

Kids need quality pre-K

Newsday (January 10, 2008) Letters to the Editor by Dr. Dina Lieser

I am a pediatrician, and in my practice I see the difference that quality prekindergarten makes for my youngest patients, including access to nutritious meals, immunizations and developmental screenings; greater social-emotional and cognitive development, and improved readiness for kindergarten.

Yet, many Long Island children are not able to take advantage of this opportunity. Unfortunately, our youngsters are caught in the middle of a system that is resource-starved and laden with obstacles.

In an ironic twist, Gov. Eliot Spitzer's commendable plan to make prekindergarten available to all 4-year-olds is now leaving many districts with money unused. Rules about how the money can be spent (e.g., only half-day programs, not for transportation or facilities) are causing headaches for school administrators, and this is depriving our children of an incredible learning experience.

This opposes all that we know about the promise of prekindergarten and about brain research. It also sends an erroneous message that the dollars are not needed. Our children deserve better; our communities need more support.

We must rise above allowing bureaucracy to hinder the healthy development and success of our children and society as a whole. My prescription: full-day, high-quality prekindergarten for our children.

Dr. Dina Lieser

Editor's note: The writer is executive director of Docs for Tots, a children's advocacy organization.

Melville