



## Great Schools: Great Texas

### Part III – Great Start: Great Texas

Every Texas child deserves a great academic start. Early childhood is the best time to establish learning foundations. An early education helps to ensure that students from all backgrounds begin to cultivate the skills that will last the rest of their lives.

Wendy Davis knows that high-quality early education is the best investment we can make in the future of Texas. *Great Start: Great Texas* highlights Senator Davis' commitment to expanding pre-K and early childhood education to Texas children.

Great Start: Great Texas includes two key components:

- **Ensures that every eligible Texas child has access to high-quality, full-day Pre-K.**
  - Ensures that school districts across the state are offering students high-quality, full-day Pre-K.
  - Expands eligibility for Pre-K programs beyond the most in-need students by implementing a sliding scale for families above the 185% federal poverty level.<sup>1</sup>
  - Works with the Texas Education Agency to establish a system of grants and special designation awards to support and promote the Pre-K programs that demonstrate the most effective preparation of children for continued learning.
  - Establishes appropriate quality standards for Pre-K programs so that students are receiving the highest-quality instruction.
  
- **Promotes early-childhood reading so that every student is reading at grade-level by the third grade.**
  - Works to improve professional development and training so teachers are equipped with the most effective techniques for maximizing reading comprehension.
  - Restores resources to school districts so that they can rebuild the community of teachers' aides that was lost after the massive school funding cuts of 2011.
  - Encourages schools to actively promote early childhood reading through partnerships with community organizations and other collaborative approaches, such as encouraging older students to work with younger students on reading skills.

Senator Davis' first education proposal, *Great Teachers: Great Texas*, will help recruit, train, and retain high quality Texas teachers. Her second, *Great Pathways: Great Texas*, will make college more accessible for Texans through dual credit programs.

Texas has had pre-K for three decades, but nearly 7 in 10 low-income students are not enrolled. And the state funds just three hours a day of learning. Findings show that high-quality, full-day pre-K initiatives deliver a major boost in math and reading scores and improve “non-cognitive skills” like concentration, teamwork, and long-term planning.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013, 185% of the federal poverty level equals an annual income of \$43,567 for a family of four.