



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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April 1, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TSTA President Rita Haecker delivered the following remarks today.

TSTA: Pre-kindergarten works for children; Abbott doesn't

Good morning. I'm Rita Haecker, President of the Texas State Teachers Association.

When I started my career, I taught first grade here in Austin, and I know, without question, that early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs provide a foundation that shapes a child's career in school and in life.

I have been in the classroom, working with young children, and Greg Abbott hasn't. We have great pre-K teachers now, but we *don't have* a commitment from the state to provide pre-K for all the children who need it. And what we don't need is the vague tinkering Greg Abbott is using as an excuse to deny the resources needed to expand pre-K.

Research has consistently shown pre-kindergarten really does make a difference. Full-day pre-K has a greater impact than half-day. And, pre-K is especially promising in closing the achievement gap for Hispanic and African American children, according to a brief issued by the National Education Policy Center on the academic and financial benefits of universal preschool programs.

Long before Greg Abbott tried to defend the status quo with his mythical "gold standard" that would provide pre-K funding for only a select few, Wendy Davis offered a "Great Start" plan that recognizes every child is worth his or her weight in gold.

The only guarantee in Greg Abbott's plan is more standardized tests - starting with tests for four-year-old kids. Seriously?

In pre-K, four-year-olds learn to work with each other, acquire basic skills and embrace the joy of learning. The last thing they need is the frustration of testing that reduces learning to coloring in the bubble. Standardized tests don't promote creativity or develop the skills students need at any level – and certainly not for four-year-olds.

Meanwhile, here's a test for Greg Abbott. If you're serious about pre-K and "waste," stop going to court to defend the \$200 million cut from pre-K programs and settle the school finance lawsuit.

Stop giving lip service to pre-K by proposing a "so-called" plan that is little more than a poor excuse to deny early childhood opportunity to the children who need it most.

Wendy Davis has a real plan to expand pre-K and improve education. Greg Abbott's plan fails the test.

Here is a link to the National Education Policy Center brief on the benefits of preschool programs:

<http://nepc.colorado.edu/newsletter/2012/11/options-early-education>