

Total Learning team visits White House

By **LINDA CONNER LAMBECK**

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The experimental Total Learning program used in a kindergarten class at Columbus Elementary School in Bridgeport was discussed Thursday at the White House.

Charles Tisdale, director of Action for Bridgeport Community Development, met with members of first lady Laura Bush's staff for about an hour to discuss the program.

"We talked about the reasons for the Total Learning approach. Gave them a lot of background, a lot of information," said Tisdale, driving from the White House to the Capitol where he planned to meet with U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman.

Tisdale said he, along with June Malone, director of ABCD's Head Start program; Sue Snyder, developer of the Total Learning concept, and others met with Marie Miller, deputy chief of staff for the first lady, and Cherie Harder, another member of the staff.

The meeting took place in the East Wing of the White House.

"They asked some excellent questions. I personally think it was a good meeting," Tisdale said. "We introduced them to the concept. If they see any validity in it, hopefully, they will

help us to support it."

The Total Learning program is designed to deliver the curriculum through art, music, drama and movement. Its backers say it taps all the ways children learn.

In Bridgeport, the program has been used since last fall in a kindergarten class at Columbus School.

All of the students previously went through Head Start. Program organizers are closely observing the children to see if strides made in Head Start can be fortified through the Total Learning approach. The program also incorporates a longer school day and extra support in the classroom and at home.

ABCD hopes to expand the program into a full-blown control study next year. Michael Cohen, the consultant who hopes to lead that study, went with Tisdale to the White House.

Tisdale eventually would like to have a chance to present his ideas to Laura Bush, who was on her way to South America Thursday with the president.

"We can't predict what will happen," said Tisdale, who is no stranger to the White House. He worked there for three years during the Carter Administration.

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Total Learning
A continuing look
at an experiment
in the classroom