

For more information, contact

Christi Fish
UTSA University Communications
Phone: 210-458-5141 or cell 210-410-8874
Email: christi.fish@utsa.edu

Senator Leticia Van De Putte Hosts Texas Early Learning Innovation Summit at UTSA

April 5 summit will encourage public-private partnerships to promote early literacy

SAN ANTONIO, APRIL 4, 2013 – On Friday, April 5, The University of Texas at San Antonio will welcome State Senator **Leticia Van de Putte** to the UTSA Downtown Campus for the Texas Early Learning Innovation Summit. The event, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., will focus on innovative strategies in early learning, building upon the momentum of San Antonio's novel Pre-K 4 SA program to promote early childhood education.

Summit participants will include San Antonio Mayor **Julian Castro**, State Representative **Justin Rodriguez**, State Representative **Mike Villarreal**, UTSA sociology professor **Harriett Romo** and Footsteps2Brilliance® CEO **Ilene Rosenthal**.

“Research shows that early learning gives children the head start they need to become engaged learners throughout their educational life,” said Senator Van de Putte. “This summit will bring together all the elements needed to make early learning innovations happen, from the educational, policy and private sectors, all converging on the same goal — allowing our students to reach their full potential.”

Romo heads the Bank of America Child and Adolescent Policy Research Institute. The UTSA research center supports the interdisciplinary study of topics such as infant cognition, early language development, childhood literacy, juvenile justice, child abuse prevention, school readiness and success, and foster care youth, ultimately translating research results into policy recommendations.

“The Early Learning Summit aims to make San Antonio a *Model Innovation City* for early learning,” said Romo. “Ultimately, our goal is to address strategies that would allow us to promote early learning that would lead to literacy in all children, by the third grade, regardless of socioeconomic status.”

“Parents and guardians are generally a child’s first teachers,” added Romo. “If we can create a way to enhance the home-school connection, we will have created a win-win situation for the children, their families and society-at-large.”

The summit will feature a variety of panelists including superintendents, researchers, scholars and industry leaders aiming to shed light on early learning best practices. Massachusetts Superintendent **Paul Dakin**, for example, will share how he used Footsteps2Brilliance's mobile platform to engage and support an overage of families in his district who were seeking pre-K learning opportunities for their children.

Grounded in research, the Footsteps2Brilliance's game-based platform teaches children literacy skills and other core competencies through learning content that is delivered on a parent's mobile device. The platform includes colorful English/Spanish bilingual texts in a series of layered language combinations and is supported by audio, interactivity and gaming options testing the child's comprehension. It is compatible with most mobile devices and tablets, both online and off-line, allowing children to literally take learning into their own hands.

"Current research shows that 46 percent of children enter kindergarten at risk of failure," said Rosenthal. "Eighty-eight percent never catch up, and 61 percent don't have any books in their home. But 80 percent of the time, people in impoverished areas use a cell phone, making it an ideal way to deliver early learning tools into the home."

Rosenthal applauds the efforts of the San Antonio leaders for addressing early learning as a critical problem that requires discussion to develop city-wide, scalable solutions.

Agenda

- 10 a.m.: **Welcoming Remarks**
 Senator Leticia Van de Putte
 State Representative Justin Rodriguez
- 10:15 a.m.: **The Early Learning Grand Challenge**
 Mayor Julian Castro
- 10:30 a.m.: **Pre-K 4 SA – A Citywide Planning Roadmap for Early Learning**
 Richard Middleton, Pre-K 4 SA Board Member and Southwest Regional VP, The College Board
 Harriett Romo, UTSA Professor of Sociology and Director of CAPRI
 John Folks, UTSA Senior Lecturer, Pre-K 4 SA Board Member and Retired Superintendent of Northside Independent School District
 Sen. Van de Putte, Panel Moderator
- 11:30 a.m. **Early Learning Solutions Citywide**
 Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance®
 Paul Dakin, Revere, Mass. Superintendent/Superintendent of the Year
 James Ponce, McAllen Independent School District Superintendent
 Libby Doggett, PEW Home Visiting Campaign Director and Moderator
- 12:30 p.m.: Lunch

- 1:10 p.m.: **Make No Little Plans – Using Early Learning and Community Involvement to Transform School Districts**
Rey Madrigal, Harlandale Independent School District Superintendent
Robert Jaklich, Victoria Independent School District Superintendent
Jesus Chavez, Round Rock Independent School District Superintendent
Daniel King, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District Superintendent
Jesus Chavez, Round Rock Independent School District Superintendent/Moderator
- 2:10 p.m. **Obtaining Success: Policies and Partnerships**
State Rep. Mike Villarreal
Richard Noriega, AVANCE President and CEO
Kate Rogers, H-E-B VP of Partner Communication and Engagement
Eugene Narciso, COO, Footsteps2Brilliance, Moderator
- 2:55 p.m. **Closing Remarks**
Senator Leticia Van De Putte

The University of Texas at San Antonio is one of the largest of nine academic universities and six health institutions in the UT System. As a multicultural institution of access and excellence, UTSA aims to be a national research university providing access to educational excellence and preparing citizen leaders for the global environment.

UTSA serves nearly 31,000 students in more than 135 degree programs in the colleges of Architecture, Business, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Liberal and Fine Arts, Public Policy and Sciences as well as University College, the Honors College and the Graduate School. Founded in 1969, UTSA is an intellectual and creative resource center and a socioeconomic development catalyst for Texas and beyond. Learn more at www.utsa.edu.