tina Trenkner, 202.862.9874, ttrenkner@preknow.org

National Report: Politics Messes with Texas' Pre-K Momentum

Despite anticipated increase, legislators overlook quality and funding measures

(Washington, DC) – Texas legislators are criticized for sending mixed messages in “Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2008,” a national report released today by Pre-K Now. The annual state-by-state analysis of legislative support for pre-k highlights the state legislature’s failure to address the need for improved program quality due to political infighting in Austin.

“While Texas serves more 4-year-olds than any other state, the program quality is nothing to be proud of,” said Libby Doggett, executive director for Pre-K Now. “Unfortunately, legislators focused on political battles instead of capitalizing on an opportunity to improve the quality of one of the lowest quality pre-k programs in the nation.”

Thirty-six states increased funding for pre-k, a number that breaks last year’s record of 34, and far exceeds the FY05 record of 15. Eight of these states, including Texas, anticipate increases through the school funding formula. A total of 528 million total new dollars will allow at least 88,000 more children to attend pre-k. Seven states are now providing or phasing in pre-k for all children and three states moved to fully fund pre-k for all eligible at-risk children.

Additional report findings include:

- A total of \$4.8 billion in state funds will be spent in FY08 nationally —a \$2 billion increase in three years;
- Texas is one of only seven states with no limit on class size;
- Just one state, Florida, decreased pre-k funding;
- Iowa and Pennsylvania had the highest increases at 241 and 135 percent, respectively; and
- Ten states still do not have pre-k programs, resulting in over 500,000 3- and 4-year-old children without access to quality, state-funded pre-k settings that have been proven to help all children.

“While expanding pre-k access is a good goal, it only matters if those programs are of high quality,” said Texas State Senator, Leticia Van de Putte. “This session gave a mixed message: while pre-k for all is valuable, the quality of programs is not a high enough priority. Only by supporting quality measures can we expect pre-k to truly improve educational outcomes.”

A PDF of the report can be accessed at: www.preknow.org/documents/legislativereport_Sept2007.pdf

###

Pre-K Now collaborates with state advocates and policymakers to lead a movement for high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. The following funders contribute to making this important work possible: The Pew Charitable Trusts, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, RGK Foundation, CityBridge Foundation, PNC Financial Services Group, and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey.