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New Haven Home Recovery Inc./ The Family School Connection:

Today, I appear before you as not only a public servant, but as an ambassador representing New Haven Home Recovery Inc. My name is Michael Rebimbas and I am the acting Clinical Supervisor for The Family School Connection program. This program operates in partnership with Fair Haven School and its 100+ faculty and staff members. The program serves over 75 families and more than 200 students that are either currently, or at one time, have been enrolled in the Family School Connection Program. I thank you for your time today and appreciate the opportunity to provide you a view into not only New Haven Home Recovery's FSC program, but our broader scope of influence on the Fair Haven School and New Haven community at large.

The Family School Connection program is a free and voluntary strength-based home visiting support program for families of school age children in

the Fairhaven K-8 School. Families are eligible for this program if their child demonstrates excessive problems with truancy, tardiness, educational neglect or behavioral issues. This is a prevention program that is designed to work with a variety of constituents including school principals, social workers, psychologists, resource officers, family resource aides, and teachers. This extended team, together, identifies children grades K-8 who may be "at risk".

The Family School Connection Program as been operating within New Haven Home Recovery and Fair Haven School for a little more then a year, and its success has spread like wildfire among Fair Haven School families. It has become the "life line" to family support, community resources, academic support for their children, and ultimate family stabilization. The FSC program has shepherded the enthusiasm and passion of the school community. The FSC program as become widely known within the Fair Haven School and the New Haven Board of Education for its successes and achievements with students and families. The FSC program prides itself on evolving parental ownership of a child's education from static participation to being actively invested in their progress, while empowering them to

create a living-learning atmosphere. Please allow me to share some accomplishments and successes:

- During the 1<sup>st</sup> half of this academic year 2009/2010, The FSC program was able to purchase school uniforms for children within our program who were in need. I am happy to report that not once was one of our students reported to the main office for not following dress code. Our students were praised for following the “uniform is unity” policy at Fair Haven School.
- During this academic year, Fair Haven School as seen a drop in DCF referrals and school administrators have credited the early prevention of the FSC program.
- This semester the FSC program as seen a 40% increase in parent involvement within their child’s education. FSC families (parents) are currently volunteering at Fair Haven School, and each month families are completing the FSC reading log that currently encourages parents to read to/ along with their children.
- 100% success rate of Fair Haven School students enrolling in the High School of their choice.
- 34% jump in academic grades after FSC program involvement.

- This academic year over 28 of our families received school supplies and backpacks at the beginning of the school year

It is with achievements and successes such as these that the FSC program had to recently create a waiting list for families who wish to enroll in to our program. Further, why several other New Haven Public Schools have expressed interest and need for the FSC program to expand into their schools and leverage the same successes we are so proud of at Fair Haven School.

But numbers and statistics should not be the only guiding factor for you to gauge our success at Fair Haven School. Please allow me to submit letters from Fair Haven School administrators, for they wish to express their excitement and express how valuable the FSC program is to their school and their students.

However, these successes and accomplishments have not been without hardship. New Haven Home Recovery has been serving the most vulnerable population in the state for the past 20 years, and over the past several years we have been impacted by several state cuts to various programs, ranging from \$25,000 to nearly \$50,000. Overtime, these cuts have added up to

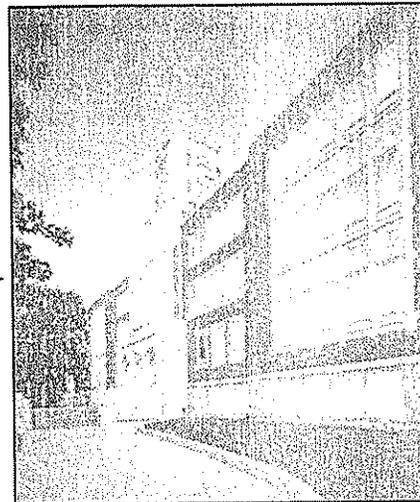
nearly a \$407,000 gap in our operating budget. This gap has been compounded by the economic conditions this year, which confronts our organization and its programs with an even greater challenge. Our staff has been overwhelmed as families in need continue to grow. Children in crisis continue to develop as waiting lists increase, and families who become victims of economic struggles and mental disabilities have become more prevalent. Yet family advocacy support programs and stabilization programs continue to get cut.

