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**State Budget Hearings  
Senate Bill # 1114  
Support of Governor Rell's Early Childhood Initiative  
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Adults who attended quality preschool programs are....

*Three times more likely to have graduated from a high school program than their peers who did not attend preschool*

*Four times more likely to earn 2000 dollars or more a month*

*Three times more likely to own their own homes*

These are just some of the substantial differences found by the well known High/Scope Perry Preschool Study conducted in Michigan with three and four year old African American children born into poverty. Similar findings by the Chicago Child Parent Center Longitudinal Study or follow up research conducted by Carolina Abecedarian Program all clearly demonstrated the long term social differences attributed to groups who attended and who did not attend preschool.

If we know these facts from varied and reliable sources are true, then why are we not providing the necessary funding for quality preschool programs? If we know that an investment in the young child yields much less cost than later support or punitive measures then why are we not investing in this sure bet future commodity?

Governor Rell's proposed budget with increases to the funding of quality preschool programs is a wake up call to the wise investor. If we do not consider our moral obligation to the healthy development of young children then surely we can at least see the economic return of money well spent on the preschool child.

It is a well known fact that the vast majority of our learning both intellectually and emotionally occurs between birth and age 5. No where in time is a life so substantially molded and evolved as it is during these formative years. Yet our attention to this age group has been minimal at best in our country and within our own state of CT.

As the principal of the CREC Montessori Magnet School I have the unique opportunity to meet thousands of parents of preschool age children. Parents of 2 year olds apply to our school each year to secure a preschool spot through our school lottery process. The worst day of each school year occurs on our lottery day when I am faced with letting hundreds of parents know that unfortunately their child did not make the lottery cut and will be unable to attend our school. Last year over 450 parents hoped for one of the 42 available spaces we were able to offer to incoming 3 year olds.

Why are parents seeking a school like Montessori Magnet School for their 2-3 year olds?

Could it be that we have a highly trained and certified staff?

Could it be the beautiful facilities and material rich classrooms?

Could it be that their child is able to make choices in their work day?

Could it be the individual attention their child is given in a mixed age group setting?

These 4 factors have been identified as the key components of a quality preschool program by one of the largest Early Childhood Studies conducted in 15 countries by the High Scope Education Research Foundation.

Governor Rell's budget stresses high quality preschool programs. An emphasis of this budget is teacher training. Quality Preschool Programs are those that have highly trained teachers. These teachers need to be financially compensated for their professional skills. Preschool teachers at the CREC Montessori Magnet School are not only Montessori trained but also certified as CT state teachers.

It is imperative that teachers of young children are highly qualified and Governor Rell's budget has this as a focus of her Early Childhood Initiative. Specific early childhood trainings such as Montessori need to be included in these initiatives. The Montessori Training Center of New England, a CREC program here in Hartford is also associated with a degree program from University of Hartford.

In addition to quality teachers, CREC Montessori Magnet School offers a comprehensive preschool through grade 6 program. Its multiage classrooms offer long term relationships between children, parents and teachers. Students who progressed through our preschool program achieve well as measured by the CMT's with all measured groups meeting AYP goal no matter their color or economic status.

CREC Montessori Magnet School is currently the only public Montessori Program in the state of CT. A private Montessori preschool education today can cost a parent between 8-12 thousand dollars per year. It is our hope that through the Governor's Early Childhood Initiative that more public Montessori programs will be available to the parents of this state. Montessori along with other high quality well established preschool programs should be available to all parents without the associated high price tag.

The Governor in her budget introduction stated that she wanted "to make good on promises made long ago". I commend Governor Rell for her efforts in delivering on the promise we make to the children of CT for equal quality education. Preschool needs state funding for teacher training and salaries. Greater options and more spaces for more children especially those with fewer means should be available to our CT parents. Governor Rell's budget supports these needs. Funding also needs to be reserved for planning of more quality preschool programs. Programs like Montessori Magnet School just don't happen; careful planning and evaluation must be a part of the funding quotient. If we want more "quality" preschool programs we must provide funding to plan for them.

Dr. Maria Montessori wrote, "*Whoever touches the life of the child touches the most sensitive point of a whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinite future.*"

If we want to help produce productive, independent, well educated, involved Connecticut citizens we must take thoughtful care of our young, the roots.

Please support Governor Rell's Early Childhood Initiative.