



Push on to close preschool gap

Quarter of Torrington pupils start without it

BY JIM MOORE | REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Early education experts could find much hope in the scene Friday morning at Torrington Preschool Center, where a trio of 4-year-olds worked together to get a bright red rocket ship ready for launch.

Intent on their task, they opened and closed compartments on the 2-foot-tall plastic toy. Nearby, classmates built a castle of wood blocks, and others wrote crayon letters for their valentines.

Their parents are able to finance an early education delivered by trained professionals. Research, most notably a four-decade-long study in Michigan, shows children carefully taught in preschool are more motivated to learn, better problem solvers and less likely to commit crimes as adults.

Stalled efforts to expand statewide access to early education may soon regain momentum, as a growing number of school districts work to cobble together local programs and the governor's Early Education Cabinet returns to action Thursday following a budget-induced hiatus.

"This is a body that has to carry a lot of hopes for a lot of people," said David Nee, executive director of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, the primary philanthropic engine behind many community-based efforts to expand access to quality preschool programs. Nee said the Obama administration is likely to open a new early education grant program soon, and the dollars will be awarded first to states ready to capitalize. "They really need to help the state get organized," Nee said of the state cabinet.

To read the complete story see Monday's Republican-American or our electronic edition at <http://republicanamerican.ct.newsmemory.com>.

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