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TEXAS HEAD START COLLABORATION PROJECT • SPRING 1995 • TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

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## The crusade for a career development system

**T**he Texas Head Start Collaboration Task Force has identified key priority issues in its legislative agenda. The agenda includes a proposed career development system for early care and education practitioners.

Most would agree that well-trained, educated staff in early care and education programs are crucial for the proper development of young children and support for families. However, there is a shortage of qualified providers, due largely to the lack of professional status and rewards associated with the job. A 1993 Caregiver Status Survey conducted by the Texas Center for Social Work Research found that many caregivers enter the field with little or no training. To compound matters, there is no systematic career track or credential system to encourage skill advancement.

The Project is working in concert with other state stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive, statewide career development system for the people who care for and educate Texas children. The Task Force's legislative recommendations call for increased state support and regulations of early childhood training and for the development of

a system which includes:

- Professional standards for roles and training;
- Coordinated and articulated training;
- Professional registry for practitioners and trainers; and
- Certification of early care and education trainers.

Further, local initiatives are taking shape statewide. The Work/Family Program of the First Texas Council of Camp Fire in Fort Worth has created a comprehensive, collaborative development plan for family support through high quality child care systems. Utilizing an interagency network, the system includes professional development for child care providers, family support services for working parents, community education and research. A community-based training, research and lab school facility has been built to house the programs. A simulated family child care home, a training classroom overlooking the child care center infant room and observation areas adjoining each classroom provide unique, individualized opportunities for entry-level to post-doctoral trainees.

In Austin, career development efforts center around a proposed "Ready-Set" curriculum for entry-level trainees in early care and

education. The training would require about seven hours per week, including classroom lectures, workshops, group and individual assignments and demonstration exercises. The pre-professional sequence will meet the new Department of Protective and Regulatory Services' requirements for entry-level practitioners and also prepare individuals for CDA, AA and BS degree programs.

Advocates of career development are encouraged by the vast support on the state and local levels. Many state agencies and organizations have pledged support for career development efforts. Legislative initiatives from the Turner Commission on Children and Youth provide direct support for career development efforts as well. ●

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## Director's Corner

—NHTSA creates new partnerships

Greetings! Children and families can look forward to more quality early care and education programs thanks to mandates set forth in the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 1994 which call for increased collaboration in all Head Start programs.

The new law has inspired states to increase efforts to develop collaborative projects that improve service delivery. Currently, the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project is finalizing two Memorandum of Understandings to define and enhance working relations among state agencies. At the national level, the National Head Start Association (NHTSA) created several new partnerships that will broaden services to Head Start families.

Thanks to funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation, NHTSA funded 67 local Head Start collaborative initiatives and embarked on joint ventures with the following:

- **National Mental Health Association**--The goal is to expand mental health services to Head Start families and focus on training for staff and families.
- **Healthy Families America, National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse**--Healthy Families America helps to assure that new parents get off to a good start through a volunteer Home Visitation Program. The program will serve as a resource for Head Start families through this partnership.
- **Reading is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF)**--This partnership will build on the other Head Start/RIF collaborative agreements already in place. The goal is to identify needs, secure resources, highlight best practices and develop materials and programs.
- **Office of Educational Research and Improvements, U.S. Department of Education**--NHTSA will assist with the validation of an instrument for planning and assessing the quality of early childhood transition programs.
- **National Parent Teacher Association**--This partnership will provide joint funding and technical assistance to three states to support a local pilot in each state as well as state-level parent training activities. The Texas Parent Teacher Association, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project are applying for this grant.

NHTSA presented a user-friendly, step-by-step collaboration guide to the state and regional Head Start associations in 1994 to facilitate the smooth creation of more partnerships. Those interested in obtaining a copy of the guide should contact the National Head Start Association, 201 North Union Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

With all the early care and education initiatives underway, this year promises to be truly exciting! ●

—Gwen Chance, Project Director

## Briefings...

The National Task Force on Head Start and Mental Health presents findings and recommendations in its report, *Strengthening Mental Health in Head Start: Pathways to Quality Improvement*. Concerns about stress and depression in families have led to an increased focus on mental health in Head Start.

The recommendations are designed to:

- Integrate more of a family support/mental health perspective into the day-to-day Head Start program;
- Enhance staff skills in dealing with challenging behaviors of children and complex stresses on families;
- Create new opportunities for the Head Start community to develop greater mental health/family support expertise; and
- Facilitate collaboration within Head Start and with the broader mental health/family support networks.

