

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: ^{NON-Speaking}
hinda Janowitz



Date: 3/12/07

Bill Number: 7348

PREVENTION POLICY BOARD

City Of Waterbury

To: The Education Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

From: Waterbury Prevention Policy Board
Sustainability Committee

RE: Testimony in support of **Bill #7348**

Date: March 10, 2007

Cohort 1--Sites at West Side Middle School, Washington Elementary School and Driggs Elementary School. Our partners are Girls, Inc. Of Greater Waterbury and Waterbury Youth Services System, Inc.

Quotes from our Parent Surveys:

"The staff are good role models."; "Extend the year for parents who work."; "My child has become more sociable."; "He listens better to me"; "He meets new friends and finishes his homework."; "He learned new things-for example, chess."; My child is more responsible for his work and actions."; My son is more polite, tries harder at school and looks forward to going to school every day."; "I would love to see the program extended to 5:30."; "I would like to thank you so much for your wonderful after school program. It really made a difference in my child's behavior and academic school year."; "You have helped my daughter with her self-esteem." "He is a happier child because of his homework help. He is no longer afraid of the homework because he knows he will get the help in school. At home there is a language barrier and I could not help Him."

Parent Surveys indicated that parents felt their children improved in the areas of homework completion by 91%, attitude/behavior by 85%, and quiz and test cores by 87%. Parents felt that the program met both their child and family needs by 98%.

Student Surveys showed that they enjoyed the programs by 98%. Their favorite activities were gym and arts programs by 81%. And they felt that the program helped meet academic needs by 88%.

Cohort 2--Site 1 - Sprague School/Waterbury Parks and Recreation

Site 2 - Downtown Academies: Mattatuck Museum, Girls, Inc. of Greater Waterbury, YMCA, Connecticut Junior Republic, Waterbury Youth Service System, Inc.

Quotes from our Parent Surveys:

"Keep up the good job. Thanks for your support."; "Program helps with his confidence."; "He is an only child so it is good for him to interact with other kids his age."; "He enjoys going someplace on his own."; "He doesn't have that chip on his shoulder."; "My child pays closer attention to what she is doing".

98% of our parents felt the program helped in homework completion, attitude/behavior, quiz and test scores, and meeting family needs.

From our Student Surveys we found that 94% of the students enjoyed the program and 98% felt that it helped them academically.

Responsibility and commitment are demonstrated by attendance at the after school programs which ranges from 64% to 94% at the sites, and positive learning that goes on during the program itself.

From one of our providers:

She is ecstatic to have an after school program at her school knowing that the children have a place to be that is safe and helps them with their academic and their social lives. The alternative is often going to an empty home where risky behaviors may occur. She is happy to know that she is helping the parents of these children by giving them peace of mind to know that their children are in a safe place while they are working.

Excerpts from the Testimony of Dr. Snead, Superintendent of Schools, Waterbury, CT.
Public hearing March 13, 2006

"The Waterbury community working collaboratively on multiple youth development initiatives including providing quality after school programs has developed and built a system of after school programs that meets the needs of working parents by being located in a variety of sites including schools, neighborhood facilities, and churches. They provide educational and enrichment activities for our most at risk students. The success of our programs is demonstrated by high attendance, in many cases more than 90%, and academic success with more than 50% of the students showing improvements in math and reading skills. Academic gains are measured by examining report card grades for math and reading in the first and third marking periods of the year.

Still, only a fraction of the need for after school programs is met. Despite our gains, we still serve only 20% of the target age population. Many children cannot be in our programs due to space and funding limitations. At the same time, we face reductions in the support for our existing after school programs. Recently, our community launched a planning effort to sustain the programs we have as 21st Century and private funding declines. Funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants are reduced in years four and five of each program. Grants from local foundations have also been reduced. State funding to support the continuation and expansion for such after school programs is critical.

We urge the Legislature to insure that the appropriated funds are used to sustain quality existing programs in addition to creating new ones. It would be heartbreaking to allow an existing, proven program to end in one site only to develop a new program in another. Our youth cannot afford the time it takes to develop or rebuild an after school program especially when we could lose excellent staff who have a positive relationship with the youth.

.....we hope the funds included for strategic planning are utilized in a variety of different ways including the support of new partnerships as well as sustaining and enhancing the partnerships that have been nurtured in communities like ours.

On behalf of the City of Waterbury and its after school network, I thank you for this opportunity to share our support and offer our suggestions."

Respectfully Submitted by
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