

Small Steps Nurturing Center  
2010-2011 Accomplishments

**NAEYC Accreditation**– Small Steps was successfully reaccredited in 2009 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an achievement only reached by 33 schools in Houston and 262 schools in Texas.

**Ranked in Top 2% of Charity Navigator Charities**- Small Steps was recently awarded Charity Navigator’s four-star rating (highest rating) for the seventh year in a row. Only two percent of charities have received this rating for seven consecutive years showing, in Charity Navigator’s words that “Small Steps consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way.” We feel that Charity Navigator’s affirmation of Small Steps’ management sends a message of trustworthiness to the community we serve and to our volunteer and donor community as well.

**Kindergarten Test Scores Indicate Student Readiness:** Departing kindergartners are tested using both an aptitude and achievement test. The 2011 graduating class scored higher on the achievement test as a group than they did on the aptitude test, showing that Small Steps is preparing our graduates to be ready to achieve in elementary school.

**Test Results Demonstrate Increased IQ:** Year-over-year cognitive testing for Small Steps students, first when they enter at either age 2 or 3, and then a year later, has shown statistically significant increases in IQ in the majority of our students. This testing demonstrates that our program is able to help overcome some of the delays our students face and also prepares them to learn in a way that is appropriate for their age group.

**Graduate Placement**– Small Steps works very closely with parents to inform and assist them in the selection process for elementary schools for their graduates. Twenty-five out of twenty-six Small Steps’ 2011 graduates have enrolled in TEA exemplary or recognized elementary schools for first grade. Seven of these students transferred from their zoned elementary school to magnet programs.

**A Model Program** – Small Steps is committed to serving more children in need by collaborating with other organizations to develop quality early childhood programs. In this way, Small Steps is serving as a model program to several other early childhood programs in Houston and across the nation.

**Teacher Retention** – Hiring and retaining high-quality, caring, and committed teachers is one of the most important aspects of our program. Our teacher retention rate has been 97% over the past five years. Our students have the benefit of a seasoned and well-equipped teaching staff.

**Small Steps Continues Relationships with Graduates:** Camp Eagle generously provided thirty-four scholarships for our students’ older siblings and former Small Steps students to attend Camp Eagle’s Headwaters adventure camp this summer. One of Camp Eagle’s donors generously provided all of the scholarships to these students ages 8-16, who each attended camp for a week in June or July. Camp Eagle is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Christian outdoor adventure camp in the Texas Hill Country.

The Youth Development Center (YDC) provided after-school tutoring to several of our former students or our current students' older siblings this spring. The YDC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves children from the Greater Fifth Ward. Currently, YDC operates an after-school academic remediation program that addresses literacy development for inner city students in grades 3 - 8.

***Continued Partnership with Rice University:*** Six Small Steps teachers participated in Rice University's School Literacy and Culture Project, specifically trained in the Classroom Storytelling Project in Spanish, during the 2009-2010 school year. Our teachers went to trainings, participated in mentoring relationships, and implemented activities they learned in the classroom. These six teachers completed their training in May 2010 and created an anthology of their students' work, chronicling the progress their students made as teachers implemented these new tools in the classroom. In September of 2010, two more teachers started the training for the Classroom Storytelling Project, which will be completed at the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

Rice University's School Literacy and Culture Project also held two teacher in-service training days for our teachers in the fall of 2010. The first day covered integrating math and literacy tools in the classroom and the second day covered developing writing skills for age groups 2 years old through Kindergarten.

This continued partnership with Rice allowed us to serve our students more effectively and also engage in learning and discussion with a like-minded Houston organization. Continued participation in the program could include the following elements: more teacher participation in the Classroom Storytelling program, training in Rice's Summer Institute, on-campus teacher workshops through Rice's Campus Collaborations project, and an ongoing on-campus mentorship.

***Small Steps Provides Resources for Families:*** We expanded our services to our families in 2010. Small Steps has always strived to serve the entire family, but this year specifically has shown us the multiplied benefits of a greater number of parent engagement opportunities. In addition to our monthly Parent Education classes, Small Steps now also offers: a weekly "Baby and Me" class that focuses on the value of parent-child interaction and bonding, a weekly evidence-based curriculum class called "Child-Parent Relationship", and a weekly support group and Bible study for parents initiated by their requests. Our program director began a photography and writing workshop for parents, which has allowed parents to share their own experiences and struggles, further developing their sense of dignity and self-worth. Another invaluable piece of our parent engagement has been a new partnership with Interface-Samaritan Counseling, which has recently begun providing three weekly counseling sessions for parents. Referrals are made by our program director based on meetings with parents. All of these opportunities have allowed us at Small Steps to deepen our relationship with our students' parents, encouraging them as the primary teachers of their children and as adults capable of healthy relationships and productive lives.