As a follow-up to the report, the Task Force is identifying promising programs and training or policy initiatives that address family support/mental health issues.

**Applications for the Early Head Start Program, a new initiative for children ages 0-3, are expected to be released in early 1995.** This presents an new opportunity for Head Start grantees to collaborate with other early childhood programs such as teenage education programs, Even Start and others to provide a full range of services (i.e., teen parent services, literary services). To receive a program announcement and performance standards, write to the Early Head Start Program, Head Start Bureau, P.O. Box 1182, Washington, D.C. 20013. ●



# Making connections!

—Fort Worth initiative connects school children and their families to health and human services

**J**immy is a six-year-old student in Fort Worth who at one point may have been considered a "problem child."

*Excessive absences and behavioral problems led to several visits to the principle's office each week.*

*The Tarrant County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Preservation Team was called in to evaluate Jimmy. Subsequently, Jimmy was found to be suffering from depression. Treatment, including off-site play therapy, have turned things around. His school reports that Jimmy's behavior has improved markedly and he had no absences within the school six weeks period.*

Families today face complex issues resulting from increasing demands in the workplace and decreasing supports in the community. The stress often affects the way our children develop. Child advocates have long recognized the need for a comprehensive, community-based support network which serves the needs of the "whole" child beginning at birth in order to maximize the child's health and learning potential.

One model initiative in Fort Worth is doing just that.

"Linking the child and family to school and community" is the motto of CONNECTIONS.

It is a collaborative initiative for young children and their families sponsored by the Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce and various health and human service providers. CONNECTIONS, which serves children in pre-kindergarten through second grade, offers a

developmentally appropriate curriculum and links families and children to health and social services at 13 elementary schools.

Some of the schools have on-site coordinators to help with the delivery of services. School-based or school-linked services at each site may include:

- Dental screenings and treatment;
- Preventive health services;
- Psychological evaluations; and
- Eye glass prescriptions.

Schools must apply to be a CONNECTIONS school and are

throughout Texas, with the largest being operated by the Fort Worth Independent School District. The goal of the program is to enhance and develop the parenting skills of first-time parents through the child's first three years.

Unique aspects of this program include parenting workshops and parenting materials for use in the home. Another home-based program helps to facilitate the transition from the Parents as Teachers program to the four-year-old prekindergarten program.



Fort Worth classroom offers parenting and child guidance skills

selected based on factors such as faculty commitment and parental involvement.

The Parents as Teachers program is also part of the CONNECTIONS initiative. Currently, Parents as Teachers is offered in 60 communities

For more information call the Early Childhood Education Division of Fort Worth ISD at (817) 871-2523. ●



Head Start's success is the result of a unique marriage of "hard" and "soft" dimensions. The hard dimensions are most visible and identifiable. The soft dimensions are those subtle characteristics of Head Start which form a "compassionate partnership" between each parent and the Head Start staff.

The structure of Head Start is an example of a hard dimension. The program's structure represents one of the very few publicly-funded partnerships between the federal government and local community. Federally, Head Start is managed by a relatively small number of employees, therefore much of the innovation and decision-making takes place locally. Many feel this aspect contributes to the flexibility and appropriateness of each Head Start program. Other hard dimensions which contribute to the success of Head Start include: 1. **Mission**—clearly defined and long-standing; contributes to a sense of oneness and personal responsibility for all Head Start staff from cooks to classroom teachers. 2. **Regulations**—federal and state; define, shape and make Head Start accountable to certain standards; allows considerable local flexibility in program design and service delivery. 3. **Systems**—comprehensive; assures the delivery of educational, health, nutrition, parental involvement, disability and transportation services.

The hard dimensions are necessary, but insufficient factors in the success of Head Start. It is the soft dimensions which result in the development of a "compassionate partnership" between each parent and Head Start staff. This compassionate

partnership is the secret to Head Start's success.

