Collaborative for Children Raises Nearly $300,000 to Expand Early Learning Opportunities Across Greater Houston

"Hope Takes Root" luncheon honors Enbridge and highlights the growing need for investment in community-based pre-K.

HOUSTON, Texas, September 28, 2026 – Collaborative for Children raised nearly $300,000 at its 2026 Building Blocks Luncheon, "Hope Takes Root," held September 24 at River Oaks Country Club. The event brought together business leaders, educators, elected officials, and community supporters to expand access to high-quality early childhood education across Greater Houston.

The luncheon honored Enbridge for its commitment to building stronger communities through long-term investment and leadership. Guests also learned how Collaborative for Children strengthens early learning through instructional support, family engagement, and business development for child care providers.

"Hope takes root when children have access to high-quality learning experiences, families have trusted support, and educators have the tools to help every child grow," said Dr. Melanie Johnson, President and CEO of Collaborative for Children. "The support generated through this luncheon will help us respond to an urgent need and continue building early learning opportunities that prepare more children for kindergarten and everything that follows."

The need for this work continues to grow. At the same time, Texas is reducing the number of available child care scholarships by nearly 10%, while providers are now operating without the temporary pandemic-era support that helped stabilize child care programs.

Collaborative for Children is working with Houston ISD to address this need by giving eligible 3- and 4-year-olds access to free, high-quality pre-K within trusted community child care centers. Children receive developmentally appropriate instruction in literacy, math, social-emotional development, and other skills that build a strong foundation for kindergarten.

Participating child care centers maintain their identities and daily operations while receiving curriculum, instructional coaching, professional development, marketing support, and compliance assistance from Collaborative for Children. The partnership also strengthens the connection between a child's community-based pre-K experience and the transition to a Houston ISD elementary school.

The event also recognized Gina Bishop of Kandy Stripe Academy, a Collaborative for Children Center of Excellence, as the recipient of the Elsie Samuels Educator Excellence Award. The award honors an early childhood educator whose skill, care, and commitment help young children build strong foundations for learning.

Through its network of 125 Centers of Excellence, Collaborative for Children works with child care providers, educators, and families to strengthen early learning across Greater Houston. Funds raised through the Building Blocks Luncheon will support that work and help expand access to high-quality early education in the communities where families live and work.

Funds raised through the luncheon represent an important investment, but continued support is needed to meet growing demand. Collaborative for Children invites businesses, foundations, community leaders, and individual donors to help extend its partnership with Houston ISD to more child care providers, families, and Greater Houston neighborhoods.

To support the expansion of high-quality pre-K or explore a partnership with Collaborative for Children, visit https://collabforchildren.org/building-blocks-luncheon/

To access press images from the event: CLICK HERE.

About Collaborative for Children

Collaborative for Children is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has championed high-quality early childhood education for nearly 40 years. Through innovative programs, educator support, and family resources, Collaborative for Children helps children from birth to age 5 develop the skills they need for kindergarten and lifelong success. Its mission is to advance educational equity and ensure every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Media Contact

Chase Murphy
Collaborative for Children
Email: Cmurphy@collabforchildren.org
Phone: 713-600-1184
Website: collabforchildren.org