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MOBILE CLASSROOM ROLLS INTO HOUSTON NEIGHBORHOODS THIS FALL

Collaborative for Children brings free dual-generation learning to Acres Homes, Galena Park, and Greater Greenspoint (North Houston)

Houston, Texas (September 23, 2021) ... From the welcoming exterior of the Collab-Lab to the vibrant learning spaces within, every inch of this new mobile classroom is designed to captivate little learners, bringing families and children, ages 3 to 5, a fun, thematic, interactive learning journey directly to their neighborhood. Collab-Lab is a first of its kind, rolling out to Acres Homes, Galena Park and North Houston this fall for initial recruitment. Designed to be convenient for families, and at no cost to them, Collab-Lab gives parents, and their children, access to experts, educators, resources, and innovative programs to equip them with the academic and emotional/social skills essential for school readiness and early academic achievement. Research confirms that high-quality early learning experiences give children a strong start on the path to later academic achievement and success in life.

This innovative initiative from [Collaborative for Children](#) brings project and play-based curriculum together to reflect the changing needs of early childhood education. 21st century learning recognizes that emotional intelligence skills are inextricably intertwined with cognitive skills, suggesting that

executive function and social emotional learning skills should be taught alongside traditional academic areas such as literacy, math, and science. Collab-Lab was created with this new model in mind with the goal of helping area children develop the social and emotional skills as well as academic skills necessary for successful entry into kindergarten. Plus, Collaborative for Children understands the benefit of involving the parent or essential caregiver in the process as



a vital element of support for a child's learning. This is what the dual-generation approach to learning is all about.

"We recognized that traditional early learning models needed to be transformed," said Dr. Melanie Johnson, President and CEO of Collaborative for Children. "The recent pandemic has shone an even greater light on the importance of creating equitable, quality early learning opportunities for our youngest citizens," stressed Johnson. "Students have fallen behind, many of whom didn't have quality early learning opportunities to begin with because Houston is fraught with child care deserts. We're leading the way to make sure that no child falls through the cracks, no matter the external circumstances," remarked Johnson. "We see the urgency of this issue as vital to Houston's future economic growth. That's the reason we developed the Collab-Lab, to help change the trajectory for our community," added Johnson.

On Board the Collab-Lab

Collaborative for Children has been at the forefront of early childhood education for more than 34 years. But the Collab-Lab is part of its most determined attempt to reshape early learning and child outcomes as part of an overarching new strategic plan, which included developing its



own proprietary "*I Wonder!*" curriculum for the Collab-Lab, an innovative, project and play-based curriculum that utilizes 21st century learning focused on creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.

On board the Collab-Lab, which is set to a backdrop of Houston's diverse neighborhoods, illustrated in bright, colorful murals like a grocery, bank, space lab and more, children and parents will learn and develop skills to prepare for kindergarten and an unknown future that awaits by:

- Practicing literacy, math, and science activities
- Learning how to help a child manage their emotions and build social skills
- Continue learning at home with real-world extensions
- Connecting families with community partners and helpful community resources

Programming themes revolve around five core units that correspond to the attributes of the Collab Kid—a global learner, an innovative creator, a leader, a digital learner, and a problem solver. These core attributes are at the center of the organization’s focus of equipping children with 21st century learning skills. Working with family specialists and a family member, each child will explore hands-on activities and topics like *A Community of People*, *Loose Parts Coding*, *Lego Symmetry* and *Perfectly Me*, all designed to build on a child’s natural curiosity about their world. In addition to theme-based activities, children will also engage in skill-based and open-ended activities related to school readiness as set forth by Texas Pre-Kindergarten guidelines. Each group of children and families will spend twelve exciting weeks on the Collab-Lab, beginning January 2022.

Dr. Kimberly Agnew Borders, Chief Programs Officer for Collaborative for Children, explained “early cognitive development shows that the developing mind is astonishingly competent, active, and insightful from a very early age. For children to be fully engaged in learning, they must develop a set of mental skills called Executive Function, which include working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control. Without developing these skills at an early age, children are less likely to be able to focus, follow directions or handle emotions. That’s why we’ve spent so much time developing our curriculum, so we can tap into the incredible agility of the young mind, ensuring that both academics and critical social/emotional skills are taught hand in hand to give children the best shot at being ready for kindergarten and for life,” stressed Borders.

Initially, Collab-Lab will serve several established area communities, but is available to come to other neighborhoods by request. Visit <https://collabforchildren.org/collab-lab/> or contact mobileeducation@collabforchildren.org for information. Funding for Collab-Lab is provided by: CenterPoint Energy, Community Health Choice, Herman H. Fleishman Foundation and ReBuild Texas.

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About Collaborative for Children:

Collaborative for Children believes every child deserves high quality early childhood education and access to innovative early learning opportunities that foster critical 21st-century skills. For 34 years, we have provided families and educators with business resources and programming to help children ages 0 to 5 achieve school readiness. We are unyielding in our focus to provide early educational equity for all children. Today’s children face a workforce that does not yet exist. Early learning is the building block of future leaders. We are architects, using our collective ingenuity to usher in a future bright with possibilities for every child. For information, visit collabforchildren.org or follow us on Facebook [@collaborativeforchildren](https://www.facebook.com/collaborativeforchildren).