



The Dallas ISD Board of Trustees has taken the following action on items related to:

Expanding High Quality Early Childhood Education

January 28, 2016

- *Consent Item 8.02 – Approve Revised Board Policy EHBG (Local)*

✓ Passed 7-0

✓ Supports Student Achievement

Yes: Solis, Micciche, Bingham, Blackburn, Cowan, Flores, Nutall

Abstain: Foreman

August 27, 2015

- *Item 10.18- Contract with SMU for research and observation in EC classrooms using the CLASS tool*

✓ Passed 7-2

✓ Supports Student Achievement

Yes: Solis, Micciche, Bingham, Blackburn, Cowan, Flores, Morath

No: Nutall, Foreman

May 28, 2015

- *Item 11.5- Contract for Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs & Services*

✓ Passed 7-2

✓ Supports a High-Quality Talent Pipeline

Yes: Solis, Micciche, Bingham, Blackburn, Cowan, Flores, Morath

No: Nutall, Foreman

- *Item 11.6 –Contract for Nationally Accredited Childcare Providers to Offer Pre-Kindergarten Services for Three Years*

✓ Passed 9-0

✓ Supports Student Achievement

Yes: Solis, Micciche, Bingham, Blackburn, Cowan, Flores, Morath, Nutall, Foreman

- *Item 11.7- Contract with Teachstone for Proprietary Materials Related to the Class System for Measuring and Improving Adult-Student Interaction in Early Childhood Classrooms*

✓ Passed 7-1

✓ Supports a High-Quality Talent Pipeline

Yes: Solis, Bingham, Blackburn, Cowan, Flores, Morath Nutall

No: Foreman

Not Present: Micciche

Summary

These votes represent support for key enablers of the district's Early Childhood education services. In the May 28th meeting, agenda items 11.5, 11.6, and 11.7 allow for key components of the district's EC initiative to be realized. Agenda Item 11.5 establishes home visiting programs and services that will support children 0-5 years old aimed at helping parents deliver quality early experiences. Adoption of Agenda Item 11.6 authorizes contracts with nationally accredited childcare providers, in order to bridge capacity gaps for all eligible 3 and 4-year-old Pre-K students. Agenda Item 11.7 is for a contract with Teachstone, a company that provides tools that improve adult-student interaction. In August, the board approved a contract with SMU that allows for observation and professional development using the CLASS tool, which is aimed at improving teacher-to-student interactions. Consent Agenda Item 8.02 from January 2016 approved a new policy offered as a way to fully institutionalize the long-term continued execution of the administration's strategic plan for the Pre-K aged students.

Background, Context, and Board Action

Dallas ISD has prioritized ECE in recent years and created the Department of Early Childhood in the Fall of 2013. In Fall 2014, the district rolled out a plan to address the critical need for improved ECE by accessing “four key levers”¹:

- Increase access to Pre-K
- Boost parental demand
- Improve Pre-K quality
- Extend “continuum of care” (Family/Community Alignment)

In support of this plan the ECE department presented three contracts to the board in the May 2014 Meeting, Bernadette Nutall and Joyce Forman voted no against the contract for Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs (11.5). Their rationale was based on what they saw as the lack of a plan or clear goals for the program. The contract for partnering with accredited private providers (11.6) passed unanimously. The contract for partnering with Teachstone was opposed by Joyce Foreman. She questioned district officials for more information but provided no clear reason for vote against the motion. In August, Foreman and Nutall also voiced opposition to the SMU contract under agenda item 10.8. The board members were concerned about equity, the privacy of the students, and wanted more information about how the tool would be used.

Discussion

The contracts presented to the board are aligned with the comprehensive strategy the administration outlined in October which states that “the district shall work to expand the network of high quality early childhood programs used by children before entering kindergarten, whether operated by the District or by partners”. Home visiting programs serve to extend the continuum of care that is key for ensuring kids arrive at school ready to learn, and not behind. Studies show the achievement gap between low-income children and their high-income peers stems from a lack of kindergarten readiness, which means low-income students start school behind and have to play catch-up.² The district is making strides to increase access to Pre-K as evidenced by the Interim bridge plan, and partnering with already established providers increases immediate access to high quality ECE. The partnership with Teachstone is an effort to improve the quality of ECE programs. The company provides research-based tools that assess teachers and help them develop better interactions with their students, which has been shown to be an important indicator of future student achievement.

¹ DISD Early Childhood Strategy: Board Briefing Presentation Oct. 2014

² For one such study, see: Loeb, S., & Bassok, D. (2007). Early childhood and the achievement gap. In H.F. Ladd & E.B. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy* (pp. 517-534). Routledge Press. Accessed: <http://cepa.stanford.edu/content/early-childhood-and-achievement-gap>

This study finds significant differences in cognitive abilities between children entering kindergarten from high socioeconomic backgrounds and peers from low socioeconomic background (similar gaps exist along racial lines).