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NEWS

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Oct. 17, 2017

TEA, Texas PBS and United Ways of Texas launch Start Smart Texas

AUSTIN – Commissioner of Education Mike Morath today announced the launch of Start Smart Texas, a collaborative effort between the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas PBS and the United Ways of Texas.

Start Smart Texas is a parent-focused initiative designed to work with families, community leaders and schools to promote the role of parents in making any time a learning time. It is a component of Governor Greg Abbott's Texas Public Elementary School Reading Initiative – Texas Readers – which was announced earlier this year.

"Texas is continually looking for new and innovative ways to give our children every advantage possible when it comes to education," said Governor Abbott. "Start Smart Texas is a great way to promote the role of the family in the learning process, and I thank Commissioner Morath, Texas PBS, and the United Ways of Texas for this inspired program. It is initiatives like these that make Texas a top state for education."

"Academic success for every child in Texas begins before they ever set foot in the classroom," said Commissioner Morath. "By providing parents with simple reading preparation tips for their son or daughter, the Start Smart Texas campaign can help build a foundation for success in school and in life."

Start Smart Texas will provide parents with tips that inspire positive interactions to promote healthy brain development, early literacy and reading skills. The goal for this statewide initiative is to empower parents in their child's success.

“Parents today are busy, so Start Smart Texas hopes to provide friendly reminders of how we can make any time a learning opportunity – whether at the grocery store or in the car with our children,” said Adrianna Cuellar Rojas, President and CEO of United Ways of Texas. “Parents, schools, communities each play important roles in our children’s development, and together we can set them on a path for success,”

Public service announcements airing on PBS stations throughout Texas are part of this effort, reinforcing the message to parents that “Anytime is Learning Time.” The Start Smart Texas videos can be viewed here: <http://startsmarttexas.org/about/tv-spots-pbs/>.

“We want parents to know that they have what it takes to help their children succeed,” said Kierstan Schwab, Executive Director of Texas PBS. “What we are learning about brain development is that child success starts with simple things like talking to your baby, playing word games and working fun rhyming games into your busy life.”

In addition to the public service announcements, Start Smart Texas will work in partnership with statewide organizations and local community groups to build local-based strategies and a network of organizations to increase reading proficiency rates across the state.

Many cities have already created collaborative work focused on supporting children to achieve academic success and are part of a national network called the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. To become part of the national campaign, stakeholders in each city — including business, nonprofits, PBS stations, government and philanthropy — work collaboratively to develop a plan focused on increasing reading achievement, proposing specific strategies and identifying local goals related to school readiness, summer learning loss, chronic absenteeism and parental engagement. Start Smart Texas currently includes seven cities that have developed community-wide plans: Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, Houston, Palacios, San Antonio and Waco.

To learn more about the Start Smart Texas initiative, visit www.startsmarttexas.org.

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