

Montgomery County leaders hear importance of early childhood education

By Jay R. Jordan, jjordan@hcnonline.com Published 4:26 pm, Thursday, December 15, 2016



Conroe ISD elementary school officials are hoping to continue to receive a grant that helps early childhood education for lower-income families. Armstrong Elementary received a two-year grant from the state for almost \$1 million that helps provide pre-kindergarten education to students in the school. County officials, including Montgomery County Sheriff-elect Rand Henderson and County Attorney J D Lambright, spent their Monday morning learning from teachers about the importance of an early childhood education. The two also read to young students who are in the school's pre-K program.

"We are so fortunate at Armstrong Elementary and across Conroe ISD to have the involvement and support of the officials in our community," Armstrong Principal Patricia Thacker said. "It is always a treat to have guest readers in our classrooms."

Henderson said bumping up funding for early education can help save taxpayers money in the long run. "The premise behind it is you want to invest the money up front instead of having them invest money on the back end during incarceration," Henderson said. "The more we put into them at an early age and give them what we can do from our level, it keeps them out of trouble." The teachers gave pointers about the impact early education can have on students.

"The best part we got to hear about was their take on the importance of early childhood education especially for those who can't afford it," Henderson said. "They made some pretty sound arguments for getting the kids started early to give them a head start. It leads to success later in their education."

The County Attorney's Office, which handles the prosecution of juveniles, sees an upwards of 1,300 criminal juvenile cases per year, Lambright said. "Some of this early intervention with very young kids might turn that around a bit," Lambright said.

Joe McMahan, Texas State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, said Henderson and Lambright are going to urge support in the 85th Texas Legislature to help continue funding grants like the one at Armstrong Elementary. The funds go to help reduce the student-teacher ratio and establish a District Pre-K Instructional Coach, according to information from the district.