

Transcript of Mayor Ben McAdams

Interviewer

So, let's just talk about preschool. Why is high quality preschool important?

Mayor Ben McAdams

You know, for me, I know the data. The data shows that the earlier we can get help to some of our kids who are falling through the cracks, the cheaper it is, and the more successful it will be. It's just like any sickness -- the sooner you catch it, and the sooner you treat it, the greater the chances of a remedy and a cure. So it's the same thing with preschool. And I know that data. And we also know what happens with our kids who fall through the cracks and the harm to them as individuals, to their family and loved ones as they grow up and maybe find their way into drugs and crime and that's painful, and it's also expensive to the taxpayer. So the data all shows that early intervention -- let me back up. The data all shows that early intervention -- preschool in particular, is a great way to set our kids on a path to success. And I'm familiar with the data, but what's really hit home to me is the chances that I've had as mayor to visit classrooms, to get to know some of these kids who are three and four years old, and their parents who love their kids and want to see their kids to succeed, and then know that the story that the statistics and data tells about these kids. And the fact that we have an opportunity to intervene, to set these kids on the right path and give them the opportunity to succeed, and a chance at success in life, I think it's so amazing to see that Utah has responded in a way to start to create those opportunities.

Interviewer

How did you become informed on this whole thing? How did you get to know what's going on?

Mayor Ben McAdams

You know, I have young kids and we have nine-year-old twins, a six-year-old, and a three-year-old. And as a parent, you know, I desperately want to see my kids succeed and have the same opportunities for career advancement and happiness in life that I've had. And as a parent you're looking and always trying to understand what I can do to help my kid succeed and it's in that process that I learned the importance of learning, of early learning, of building vocabulary, of me as a parent talking to my kids and helping them to learn how to interact with other people. And you know, when I see that and it's really pretty simple in a way to do that, but so many kids who don't have that opportunity, who come from households where they don't have the opportunity or a parent who is reading to them, and they fall behind. And the devastating consequences that that early harm or falling behind early can have multiplied over the course of that child's life is really saddening.

Interviewer

So the money from this bill reaches beyond the Granite District. They're going to Head Start to track where those kids are ending up through a partnership with the Salt Lake School District. Some of the money is going to training teachers for a program called Parents as Teachers. Like as a county mayor talk about how it's sort of growing and building and people are catching on.

Mayor Ben McAdams

Well, I think one of the things that we know, you know, the old adage that says an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Too often we are spending all of the tax dollars we have on that pound of cure that we can't afford an ounce of prevention. And oftentimes our cures aren't cures they're maybe Band-Aids as we're trying to get on top of drugs and crime problems in our community. What House Bill 96 really did was provide that limited funding for an ounce of prevention. That we can start figuring out what works and putting our tax dollars and creating opportunities in places where we'll see success. And so it's such a pleasure to see, first of all, as the steward of precious tax dollars that we want to use in the most fiscally conservative way possible, if we can use our precious tax dollars to help a kid have a future, instead of locking up people who we failed on the first time. What a better place to spend precious tax dollars by creating a future for kids in our community.

Interviewer

And let's move on really quick to the Nurse Family Partnership. What do you know about it?

Mayor Ben McAdams

Salt Lake County has a small Nurse Family Partnership program that we're hoping to expand. It's just like how preschool is so meaningful to our kids and to give them an opportunity for success in life. There's some opportunities where you know, just once again, coming back to the sickness or disease -- the earlier you catch it, and the earlier you treat it, the cheaper and more successful the treatment would be. And Nurse Family Partnership is one of those instances where if we can have a practitioner visit a family and help them to educate the parents about the importance of nutrition, the importance of proper prenatal care and other services that a mother, a loving mother, and a loving father want to provide for their children, but in many cases don't know what they need to do. Children don't come with an owner's manual. But if we can help give people the right information about what services and what opportunities they should provide in the home to their kids, our entire community will have a benefit from those kids, getting the right start on life from a very early age.

Interviewer

So you would like to see more money --

Mayor Ben McAdams

So similar to what we've done with preschool where we see a future benefit if we can only find a way to create an opportunity today. And we did that with preschool. We want to see preschool continue to expand to those who need it and also start looking at also creating opportunities through the nurse family partnership where we can empower parents to have the skills and the knowledge they need to get their kids on the right path early on, even before preschool.

Interviewer

Do you know about the preschool development grant and how that was not accepted--the \$15 million in federal support that could've gone to Utah's four year olds?

Mayor Ben McAdams

So in the fall of 2014 the state of Utah had an opportunity to apply for a federal grant, a preschool development grant that would've helped us to open that door of opportunity for our at-risk kids a little bit wider. And I was very disappointed to see that the state of Utah and the governor decided not to apply for that grant. Too often some people see the world through a hyper-partisan lens of Republican, Democrat, federal, state. That's not a view or an approach to politics that's going to serve us well. I believe it's important that we look beyond partisan labels and come together to work collaboratively to really to create opportunities for the next generation. If we are going to help our kids succeed and have a future in life, especially some of these at-risk kids, we need to find ways for the federal government to work collaboratively with state government, and county government, to bring a comprehensive view to some of these solutions. And that needs to be how we approach these things going forward. I hope that maybe we'll have another opportunity. We missed the first round of this grant. I hope that maybe there's additional opportunities for us to step up to the plate and be a willing partner with federal government and local government and state government to continue to create more opportunities for our kids to succeed.