



BRIDGE TOGETHER

*Building bridges between communities, families,
and the Bridgeport Public Schools, on the road to
systemic change.*

Executive Summary

MISSION

ABCD's **Bridge Together** Initiative is founded on the Head Start philosophy of engaged parents, stable families, healthy children, and cognitive development. In order to effectively learn and develop, the children of Bridgeport must be supported socially, academically and cognitively, in the school, community, and at home.

THE PROBLEM

In Bridgeport, **32.7% of children live in poverty** (State of the Child in Bridgeport, 2014) and **94.6% are eligible for free or reduced lunch** (NCES Data, 2010). Children in poverty are at higher risk of malnutrition, poor health, low academic achievement, exposure to violence and abuse, and homelessness, leading to an **unstable and stressful home environment**. Research has shown that:

"Healthy development can be derailed by excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and the brain, affecting brain surface area, cognition, and social development. This has a significant effect on a child's educational future, beginning in preschool and beyond."

- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

THE BRIDGE TOGETHER APPROACH

What makes **Bridge Together** unique is the the combination of supports, not only for the child, but for the family. The cognitive and social supports build essential skills in the child to maintain healthy development, while the family supports allow for the ability to alleviate stressors and connect to essential services. **Bridge Together** has partnered with the Bridgeport Pubic Schools to provide a systemic change model that begins at birth, and follows the family through preschool and beyond.



Provides a research-based, enhanced learning environment (birth-9) that supports overall healthy brain development and builds parent/child relationships.



Provides early intervention for young families, connecting them with services before they become at risk, alleviating chronic stress in the home.



Provides a valued collaboration to increase family involvement in Family Resource Centers, the Bridgeport Public Schools and existing service agencies throughout the city.

Providing supportive and responsive relationships as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress.

- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University



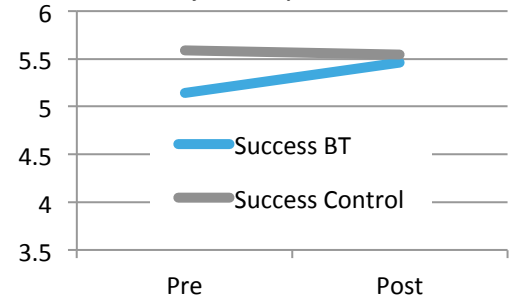


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RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR BRIDGE TOGETHER

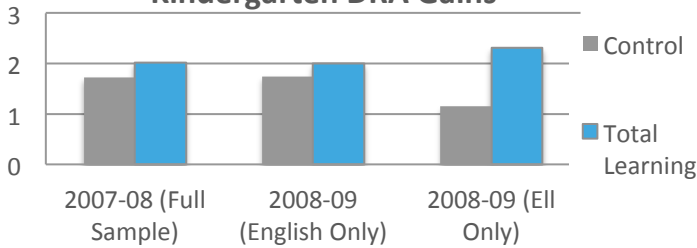
Research demonstrated that Bridgeport parents (n=46) who participated in Music Together classes showed more favorable change, at a statistically significant level ($t(67)=-2.961, p<.01$), in their perceived **success in preparing their children** to learn (measure based on Sheldon & Epstein, 2007).

Changes in parent's perception of their ability to help their child learn

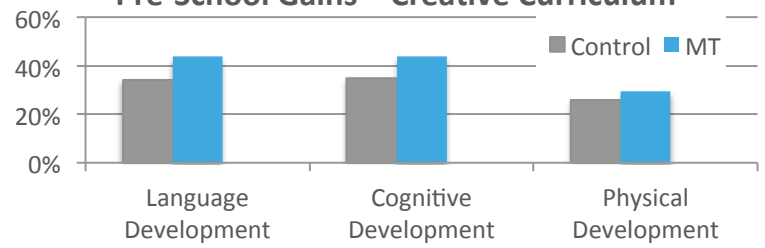


Further, previous research using the **Bridge Together** model of family services and engaging programming (previously Total Learning) showed the potential to impact **DRA scores in Kindergarten students** and **multiple domains of development in pre-school children** (all statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level).

Kindergarten DRA Gains



Pre-School Gains – Creative Curriculum

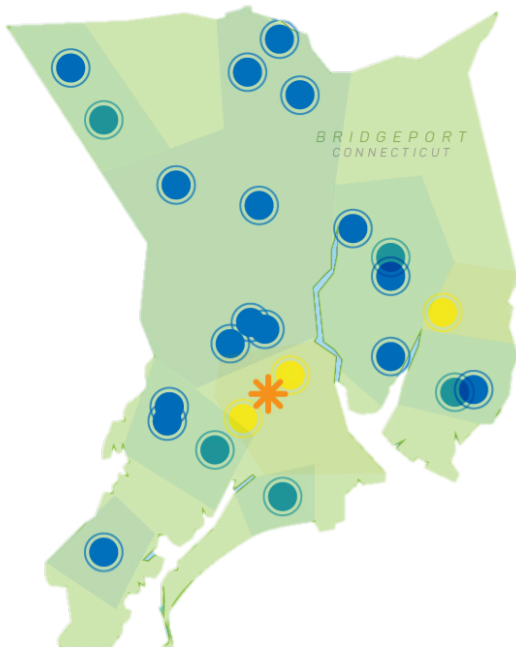


PRAISE FOR BRIDGE TOGETHER

“My daughter has developmental issues and Music Together has helped her interact with other children, improved her hand-eye coordination, teachers her words and sounds, and something about the clapping and tapping-helps her to gain focus. It has made me closer to my children, since we are always singing and dancing with the CDs at home too!

*My Family Service Advocate has provided a safe place to discuss personal and family situations and connected me to services that were immediately helpful. I have become less stressed and more organized with the needs of my family. We are very grateful for the **Bridge Together** Program!”*

- Maria, Bridge Together Parent



5 Year Goal:

To **Bridge** **ABDC** headquarters, the 5 Family Resource Centers, multiple parent/child sites & all 21 Preschools **Together** to support the children of Bridgeport.

We will need the additional help of community partners throughout to fully support our **Bridge Together** mission.

