

Written Testimony
Submitted to the Education Committee In Support Of

Education Implementer Bill #6502: An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program

March 7, 2011

To Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Marco Famiglietti and I am the Principal of Avon Middle School in Avon. Thank you for this opportunity to express my personal views regarding increasing funding for the Open Choice Program.

Although this program has been in existence for many years, the Open Choice program has experienced greater enrollment and created more meaningful opportunities for our students this year than ever before. The number of students enrolled in the program doubled this past year, bringing a total of 20 students from Hartford to Avon Middle School.

Grant funding from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) has allowed us to create several programs to address the academic and social needs of these students while fostering new friendships and relationships with their Avon peers. Each day after school, our media center is bustling with student activity while a staff member provides supervision and guidance. Students from Avon and Hartford work side-by-side on homework, participate in afterschool clubs & activities, and play on intramural sports teams. Once these activities end and the media center closes at 3:30 p.m., the Open Choice students, work with a teacher to make sure their homework is complete - receiving extra assistance if necessary - and have a snack before taking the late bus home at 4:15 p.m.

We further foster social interactions by encouraging our Open Choice students to stay for our Student Council dances which are held several times a year on Friday nights. Students stay after school and work with the Student Council to decorate and prepare for the evening's festivities. Prior to the dance, they all enjoy a pizza party and share some time to bond and get to know each other better. At the conclusion of the dance, a CREC bus is made available to bring students to their homes in Hartford.

Teachers and students alike have commented on the increased vitality and diversity this year at Avon Middle School. It is our hope that despite the difficult economic climate, the State will continue to fund the CREC programs and grants available for students to cross racial, social, and economic boundaries.

Sincerely,

Marco C. Famiglietti, Principal
Avon Middle School, Avon, CT