Allison Logan: ABCD: Head Start Link Reinstatement

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Allison Logan and I am Director of Educational Initiatives for ABCD, the anti-poverty agency in Bridgeport. I am speaking tonight to ask for your support to **reinstate the ABCD Head Start Link that was cut from the Office of Early Childhood budget.**

Addendum: The OEC presented a budget earlier today, which was severely incorrect. Dr. Jones Taylor reported we were only in 5 classrooms and have not expanded from a pilot. The new Superintendent of Bridgeport, Fran Rabinowitz this year, expanded the early childhood portion the initiative to 10 infant toddler classes in her 5 Family Resource Centers, 3 PreK classrooms and sustained 5 K-4 classrooms reaching over 335 children and families in Bridgeport this year alone. As u will hear later in my testimony, Superintendent Rabinowitz is dedicated to expanding the initiative to all of Bridgeport with help from continued funding.

I realize these are difficult monetary times for the State, however years ago, the State recognized and funded through this link, a powerful pilot Initiative in Bridgeport: **ABCD's: Total Learning Initiative.** This pilot was founded on the Head Start philosophy of Engaged Parents, Stable Families, Healthy Children and Cognitive Development in a continuum from Birth to Grade 4. It was based on the belief that **in order to effectively learn, children must be supported socially, academically and through addressing the needs of the family as a whole. This falls in direct alignment with the vision of the OEC's desire for a P-3 continuum, and we have years of significantly significant research that it is effective.**

ABCD's Initiative in Bridgeport Public Schools has made a dent in public schooling's ability to **close the achievement gap.** ABCD has mobilized a program, which not only **closes the achievement gap** for the poorest children, but upgrades the engagement of students, parents, teachers, administrators and community resources.

This is NOT a quick fix or a band aid to a severe educational and social issue- it is systemic change, starting with Bridgeport's youngest. It has proven itself to creatively support children's family, social, and academic needs from Birth through Grade 4- allowing for a head start in life and their future.

If I came tonight with the all of the people this program has positively affected, the entire room would be full. I am representing them by sharing their strong voices here:

mcg michael cohen group LLC
research, evaluation, consulting

The pilot's independent research – The Michael Cohen Group says:

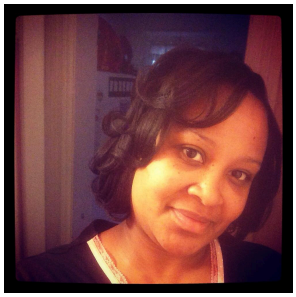
Gold Standard research has shown ABCD's initiative provides a ***best practice model*** *for public-private partnerships working together to combat the overwhelming consequences of poverty in the* ***most underfunded school district in the State of CT.***

Bridgeport's Superintendent Fran Rabinowitz says:

I have seen first-hand the joy of parents and infants/toddlers, sharing in music and movement classes that develop essential pre-reading skills such as sequencing, attentive listening, and patterning. I am dedicated to expanding to more schools, to engage an increasing number of families and their children in Bridgeport. The parental participation in the program has been truly extraordinary.

Bridgeport Principal Hector Sanchez says:

ABCD's Total Learning is a total program…..If it runs to it's optimum you're going to have highly prepared, committed students; supportive parents who are involved all the time with education, in school and home; you'll have teachers who continue to grow professionally and as a community of learners; and finally what everyone is measured by- the test scores are going to go up because the whole community is involved.



Bridgeport Teacher Candice King says:

ABCD's Total Learning program provides complete engagement for my inner city students, through instruction that is not only brain based, but developmentally appropriate. It provides family and mental health support to meet the needs of the WHOLE child, which our underfunded system continually fails to provide. This is the ONE program that successfully reaches ALL my learners and meets All of their needs. To remove this program now would be detrimental to so many lives of children and families in Bridgeport.

and Bridgeport Parents say:

This has given me such powerful time with my children. My child was delayed and not speaking when we began the infant/toddler classes but in a few short months she was singing the songs and speaking during class and at home! Please don't cut a great thing-it makes a difference!

This hugely successful Initiative is poised for expansion throughout Bridgeport and the State. If the **Head Start Link is restored, we could expand on the State's initial investment and impact thousands, upon thousands more families and children,** finally making a dent in the achievement gap that has plagued Bridgeport for so long. I have seen first-hand the joy and enormous change it had brought. Stopping this program now would be a tragic error, setting back progress in Bridgeport schooling for years. I am asking for you and your colleagues in the Appropriations committee reverse this error….. It's as much a key to Connecticut's future as any other investment you can make.

Thank you.

Allison Logan: Director of Educational Initiatives

ABCD

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