

March 12, 2007

To: Education Committee

From: Dr. Gail Gilmore

RE: House Bill 7360 – An Act Concerning Transition from Preschool to School

Good afternoon, Education Committee members. My name is Gail Gilmore, and I have been the Principal of Jennings Elementary School in Bristol, Ct. for 11 years. I am also a 29 year practitioner in education and I'm passionate about advocating for the needs of children.

Before I begin addressing House Bill 7360 – An Act Concerning Transition from Preschool to School, I want to thank you for your work as a committee in our state. Your diligence and advocacy to meet the educational needs of all children is appreciated. I want to publicly thank Representative Ron Burns, for his work in our district and for inviting me to speak today.

I completed my doctoral degree and dissertation in December 2005. My primary research question asked: *What is the impact of small group literacy instruction on kindergarten students' text comprehension?* I was interested in obtaining information to see if a team of teachers instructing literacy skills in small groups in the classroom obtained significant achievement results in kindergarten students when compared to a single teacher model of literacy instruction delivery. I provided a comparison study of half-day kindergarten programs, involving 10 elementary schools, a stratified random sampling of 800 students, and utilized the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for my quantitative data.

Data was examined for a 4 year time frame. I compared 2 years of kindergarten achievement without small group literacy instruction (utilizing the traditional single teacher model) with 2 years of data utilizing a small group literacy model of up to 6 facilitators in the classroom instructing 6 literacy stations.

The findings of my study were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) in favor of small group literacy instruction affecting students' text comprehension achievement. This study clarified the importance and significance using a small group collaborative, cost-effective team approach for learning early literacy skills in kindergarten.

Presently, children age 4 can enter kindergarten in September, if they turn age 5 by January 1<sup>st</sup>. Children enter kindergarten at different levels of literacy and reading readiness skills. The beginning of a significant achievement gap begins when some parents choose to enroll their children in preschool readiness programs while others choose to keep their children home. Our achievement gap begins Day 1 of school, under current registration guidelines.

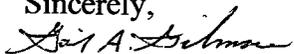
Every child has unique learning needs and every child learns differently. Why not provide a level playing field for all kindergarten children to begin their kindergarten experience with equitable chronological advantages – socially, developmentally and cognitively? By having our children begin the kindergarten school year at age 5 by September 1<sup>st</sup>, we would provide a more equitable playing field for all children. Each child would have the advantage, of at least the chronological age, to contend with the rigorous literacy and numeracy expectations found in our comprehensive kindergarten curriculum.

With this stated, it would be imperative that we consider universal age 4 preschool. We would want to provide all age 4 students with developmental, social, and academic support and learning readiness to then transition to a kindergarten experience that is successful and rewarding for all children and families.

I would like to provide the Education Committee with a complimentary copy of my dissertation for reference and review. It is important to note that this is only one study; however, it has statistical significance and practical implications for the future of our youngest children.

It has been a privilege speaking today and I thank you for your commitment to education.

Sincerely,



Gail A. Gilmore, Ed.D.