



March 10, 2020

Senator Stuart Adams
President, Utah State Senate
jsadams@le.utah.gov

Dear Senator Adams,

We at [Defending the Early Years](#) recently read your Guest Essay about early childhood education in the Feb. 28, 2020 *Deseret News*. We appreciate your concern for the well-being of Utah's young children, including your many grandchildren. We know that Utah and, now many other states, are searching for low-cost but effective ways to enrich the lives of young children. Many believe that they have found the answer in Waterford's UPSTART program, online "preschool."

However, as experts in the field of early childhood education, we have grave concerns about this program for several reasons. They include:

- Young children learn best through hands on, exploratory, creative play and loving relationships with supportive, well-trained adults. This cannot be duplicated on a screen.
 - The American Academy of Pediatrics states, "Higher-order thinking skills and executive functions essential for school success, such as task persistence, impulse control, emotion regulation, and creative, flexible thinking, are best taught through unstructured and social (not digital) play."
- Research shows that screen overuse by young children puts them at risk for behavioral problems, obesity, delays in social emotional development, and sleep deprivation. While some children may show short-term gains in their ability to recognize letters, numbers, and other rote learning, the gains are short-lived and come at the expense of infringing on time used for beneficial activities, such as child-directed, creative play, enriching interactions with other children and adults, lap reading, and time outdoors.
- Using public funds for such programs means that there are even fewer dollars available for appropriate brick and mortar schools or alternative programs to reach children in remote areas, such as home visiting programs or "preschool on wheels."
- Children from low-income areas are even more likely to be offered such programs, while economically advantaged children attend appropriate preschool programs with well-qualified teachers, well-appointed classrooms, and engaging curriculum.
- Waterford UPSTART falsely claims to be aligned with accreditation standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). See [There's No Such Thing as Online Preschool](#).

In summary, we urge you to reconsider your support of online "preschool." It is a poor substitute for a quality preschool experience with well-trained teachers. While virtual preschool may save taxpayers money, it is at the expense of young children, their families, and their futures.

Sincerely,

Blakely Bundy
Director, Defending the Early Years

Nancy Carlsson-Paige & Diane Levin, Founders and Senior Advisors

Blakely Bundy & GERALYN BYWATER McLaughlin, Co-Directors Denisha Jones, Director of Early Childhood Organizing
www.dey.org info@dey.org [@DEY_project](https://twitter.com/DEY_project)