

TESTIMONY TO SUPPORT REINSTATING ABCD'S HEADSTART LINK FUNDING

Presented by Jackie Jacobs, Partner, Total Learning Initiative Bridgeport, CT

Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Jacobs, and I am here to speak about the proposed cut to ABCD'S Headstart Link Funding.

Imagine this: Infants, toddlers, and their parents, sitting on the floor, singing , dancing and playing instruments, looking at songbooks, singing at home with other family members. Parents who don't speak English, parents whose children have developmental delays, parents of typical children. Parents coming weekly year round to participate with their children and learn how to support their development ! Family engagement going up as much as 98 % in participating schools !

We have gold standard, independent research showing statistically significant gains in speech, language, social emotional and cognitive development.

Imagine this: Preschoolers singing, moving around the classroom as they learn all aspects of their curriculum. Teachers singing classroom transitions, children happily moving from one activity to the next .Parents coming in to sing the songs children learn in school with them, learn how to support their development. Family engagement going up as much as 80% in participating schools !

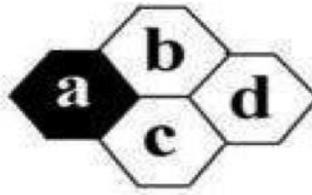
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Now imagine this: Kindergartners, children in classroom through 4th grade. They learn the curriculum using the kind of activities that stimulate, engage, and delight. Teachers work creatively with them, in small groups called studios, acting out stories, singing rhymes, stimulating dialogue.

We have gold standard , independent research showing statistically significant gains in classroom instruction, early reading, literacy and math .

Imagine each of these children having access to a family worker who helps support them so that they can attend school consistently, solving problems like electric bills not being paid, lack of clothing to attend school. These same children also have access to extended day programs, extra para professionals in the classroom.

Imagine a summer camp program : Children so stimulated and interested in learning that even in stifling



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hot classrooms that they are happy to come every day and don't want to go home. Children say " Can we come back next summer ?"

And, again, we have gold standard, independent research showing statistically significant gains in preventing the " Summer slide" and increase in DRA scores.

Imagine a school superintendent who 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."

Imagine hundreds, thousands of children, parents, teachers, engaged in this type of program that actually helps close the achievement gap for the most underfunded district in the state. . If you can imagine it, then you should now. We did it. This amazing program is the Bridgeport Total Learning Initiative, which is funded by the ABCD Headstart Link Funding. This is a program that works. We have the gold standard, scientific research that proves it. This is best practice, comprehensive, thorough, and completely effective programming in action. While others talk about helping close the achievement gap, we've done it. Test scores go up , teacher retention goes up , Parent engagement goes up .

I urge you, DON'T CUT WHAT WORKS. WE ARE READY TO EXPAND TO MORE SCHOOLS AND OTHER DISTRICTS STATEWIDE. WHY NOT BUILD ON THE INVESTMENT THE STATE HAS MADE TO PILOT THE TOTAL LEARNING INITIATIVE AND EXPAND IT. SPEND YOUR VALUABLE DOLLARS ON WHAT WORKS AND CAN BENEFIT THOUSANDS MORE POOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Thank you for your kind attention.