



UPSTART

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Nonprofit Helps Texas Children Avoid “COVID Slide” and Enter Kindergarten Prepared
Results from the Waterford Upstart pilot show the average Texas graduate entered kindergarten at a “Kindergarten Advanced” level.

(Austin, TX) November 10, 2020 — This year created unprecedented issues in education, especially for the state’s youngest learners. However, nearly 2,500 Texas children across 69 counties were given the opportunity to avoid the “COVID Slide” and prepare for kindergarten thanks to an at-home summer learning program by education nonprofit, Waterford.org.

“This spring was tough for families across the Lone Star State. With months away from school, we feared learning loss was inevitable. That’s why we were so excited to hear about the Waterford Upstart program. The results from the Houston area and across the state are inspiring. This is exactly the type of program we should be thinking about as we work to provide a solid foundation for our state’s early learners,” said **State Senator Larry Taylor**, who serves as Chairman of the Senate Education Committee and as a member of the budget writing Finance Committee.

The Waterford Upstart Summer Learning Path provided children personalized early literacy instruction and gave families the tools they needed to work with their children offline, including a parent coach, push notifications, and social-emotional training. Thanks to philanthropic donations, more than 13,000 children in 9 states and the Navajo Nation were able to participate in the program at no cost. A computer and internet access were also provided to families that needed it.

In Texas, over 83 percent of participants were from low-income families (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and 68 percent of families received a computer as part of the program.

The Waterford Upstart curriculum is aligned to Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, and children were assessed at the beginning and end of the program to track their progress. Texas children saw significant growth over the course of the program with the average graduate entering kindergarten at a “Kindergarten Advanced” grade equivalent. These results were consistent with low-income families in metropolitan areas like Dallas, El Paso, and Houston, as well as for children in rural areas of the state.

State Representative Ryan Guillen, Vice Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, supported this effort saying, “I’m pleased that so many of our early learners from across the state had the opportunity to participate in this summer program. We must continue to look for ways to help our school children during this time of great uncertainty, and I believe that proven technology solutions, like Waterford Upstart, can ensure our Texas children excel and are not left behind due to the interruptions caused by the pandemic.”

Waterford.org has detailed information on counties, cities, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses at a reporter’s request. Waterford.org is encouraged by the success of this program and the impact it will have on Texas children for years to come. Waterford.org will continue working with policymakers and education leaders to implement the Waterford Upstart program with state support so more children in Texas enter school ready for success.

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About Waterford.org

Waterford.org is an education nonprofit with a mission to achieve universal literacy for children through equity, access, and parent empowerment. Waterford develops educational tools that guide students along adaptive, individualized learning paths toward fluent reading and lifelong learning. Waterford empowers parents as a child's first teacher and supports teachers in taking the right actions at the right time for their students. Currently, Waterford.org serves over 300,000 children across 43 states every year.

Waterford.org is a BBB Accredited Charity with programs supported by a variety of governmental and philanthropic organizations, including support from a federal EIR grant, The Studio @ Blue Meridian, and TED's Audacious Project.

About Waterford Upstart

Waterford Upstart helps four-year-old children prepare for school at home and at no cost. Children develop foundational reading and social-emotional skills, and parents are empowered to become their child's first and most influential teachers. The children use adaptive software just 15 minutes a day, five days a week in the year before they start school. Waterford Upstart also fuels family involvement in their child's early education through parent coaches and fun educational activities parents can complete with their children offline. Waterford Upstart has been rigorously tested and proven, earning the program a [federal EIR grant](#) and the title of a [TED Audacious project](#). [Independent research shows](#) the average Waterford Upstart graduate enters kindergarten reading at nearly a first-grade level and maintains those gains through the fourth grade.