The compassionate partnership develops when all of the following eight factors are present: 1. **Trust**. Head Start agencies are trusted by low-income parents. Most recruitment is by word-of-mouth referrals from people who have developed trust in Head Start. 2. **Compassion**. Head

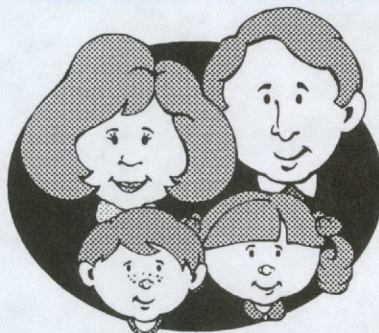
use lots of music, activity and movement. 5. **Child-focused curriculum**. While strengthening parenting skills and enabling parents to solve their own problems is a goal of Head Start, the focus of the program is on the child. This gives the parent privacy. After trust develops between parent and staff, the parent is more likely to voluntarily work on their own problems. 6. **Consumer-oriented policy**. Every program must have a Policy Council made up of at least 50% parents of enrolled Head Start children. Programs are reviewed, monitored and approved by the Policy Council. More than 40% of staff are current or former Head Start parents. 7. **Psychological contract**. Each program is expected to work closely with each family to identify needs and ways to meet those needs. This encourages a comprehensive, holistic approach to helping families. 8. **Persistence**. Staff keep phoning, visiting and trying to keep families involved because they care. Persistence wears down resistance.

As legislators, educational leaders, agency staff and Head Start professionals seek to expand Head Start or apply Head Start principles to other programs, they must understand *what* makes the program work. There must be a marriage of these dimensions with the soft dimensions that establish a compassionate partnership between staff and families.

There are no partial answers.

Questions regarding this excerpt may be directed to Dr. Tim Nolan at the Institute for Innovation in Human Services. Call 414-548-8080 or write to P.O. Box 27693, Milwaukee, WI 53227. Ask about other related publications! ●

## THE SECRET BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF HEAD START



Excerpted with permission from  
***What Really Makes Head Start Work?***  
***You May be Surprised! by***  
**Dr. Tim Nolan at the**  
**Institute for Innovation in**  
**Human Services in Wisconsin**

Start staff *care*. Staff are caring and skilled. Staff respect the rights of Head Start parents. 3. **Non-punitive nature**. Head Start cannot threaten to dismiss a child for non-performance of either the parent or child. 4. **Positive attitude**. Staff use a casual, informal style to reduce psychological distance with the family. The nature of instruction is to



# School of the future and Head Start: Collaboration at its best

-By Louise Iscoe, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

**I**t all started with a deteriorated shopping mall just off I-35 on the south side of Dallas. The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) joined forces to transform the mall into a complex, housing two elementary schools and a high school. They called it Nolan Estes Education Plaza. A few years later the high school closed, leaving an empty three-story building.

Meanwhile, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Austin initiated its School of the Future Project (SoF), based on the concept of coordinating an array of health and social services on school campuses to make them more accessible to neighborhood children and their families. In 1990, the Foundation funded four pilot sites—one each in Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio. The Dallas site consisted of McMillan and Patton, the two elementary schools located in the plaza, and Boude Storey Middle School a few blocks away. The large, vacant building was seen as an ideal setting for co-locating health and social services.

Head Start was first to move into the Plaza under the School of the Future program. The match was perfect. SoF wanted to provide much-needed child care. Head Start had been looking for a site in Southern Dallas to serve eligible preschoolers from low-income families.

SoF Coordinator Marcia Booker worked with Head Start administrators, enabling them to meet the federal requirements for classroom and recreation space.

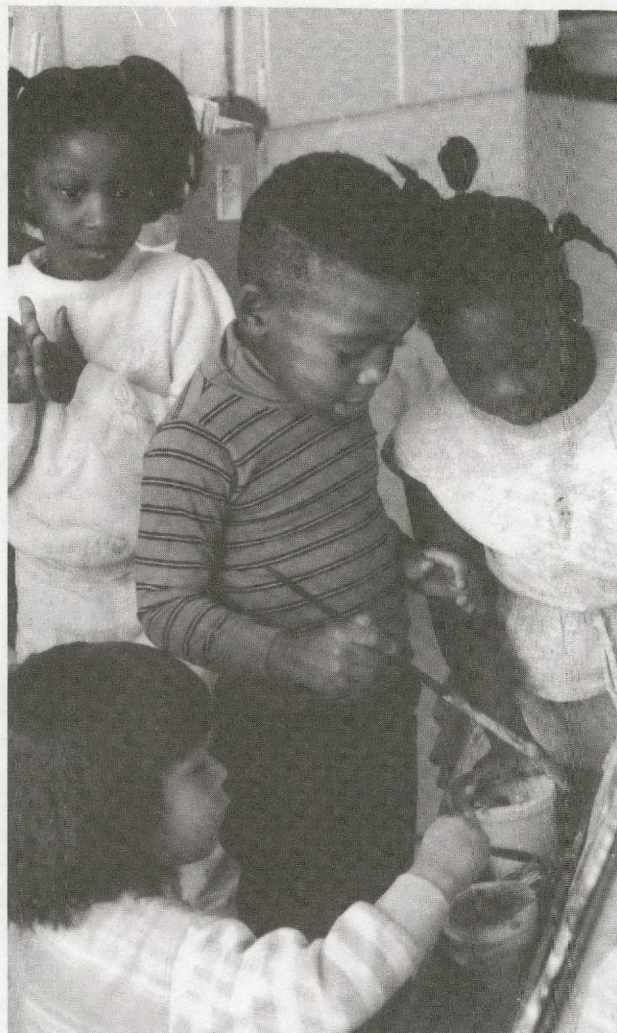
"It was hard to resist joining the center," beamed Wanda Smith, Director of Head Start of Greater Dallas. "Marcia worked with us to get space, and to get it free. We paid for renovations. This met part of our nonfederal share of funding. Elsewhere we pay by the square foot." She added, "It gives us a chance to provide an enormous array of services for our families."

