POSITION STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Early Childhood Education/Development for At-Risk Children

PTA is committed to removing the barriers faced by at-risk children and supports programs that seek to eliminate poverty for all children. Children who are educationally disadvantaged benefit from quality early intervention programs. Research documents that quality early childhood development programs enhance success in school and reduce problems such as retention, special education placements, dropouts, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, and delinquency.

The first years from birth to age 5 are important determinants for a child's success in school. All children must receive certain essentials to be ready to learn including good health care, adequate nutrition, self-esteem, socialization and intellectual readiness skills, and enriching experiences.

PTA strongly supports Head Start. Head Start, a successful educational and federally funded program initiated in 1965, provides low-income preschool children with educational, social, medical, nutritional, and mental health services. The program emphasizes parental involvement in the development and education of children. In addition, other federal programs follow the Head Start model and many states provide preschool programs similar to Head Start. Effective programs ensure developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching practices and offer coordinated comprehensive services for young children and their families.

PTA supports programs that bridge the transition from Head Start and similar programs to public schools. These are essential to continue the success of children in classrooms and promote parent involvement in the schools.

Maintaining collaboration between effective programs and community agencies is important. These programs include, but are not limited to, Head Start, Even Start, Sure Start, Title I, Bilingual and Toddler and Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities.

PTA values parents as primary influences and essential partners in the education of children. Programs that provide education for parents prior to and immediately following the birth of the child provide foundations for future success. These programs include education, social, medical, nutritional, and mental health components.

PTA supports programs that assist preschool children to prepare for social, emotional, academic, and vocational development. The success of these programs depends on adequate funding for all children and strong parent involvement. Communication and cooperation between school systems and community based agencies is essential.

Adopted by the Convention Delegates 4/30/99