

# Act Now for Our Future 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

#ActNowForOurFuture



#FundPreKTheRightWay #StopTheYoYo

INVEST

## Fund Pre-K the Right Way

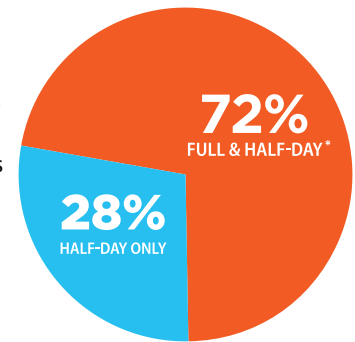
Raise Your Hand Texas® believes all children, regardless of family background, deserve a fair shot at success in school and in life. Full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten gives them that opportunity.

### How can Texas fund pre-K the right way?

Texas educators know the value of full-day, high-quality pre-K, and overwhelming evidence confirms it can pave the way for student success. In the 2016-17 school year, more than 211,000 eligible three- and four-year-old Texas students were enrolled in optional public school pre-K.<sup>1</sup> Yet our system only funded these students halfway. In the past, the state made up for this lack of full support by funding numerous pre-K expansion grants, but that funding was inconsistent and is now nonexistent. Now is the time for the state to fund pre-K the right way, with consistent, formula funding for a full-day, high-quality program.

### Districts Already Know the Value of Full-Day Pre-K

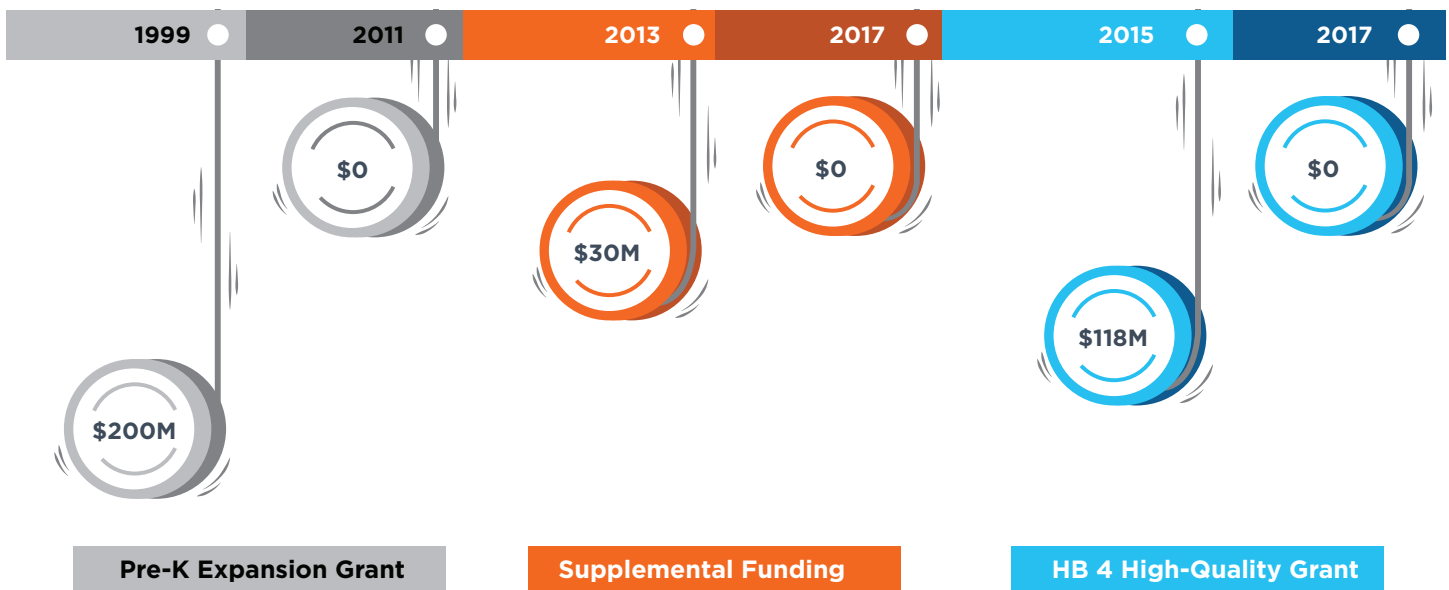
Over 750 districts offer full-day pre-K. These districts make the commitment to supplement the half-day state program with local funding, at the expense of other district programs and budget demands.



