



Tuesday, February 20, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am here to testify on Senate bill #1114. On behalf of Side by Side Community School, I am pleased to present my experiences teaching in a school where school performance and teamwork are driven by a mission to create community, social justice, and tolerance. I am currently the second grade teacher at Side by Side. Prior to coming to SbS, my teaching experiences have found me in various educational settings, including a private elementary school, a "regular" public elementary school, and at an adult educational institution. I feel that out of all of my experiences, working in a public charter school has provided me with the most profound opportunity to impact students and to grow as a professional.

One of the most unique aspects of Side by Side is the constructivist approach to teaching, which is a philosophy shared among all of its teachers. Success is embedded in Side by Side's curriculum since our hands-on, investigative approach to teaching enables every student to construct meaning at a level that is "just right" for him/her. Students at Side by Side are not simply taught content, skills, and strategies as dictated by the curriculum, rather they encounter experiences which allow them to create their own understanding of the content, skills, and strategies that they are expected to know and do. Students are guided by teachers as they construct their own understanding of the world around them, particularly during academic endeavors, as well as during the pursuit of social justice and tolerance.

Because of the constructivist nature of student learning, teachers are constantly searching for better ways to provide meaningful learning experiences. However, better ways to provide meaningful experiences often come with a price; therefore, funding is detrimental to our hands-on approach to education. Although many programs at Side by Side are supplemented through grants and fundraising, it is frightening to think that any program might have to be sacrificed in the future due to lack of funding. For example, SbS currently benefits from an Early Reading Success grant that funds our *100 Book Challenge* reading program. More than half of the second grade is currently reading **above grade level**, and I believe this is in part due to the *100 Book Challenge* reading program. Without appropriate funding, programs like these would not be possible at Side by Side.

Another distinctive feature of this charter school is the teamwork that is evident between administration, teachers, parents, and students. Every invested stakeholder in Side by Side's success has a voice, and the only requirement for being heard is to speak, which in my experiences is very unique to education. Because everyone's thoughts and insight are embraced, teachers, parents, and administration are able to comfortably come together to brainstorm and problem solve ways to promote and expand student success and achievement. We do not work as separate bodies striving to achieve a common goal; instead we work as a community to ensure that we do achieve of our common goal.

Sincerely,

Erin Myers
Second Grade Teacher
Side by Side Community School