

**Testimony Submitted to the  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015**

Thank you Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Committee for allowing me to speak today. I am a voter in New Britain and am here today to speak to you on the importance of supporting and funding Magnet Schools. I believe education should be a choice. Every child should be able to receive a top quality education regardless of where they live. I also believe each child is different, with individual needs and learns differently. Magnet schools can be the answer to help educate children where the traditional community public school cannot. I would like to share our families experience with the magnet school system.

My daughter attends the CREC Montessori Magnet School in Hartford (MMS). When she was two years old, my husband and I, like most parents began looking into where our daughter will attend preschool and elementary school. After doing our research and learning what is available we decided the Montessori Pedagogy would be the best fit for her. At one year old she spoke in full sentences in two languages. She had this great sense of determination and attention span for such a little baby. She was able to learn and do whatever I exposed her too. She is my only child and this seemed normal to me. When she was two years old both her pediatrician and my sister-in-law, who works with the birth to three program, showed me developmental scales and tests that she is already at the four year old level in many areas.

My husband had attended Catholic Schools from kindergarten through high school. He was also like our daughter but his natural gifts and talents were never nurtured or challenged in this setting. We knew we did not want her to be bored and unchallenged. We also didn't want our little girl to be the only child in a classroom with all older students. This led us to deciding on the Montessori Pedagogy of Education. She would be in mixed age group of students where learning at different levels was the norm and yet still be a little girl with friends her own age. She would receive individualized instructions. The hands on and visual materials used would develop a deeper level of understanding of the lesson. She would be constantly challenged, engaged and able to grow at her pace. MMS was the perfect fit for her. It offered a top private school education with the benefits, diversity and affordability of a public school. We were fortunate to be admitted in the school lottery.

My daughter is now eight years old and still constantly growing and being challenged with an insatiable love of learning at MMS. It has been a great benefit for her but also for so many other students in many different ways. As she is being constantly challenged there are children at her age that still struggle with the very basics. These children are given the same individualized learning that supports them, gives them the time to really learn and grasp the lesson before

they move on. In a traditional public school setting the children will be in classroom learning the same lesson at the same time and the teacher would move on to the next lesson. My daughter would be bored and unchallenged the other student would not master the lesson and continue to fall behind. The Montessori education works for these children and all children. Being a Magnet School, makes it an affordable option for all families not just those who can afford a very pricey private school. I couldn't be happier with the level of education she is receiving.

The school's diversity is a big plus in helping all the students see such a natural acceptance and appreciation that we are all different, important, have value and something to give. By starting at MMS at age 3 with diversity all around her in culture, race, economics, developmental, physical and emotional ways, she sees each person as an individual, what they have to offer and that everyone matters. What a wonderful viewpoint for our children to grow up with. MMS has nurtured this respect and appreciation for everyone. The kids at MMS have such a unique love and respect for others. This comes from Grace and Courtesy being part of the curriculum. I wish this were part of every school's curriculum. The children are taught at three years old how to work together in the classroom, respect one another and the work others are doing. Proper manners and kindness are an important part of interactions with one another. MMS is educating the whole child to grow and be a positive and productive member of society with such an amazing love for learning, appreciation for all people and their surroundings. I couldn't ask for a better education.

This has been our experience with the magnet school. It is been a positive experience for the majority of parents at our school as well. Every family deserves the opportunity at a top quality education regardless of their zip code. The Magnet Schools are an answer for those who do not live in the top ranking school districts and cannot afford a private school. The magnet school option is also the reason why we decided to stay and live in New Britain. We love our home and our neighborhood. I grow up in New Britain and live near my family. Many of our family and friends have moved out of New Britain to better school districts. I believe having a magnet school option is a positive way to keep families from leaving our town.

I believe education in our country is a right not a privilege. I implore you to support the funding of magnet schools to offer this equal opportunity and right to everyone.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my point of view.

Sincerely,

Arbella Baba-Lanza  
New Britain, CT