



GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP

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NEWS RELEASE

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New Regional Coalition Addresses Early Education Issues *Early Matters* Features Collaboration of Business, Education, Philanthropic and Social Service Organizations

HOUSTON – On the first day of the 2014 school year, members of the new Early Matters coalition announced their ten-year vision to address early education issues in the Houston and Harris County region at a press conference at Sylvan Rodriguez Elementary School.

Early Matters is a broad-based group of more than 50 concerned leaders from business, civic, education, philanthropic, and nonprofit organizations who have collaborated to study the issue and develop an action plan to address this challenge.

The coalition's ten-year vision focuses on the "zero to third grade" timeframe to make a positive impact on learning. "The fact is that if students are not reading at grade level by the third grade, they are four times more likely to drop out of high school," said Scott McClelland, President of H-E-B Houston and chair of the Greater Houston Partnership's Education Advisory Committee, citing research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. He added, "It is imperative that we catch these kids early in order to dramatically increase their likelihood of graduating from high school."

With a large number of job openings in Houston requiring some training or education beyond a high school diploma, the coalition connects effective early education with the ability to pursue fulfilling careers as adults. "From early childhood through high school, workforce training and college, it is critical that this education pipeline produces career-ready individuals" said Bob Harvey, President and CEO of Greater Houston Partnership. He added, "A robust, educated workforce will support continued economic growth for our region and offer a high quality of life for all citizens."

Key elements of the blueprint include increased availability of a range of resources for parents to become the best they can be for their growing child; improved requirements for child care programs to ensure they maintain high quality standards and be accessible to working families; and improved access to high-quality Pre-K programs.

"We are committed to ensuring that every child in our district has access to high-quality Pre-K programs," said HISD Superintendent Terry Grier. "Working as one team, across the city, as partners, we can make sure that all Houston children have a strong, early start to success in school and life."

"Each member of the coalition brings something special to the table," said Jim Postl, chair of Early Matters. He continued, "By leveraging our unique strengths towards one goal, Early Matters will maximize its impact."

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The group will release their formal report and action plan at the Early Matters Summit on September 26.

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Media Note: A list of members of the Early Matters coalition are included in the media kits.

Greater Houston Partnership works to make Houston one of the world's best places to live, work and build a business. It represents 11 counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto, Walker and Waller. With more than 1,200 member organizations, GHP represents approximately one-fifth of the region's workforce.

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