A child’s first years are instrumental to their future development. Children with access to high-quality early education programming show increased graduation rates, higher education attainment and lower incarceration rates. This is why PTA has advocated for over a century to provide affordable, accessible and high-quality early education programs to all children, such as universal kindergarten and the United States Department of Health and Human Services’ Head Start program. It is critical to PTA’s mission to empower all families with the tools and practices they need to effectively engage in their child’s education and development, starting at the earliest stages.

THE DATA

71% of parents say that finding quality, affordable child care in their area is a serious concern [1]

In 2016, only 31% of eligible children ages three to five had access to the Head Start program due to lack of funding [2]

In 2016, only 7% of eligible children ages zero to three had access to the Early Head Start program [2]

WE ADVOCATE TO

Require family engagement policies in the development, implementation and evaluation of all early childhood programs, including home visiting programs

Ensure federal resources are provided to make early education programs affordable, available and accessible for low-income families

Establish professional standards and provide ongoing training and professional development for early learning and childcare providers

Enhance coordination between early childhood education programs and elementary schools to improve the transition for children entering kindergarten
VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Michelle Salzman, a parent of three children in Pensacola, Fla. and member of Escambia County Council of PTAs, knew that she needed to take action to improve the graduation rates in her school district. For years, her county ranked as one of the worst in the nation. She decided to partner with the Studer Community Institute to conduct research on graduation rates, and discovered a direct correlation between kindergarten readiness and high school graduation rates.

Michelle also worked with the Studer Community Institute and the Thirty Million Words Initiative to draft an appropriations bill to fund a better Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. She was successfully able to secure sponsorship for the bill and it was presented to the Florida state House of Representatives in 2017.

Michelle continues to share the critical message that early learning is the key to graduation, and most importantly that early learning does not require a large time or monetary investment. It simply requires interaction, engagement and being present for your child.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are three major federally funded early learning and childhood education programs:

1. Head Start, which provides preschool services to low-income families with children ages three to five.

2. Early Head Start, which provides early education services to low-income families with children under three.

3. The Child Care and Community Development Block Grant, which provides child care subsidies to increase the availability, affordability and quality of child care.