Our work within Fair Haven School and the New Haven community is far from complete. The proposed budget cut to the Children's Trust Fund and to the Family School Connection program would not only paralyze but cripple the work and success that has already occurred within the New Haven Community. I ask you today, to continue to invest in our children's future by providing New Haven Home Recovery and the FSC program the funds and tools to continue to plant seeds for growth in New Haven so we may reap the future harvest of our labors. Thank you for your time today and welcome any questions on the aforementioned successes.

# FAIR HAVEN SCHOOL

164 Grand Avenue  
New Haven, CT 06513  
203-691-2600

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February 8, 2010

Dear Mike,

As you are aware, Fair Haven School children and their families face many challenges daily, including lack of healthy food, shelter, and essential medical care every day due to a variety of factors including immigration status, low wages, job loss, injuries, illness, domestic violence, or divorce. While all of us are susceptible to hard times, our children are most at risk. Our school community has been enhanced since our partnership with New Haven Home Recovery. We are so very grateful for all of the wonderful programs and initiatives that Family School Connection (FSC) has afforded our children and families in our school community in the last two years.

Your generous donation of coats, hats, gloves and uniforms have helped so many families at our school. The help you have given to our families who have become homeless is utterly amazing. The look in a child's eyes when they do not know where they sleep tonight is devastating. The work and commitment to be able to place our families in a shelter, find an apartment and then help a parent find employment has provided security for children who have never felt secure prior to your help. This past holiday season exceeded all expectations for our children. Student's who thought Santa was not visiting, now believe! For this, we will be forever grateful.

The commitment you have made to our school community has made a difference in the lives of so many children in our school and neighborhood, and we can never express how truly grateful we are for your continued support.

We thank you for sharing our vision that until we can meet the needs of the whole child, academics are secondary. Thank you for saving so many children who need support so desperately and we hope our shared commitment to helping children and families continue to grow.

Sincerely,

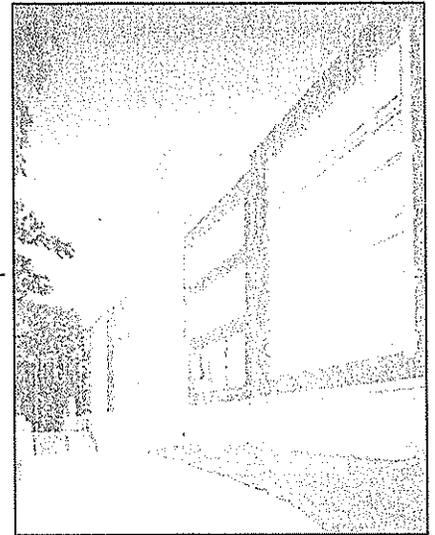


Kim Johnsky, Principal

# FAIR HAVEN SCHOOL

164 Grand Avenue  
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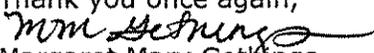
Dear Mike,

I can not begin to express my appreciation to you and your team for your cooperation, commitment and willingness to go above and beyond for our families at Fair Haven. Your organization embraces our school community and is always present at school functions. I am in awe of what you have done for our school in the last year. Thank you for sponsoring our *Reading is Fundamental Grant* providing a brand new book for every one of our students four times a year is an invaluable gift! We are committed to building our home libraries and through your generous support this has become a reality.

We are indeed grateful to FSC for your unlimited time and unyielding support to our school and community at large. I always know with every referral each family is looked into with sincerity and conviction. I am amazed at the academic growth of the students of whom you are working with directly have demonstrated. I appreciate you sharing the data to support that of all the families you work with no students failed any subjects this truly speaks volumes to the emphasis that your organization puts on education.

The holidays can present much stress for families who are struggling and your organization made certain to ensure that everybody enjoyed the holidays and you made sure the children were thought of without incurring additional stress for the families.

Your presence at our weekly SSST (Staff Student Support Team) is an incredible resource and valuable support. You are always readily available to make recommendations and extend your services. You have made a strong presence and commitment to our students. Your contributions to our school are evident daily by your enthusiasm and cooperative style. Your partnership is a critical piece to our school and helps in countless ways.

Thank you once again,  
  
Margaret Mary Gettings

Assistant Principal