Booker also arranged for two half-day Head Start programs to coordinate with the morning and afternoon half-day prekindergarten programs at McMillan Elementary. As a result, four-year-olds in prekindergarten could attend Head Start the other half of the day. This arrangement eliminated mid-day transportation problems of working parents and solved the problem of how children would be cared for when their prekindergarten class was not in session. The collaborative agreement with Head Start also provided for a full-day Head Start program at the Plaza for eligible neighborhood children.

The School of the Future exemplifies how Head Start and other programs can collaborate with a school district to obtain space,

coordinate services and meet community needs.

After providing a model for coordinating school-based services in Dallas, SoF is now under the direction of DISD. It is known today as the School of the Future Youth and Family Center. There are plans to develop 14 similar centers throughout the city. As the first, SoF can point to its arrangement with Head Start to illustrate how effective coordination and co-location can be. ●



Children in Dallas Head Start classroom.



# Don't Forget...

## February 1-28

National Children's  
Dental Health Month

## February 20-25

Creating Connections for  
Texas Children Joint  
Conference (TX Association  
of Partners in Education, TX  
Business and Education  
Coalition and TX School  
Public Relations Association)  
Hyatt Regency  
Austin, Texas

## February 23-25

Lasting Impressions Lifetime  
Commitments 11th Annual  
Early Care and Education  
Conference  
Center for Early Care and  
Education, Miami-Dade  
Community College, North  
Campus  
Miami Lakes, Florida

## March 1-3

Child Welfare League of  
America National Conference  
and 75th Anniversary  
Grand Hyatt Washington  
Washington, DC  
Contact: Conf. Coordinator  
202/638-4004

## March 9-11

Children's Defense Fund  
(CDF) Annual National  
Conference  
Seattle, Washington  
Contact: CDF  
202/628-8787

## March 17-19

National Child Care  
Association (NCAA) 1995  
Conference  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
Contact: NCAA  
800/453-7161

## March 26-29

Regional Network for Children  
of Central Texas 15th Annual  
Conference  
Wyndam Austin Hotel  
Austin, Texas

## March 27-1 April

Southern Early Childhood  
Association (SECA, formerly  
SAUCUS)  
Orlando, Florida  
Contact: SECA  
501/663-0353

## April 1-30

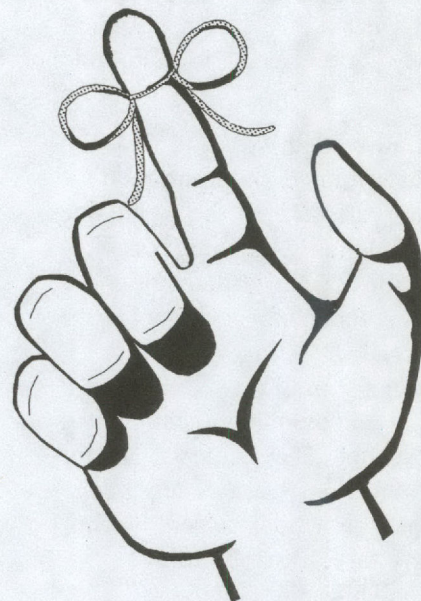
National Child Abuse  
Prevention Month

## April 16-22

National Head Start  
Association 22nd Annual  
Training Conference  
Washington DC  
Contact: NHSA  
703/739-0875

## April 20-25

Pre-Conference Seminar and  
National Conference on Family  
Literacy  
Louisville, Kentucky  
Contact: Ardith Hannula  
502/584-1133