\* Not all school districts offer full-day pre-K at all campuses.

## The Yo-Yo Effect: Inconsistent Investments in Pre-K Expansion

Optional half-day pre-K for eligible students has been funded through the Foundation School Program since 1985. Despite the success of pre-K and calls to expand it, the state has been inconsistent in its support of pre-K expansion grant initiatives in the past 20 years.<sup>3</sup>



## Why is it important to start early with full-day, quality pre-K?

To build a strong future, you have to invest in a strong foundation. For eligible students<sup>4</sup>, a half-day in the classroom is simply not enough. Decades of research concludes high-quality pre-K has a measurable, positive impact on kindergarten readiness.<sup>5</sup> It also acclimates young learners to the school environment and provides early literacy and math skills. In addition, pre-K provides opportunities for working families to access quality pre-K for their children, and a full-day program is essential to these families.

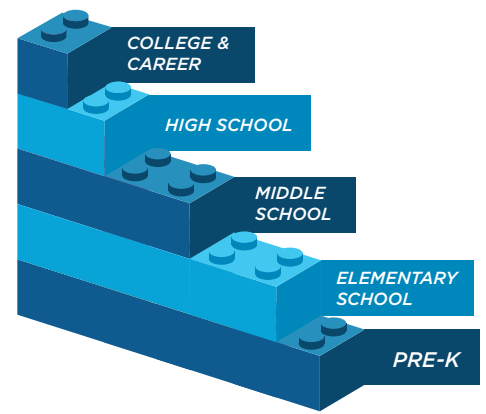


For low-income children, those for whom English is not spoken at home, or children who are significantly behind, more exposure to high-quality pre-K is critical to achieving learning gains. That is, more dosage of pre-K, particularly when it meets standards for quality, is more likely to close skills gaps than smaller doses.<sup>6</sup>

— Dr. Robert Pianta,  
Dean, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

## Pre-K Gives Students a Step-Up

To have the best chance for success at college and career, Texas students need a solid foundation built on a full-day, quality pre-K program.



## What makes a pre-K program high quality?

Quality programs typically consist of at least 6-6.5 hours per day, 5 days a week, for at least 180 days.<sup>6</sup> Additional funding for pre-K would allow districts to provide lower adult/student ratios, appropriate professional development, and quality progress monitoring. Since pre-K standards are not currently part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), adoption of quality curriculum standards is also critical.

## Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Provide formula funding for high-quality, optional full-day pre-K for currently eligible students.



## References

- <sup>1</sup> TPEIR (Texas Public Education Information Resource) *Texas Public Pre-Kindergarten Programs State Data 2016-17*. <http://www.texaseducationinfo.org/>
- <sup>2</sup> Dugyala, R. (2019) *The Texas Legislature took away \$118 million in pre-K funding. Now districts are scrambling*. Retrieved from *Texas Tribune* <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/03/27/texas-schools-lost-pre-k-funding-districts-scrambling/>
- <sup>3</sup> Legislative Budget Board, General Appropriations Acts, 76th - 85th Legislatures.
- <sup>4</sup> Eligible students include children who are economically disadvantaged, English language learners, children of military, in foster care, homeless, and children of Star of Texas recipients. Texas Education Code, §29.153.
- <sup>5</sup> Phillips, D., et al. (2017) *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects* Retrieved from [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke\\_prekstudy\\_final\\_4-4-17\\_hires.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke_prekstudy_final_4-4-17_hires.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Pianta, R. *Pre-Kindergarten for the Modern Age: A Scaleable, Affordable, High-Quality Plan for Texas* Retrieved from [https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PreK\\_ResearchReport.pdf](https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PreK_ResearchReport.pdf)