

bornlearning

A community impact initiative of
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

The importance of early learning

A parent (or other caregiver) is a child's first and most important teacher—there is tremendous mental, physical and social development that takes place during the early childhood years.

In fact, educational experts overwhelmingly agree that there is a direct link between a child's early learning experiences and a successful school career.

It's important for **communities to provide an environment that supports early learning**. Some caregivers are unaware of the need to create enriching learning opportunities for young children. Others recognize the need but are unsure how to provide these experiences—particularly when the caregiver has limited access to resources or information.

The reasons to invest in early learning:

- Kindergarten teachers estimate that one in three children are unprepared to meet the challenges of formal schooling. The poorest children start kindergarten one-two years behind in language and other skills important to school success.
- More than 50% of Texas children under age six have both parents working or have a single parent in the workforce.
- A 40-year longitudinal study that followed infants into adulthood shows that \$1 invested in early learning saves \$7 in government and social expenses down the road.
- 85% of a child's core brain structure is formed by age 3, but less than 4% of public investments in education and development occur during that time.

Project goals

- Children ages four and under will increase general early development and develop a better foundation for learning and a successful school career.
- **Long-term metrics:** Participating children will score 20% higher than their peers on Dallas ISD pre-kindergarten assessments.
- **Short-term metrics:** Participating parents will meet minimum performance standards on evaluations completed at the end of this year.





The pilot project – Pleasant Grove Neighborhood

This highly promising initiative, convened by United Way, is advised by a team of volunteers who are experts in the field of early childhood development, as well as social service professionals from the target community. The pilot program will provide a targeted focus on the Blanton Elementary and Titche Elementary school attendance zones, located in the Pleasant Grove area (which is also home to United Way's Destination: Graduation project).

This area was selected based on a variety of criteria, including household income, unemployment level, school evaluation scores, residents who do not speak English as a first language, and rate of transience.

Pleasant Grove

Population: 51,777

Average age: 28

Average household size: 3.5 persons

Median household income: \$35,443

13% of households are headed by single women with children under the age of 18.

42% of Pleasant Grove residents don't speak English as a first language.

Total crime risk is more than double the national average.

Project strategies

The program will incorporate classroom sessions, group meetings, and home visits. Stay-at-home mothers, working mothers, and mothers who attend school are targeted for participation.

Born Learning will help parents become excellent providers of positive early learning experiences through seven basic strategies:

- Developing an understanding of the stages of **child development**.
- Building **strong emotional relationships** with their children.
- Building competence and confidence in **parenting skills**.
- Supporting the development of a child's **self-regulation skills** and **social abilities**.
- Supporting the development of **pre-academic skills**.
- Monitoring and supporting their children's **health**.
- Developing awareness of how to access **appropriate community resources**.

Project partners

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How You Can Help

Your contribution to support Born Learning demonstrates that you and your organization believe that it's important to join United Way in building strong, successful families. It's also an excellent opportunity to align your organization with what will no doubt be a very visible and successful initiative.

To learn more, contact Sara Ramos at 214-978-0081 or sramos@unitedwaydallas.org.