## April 20-21

National Parenting Instructors  
Conference (Center for the  
Improvement of Child Caring)  
Sheraton Universal  
Universal City, California

## April 23-29

RIF-Reading is Fun Week

## April 26-29

Child with Special Needs in  
the First Six Years: Issues in  
Early Childhood Development  
San Francisco, California  
Contact: Contemporary Forums  
510/828-7100

## May 2

Head Start Collaboration  
Project Task Force Meeting  
Austin, Texas

## May 8-10

Early Childhood Intervention  
Statewide Conference  
Stouffer Hotel  
Austin, Texas  
Contact: Lyn Cox  
512/502-4910



# Helping migrant families in Texas



Many migrant families have extensive needs due to their unique lifestyle. In addition to high mobility and low wages, many migrant families lack adequate job security, education, housing, transportation, health care and social services. Because of their mobility, migrant families are often not linked to government support services such as Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children or food stamps.

Migrant Head Start programs in Texas, which are administered by the Texas Migrant Council, are tailored to meet the unique needs of these families. Migrant Head Start programs operate as many as 10-14 hours, 6-7 days a week during peak agricultural periods. Due to the mobile lifestyle of migrant families, Migrant Head Start programs develop and provide services quickly and constantly adapt services to meet the changing needs of the families. Staff travel and

relate to the livelihood and ethnicity of migrant families.

Migrant programs must be a part of a coordinated network of services in order to effectively meet the vast, unique challenges of the migrant lifestyle. The Texas Migrant Council works with other agencies and programs in such areas as nutrition, education and mental health in order to enhance migrant services. Currently, informal working agreements underway include partnerships with the following programs:

- Women, Infants and Children program-- nutritional assessments and counseling;
- Toys for Tots program-- Christmas toys for migrant children;
- Nutrition Education Training Program of USDA-- training for classroom and kitchen staff;
- Reading is Fundamental program-- books for migrant children;

- Foster Grandparent program-- placement of senior citizen volunteers in the classrooms and other areas.

Formal working agreements exist with the Texas Department of Health in the areas of immunizations and identification of unreported and suspected cases of vaccine preventable communicable disease. Other agreements with community health centers, private providers and the University of Texas Dental School provide physical, medical and dental examinations and/or treatment. A new GED/Literacy center will begin serving approximately 300 persons this year, thanks to a joint effort between the Council and Southwest Texas State University.

These and other collaborative efforts are helping to build a flexible, coordinated service delivery system for migrant children and families in Texas.

For more information contact the Texas Migrant Council at 210/722-5174.

Parents must accept responsibility for ensuring their children are well-nourished and ready to learn. The state can help by improving coordination among social service agencies that serve children and mothers. I also support the Head Start program which recognizes the link between early intervention, good nutrition and learning.

—Governor George W. Bush as told to the Coalition for North Texas Children



# Early Impact Teams pave the way for collaboration

**D**o you feel frustrated in your attempts to coordinate with others who serve young children? You are not alone. The Texas early care and education system is fragmented. Information regarding early care and education is decentralized and quickly outdated. There are few mechanisms by which providers can coordinate locally.

Thanks to Margie Sanford-Jordan of the Region XIII Education Service Center there is a new solution in the works. As a member of the Texas Head Start Collaboration Task Force and Resource Group, Margie saw an opportunity to apply the Project's vision of a coordinated service delivery system to local communities by creating Early Impact Teams.

The purpose of Early Impact Teams is to bring together local providers who serve children from birth to five years of age to facilitate communication and coordinated service delivery among programs.

The Early Impact Team concept started out with just Education Service Center programs, but then the Center began inviting other programs to their committee meetings to share information about their programs and role in the community.

Comal and Hays-Blanco counties which began operation in the Fall. The sites include local Early Impact Team members from Even Start, Head Start, public schools, Any Baby Can, Early Childhood Intervention, the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf and many others. Each site has objectives designed to improve outcomes of children and families through collaboration.

As Margie put it, "This is an exciting thought and makes all these years worth it!"

For additional information, contact Margie Sanford-Jordan at 512/929--1326. ●



This experience led to the creation of two pilot sites in

## Linkages

This newsletter is published by the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project. Linkages informs consumers, advocates, policymakers and providers about collaborative initiatives in early care and education. Comments and story ideas are welcome. Please write to the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project, P.O. Box 13247, Austin, Texas 78711 or call 512/502-3200 (voice or TDD). To obtain this publication in alternate format, call or write the Project. Editors: Monique Jackson and Gwen Chance