

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: e-mailed
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7358

Testimony From: Jeannette Ickovics, Madison CT

Support of BILL No. 7358

AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee

My name is Jeannette Ickovics. I am a Professor at Yale University and the proud mother of two sons, ages 4 and 7. My older son is a second grade student in Public School in Madison CT, and my younger son will begin Kindergarten in September.

I have been delighted by the commitment of the Board of Education, district administration, and teachers; the kindness and engagement of the parents; the intellect and joy of the children. Everyone is committed to quality education.

On the other hand, I have been hugely disappointed by the lack of challenge and differentiation in the curriculum content, and by the limited use of technology and state of the art curriculum in elementary education.

We can do better for our children in Connecticut Public Schools.

I am not naïve to the political and financial pressures. I know that "No Child Left Behind" and CMT test scores are driving many educational decisions. But "No Child Left Behind" should not be the same as "No Child Gets Ahead." We must meet the needs of every child - maximizing his or her ability. It is simply good educational practice.

Our most important resources - our children - are not getting the education they deserve, are not meeting their potential, and therefore are not contributing as fully as they can to the intellectual and economic well-being of our state. As such, the lack of resources for gifted and talented students is a drain on Connecticut's economy.

We can do better for our children in Connecticut Public Schools.

At the end of August, a small group of parents in our district met to discuss ways to advocate, to best meet the educational needs of all children. Since then, we have grown to a mailing list of more than 70. IDEAL was formed, and seeks to be a voice of collaboration and support to the Madison Board of Education, the District leadership, the teachers, the parents, and the children of Madison -- and throughout Connecticut.

IDEAL is Innovative Development in Education, Assessment and Learning.

IDEAL seeks to support schools in providing all children with individually appropriate instruction through the use of ongoing, formative classroom assessment and other educational tools representing current "best practice."

Our overall goal is to enhance student achievement for all students - from those with special needs due to cognitive deficits or illness, to those who are on-par for grade level, to those with specific needs due to giftedness.

To meet this goal, we promote the following three aims:

1. Implement evidence-based on-going formative assessment;
2. Utilize assessment to guide differentiated educational instruction and enrichment activities; and
3. Provide on-going teacher training and mentorship to enable teachers to implement formative assessment and differentiated instruction.

As you move forward with Bill 7358, An Act Concerning Gifted and Talented Students - resources are required. We have an unprecedented opportunity with Governor Rell's proposed budget -- along with this and other educational initiatives -- to substantively enhance education for all children in Connecticut. Maximizing potential for all students in Connecticut - across all range of ability - can be achieved. Providing resources for those with low and high ability is not mutually exclusive.

We must do better for our children in Connecticut Public Schools.

I and other IDEAL parents look forward to working collaboratively with the Education Committee and the state legislature to maximize every child's learning potential and every child's achievement.

Thank you very much for reading this testimony. Personally, I urge you to support Bill No. 7358, An Act Concerning Gifted and Talented Students, on behalf of Connecticut's children. It will benefit our children, our schools, and our state. Don't settle for less, shoot for the IDEAL!

Sincerely,

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