

**Testimony to the Education Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee
of the CT General Assembly
February 11, 2009**

Elizabeth Aschenbrenner on behalf of the Northeast School Readiness Council,
representing the towns of **Killingly, Plainfield and Putnam.**

Greetings from the 'Quiet Corner', northeastern CT, where sadly the percentages of substantiated child abuse and neglect and births to mothers without a high school degree exceed the state averages and rival the 3 large cities and where the unemployment rate for December 2008 was 2.7 points higher than the state average (9.3 compared to 6.6) Additionally, the percentage of children having a preschool experience are lower than the state average and approximately 30% lower than district reference group A. (CSDE Strategic School Profile data)

Due to our more rural nature, we are additionally challenged by the lack of resources, job opportunities, program options and public transportation. We have, however, **found effective ways to share resources by collaborating regionally.**

We all recognize the tough economic times that face our country, state and most importantly our families. The safety net already has holes and those holes will grow while new ones emerge. **We must support our families as they struggle with unemployment and underemployment, trying to meet their basic needs while still providing those programs that have the most significant impact on children's future school success.**

Research in the neurosciences has demonstrated the critical importance of brain development in the early years and longitudinal research on the benefits of high quality preschool has demonstrated the cost-benefit of investing in effective programs and services. Evidence demonstrates that parent education and participation in quality preschool programs does mitigate risk factors and does help to close the 'preparation' gap.

On January 26th over 200 people filled a room in northeastern CT to share their 'stories' with our area legislators. While not in a results-based accountability format, families told our legislators about the significant differences that the parenting education and preschool programs provided through our Family Resource Centers have made in their lives as well as the outcomes for their children.

Please maintain level funding for the Family Resource Centers, school readiness and Head Start as proposed in the Governor's budget.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and investment in Connecticut's future. Please contact me at (860) 455-0707 or [easchenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto: easchenbrenner@eastconn.org) with any additional questions or data needs.