

**Suggested Talking points for state leaders**  
**May 20, 2005**

**High quality pre-k works**

1. High quality pre-k programs with well trained teachers, comprehensive services for children, monitoring, and technical assistance work. Research over the last 35 years has clearly shown us that children who attend high quality pre-k; do better in kindergarten and throughout school, and after graduation are less likely to get involved with crime and more likely to attend college, get a job and pay taxes.

**To provide high quality pre-k, more funding is needed**

2. The average state spending per child in K-12 is \$9,172.57. Federal funding per child in Head Start is \$7089. But the per child spending in pre-k in \_\_\_\_\_ (your state) is significantly below that. Only five states provide more than \$5000 per child in pre-k. Seven states provide less than \$2000 per child.

**We need well trained teachers**

3. Teachers must be better prepared than they now are to work with young children who present behavioral challenges in pre-k classrooms. Although this study did not find a difference in expulsion rates due to teacher qualifications and training, other research has found that a teacher who is well-prepared and has specialized training or certification in early education, will be more likely to deal productively with difficult children, and less likely to expel them.
4. In addition to being well trained these teachers must be well paid. When pre-k teachers receive the same salary as their peers in the K-12 system, there will be less teacher turnover and thus better and more opportunities for building stronger relationships
5. States should provide teachers in state-funded pre-K programs formal and on-going training in how to manage behavioral problems in young children. Teachers should be provided professional development opportunities on topics such as communication styles, positive behavior management, and how to foster a child-centered program for all children.

**The pre-k system must be linked to other systems**

6. Expulsion rates are lowest in classrooms located in public schools and Head Start where there are more supports for teachers and more commitment to serving all children. We need to extend to all publicly funded pre-k programs the more

comprehensive supports available in Head Start and public schools and assure faith-based and private programs are committed to serving every child.

7. We need to assure that every pre-k program is equipped to provide a supportive environment where every child can learn and grow to his or her full potential. When 3-, 4- and 5- year olds have behavior problems, they are in essence “screaming out” for help. We need to make sure that the supports are available so that teachers, administrators and parents can effectively respond.
8. As much as possible we need supports to allow children to remain in the regular classroom: classroom-based behavioral consultation, teacher training and coaching, ongoing observation and evaluation, and a temporary place for children to go before problems escalate.
9. We should not assume that every child with a behavior problem needs special education, mental health consultation or even a behavior plan. Often training for the teacher, better arrangement of the class schedule, more one-on-one time with the teacher, better materials, working with parents and providing the teacher a break or an assistant can ameliorate problems.
10. While children with behavior problems are often identified during the pre-k years, problems are evident even earlier. We need to make sure that the entire early childhood system, including private non-profit, for-profit and faith-based child care, has the support to identify children early and provide preventive in-class interventions.

#### **cies need to address these problems**

must provide alternatives. These alternatives might include alternative pre-k classes with small group sizes and more highly trained teachers.

#### **Families must be part of solution**

11. Children who have behavior problems at school often exhibit the same problems at home. We need to assure pre-k programs have staff that can provide parents support and training and refer families to outside help, when necessary.