Independent Study Finds Waterford UPSTART Most Impactful School Readiness Program

According to the HQSR-E report, the kindergarten readiness program was the only option that had a statistically significant positive effect on early literacy development

SALT LAKE CITY (PRWEB) January 31, 2019 -- Waterford Institute, the nonprofit provider of the Waterford UPSTART kindergarten readiness program, announced today that an independent study of the Utah High-Quality School Readiness Expansion (HQSR-E) Program has found Waterford UPSTART so effective that it recommends the program be made available to all children in high-quality public and private PreK schools.

The study was conducted by the Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI). A key finding was that Waterford UPSTART was especially effective among at-risk children, closing performance gaps at a 67% rate. That’s 17 percentage points higher than children only attending public PreK schools and 21 points higher than those attending only private PreK schools.

Children enrolled in Waterford UPSTART made similar gains in social-emotional development and early math skills to their peers in public and private PreK programs, but, according to the report, traditional high-quality preschool “does not have the same positive impacts on specific literacy skills that the Waterford UPSTART program does.” The report’s other key literacy findings included the following:

• Statistics show that Waterford UPSTART was the only program to have significant positive effects on early literacy development, with an impressive effect size of .78. That means the average Waterford UPSTART student outperformed nearly 80% of children who did not use the program.
• 77% of Waterford UPSTART children demonstrated average or above-average literacy quotients, compared to 71% of public-school attendees and 69% of private school attendees.
• Waterford UPSTART children achieved “significantly higher” scores on subtests of critical predictors of future reading achievement, including letter knowledge, listening comprehension, and phonological awareness.
• 77% of Waterford UPSTART children met benchmarks for listening comprehension, compared to 65% of private-school children and 61% of public-school children.

“Every child deserves access to high-quality school readiness experiences,” said Benjamin Heuston, PhD, president and CEO of Waterford. “We’re honored to be part of expanding access to as many children as possible, particularly at-risk children and rural children who lack access to other early education solutions. Waterford UPSTART is uniquely positioned to partner with and support parents in order to provide all children the best possible opportunity for academic success.”

Waterford UPSTART launched in Utah in 2009 and has grown from 1,631 participating children in that first year to more than 14,000 in 2018. Designed to overcome traditional barriers to site-based PreK such as geography and transportation, UPSTART offers parents an option for preparing their children in the home by tapping into the potential of parents as children’s first teachers. Waterford UPSTART’s online curriculum includes more than 2,500 online reading, science, and math lessons, along with 360 digital books, 330 animated songs, and more than 450 instructional hours.

HQSR-E, now in its second year, prepares children in Utah for academic success by offering high-quality preschool experiences through grants funding of three models: traditional private schools, traditional public
schools, and home or computer-based models.

The full HQSR-E report is available at Waterford.org.

About Waterford Institute

Waterford Institute is a nonprofit education partner that creates personalized, cloud-based instruction through award-winning curriculum, content, and assessment for children in PreK to 12th grade. As a nonprofit, Waterford seeks to blend the best aspects of learning science, mentoring relationships, and innovative technologies to form community, school, and home programs that deliver excellence and equity for all learners. To learn more, visit Waterford.org.
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