

3/3/15

Testimony Submitted by Donna Marino
To Appropriations

In Support of the Parent Trust Fund and Family School Connection

- Over the past 15 years I have been involved with Parent Leadership Programs in Middletown and Middlesex County, which help parents become advocates and leaders for themselves their children, their families and their communities.
- These parent leadership training programs - Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE) and People Empowering People (PEP) -are currently funded through a collaboration of local grants, in-kind match and the Parent Trust Fund. These programs are family civic initiatives supported by **the Commission on Children**.
- PLTI, PEP & Parents SEE have a proven track record for involving parents and keeping them involved.
- **Remember parents are our children's first teachers and role models.**
- The opportunity for parents and children to learn together has been shown to increase academic achievement as well as the social and behavioral skills of the children.
- What better way is there to promote family literacy and lifelong learning than by bringing children and their parents together to share in the community learning process? All our parent leadership trainings offer intergenerational learning opportunities.
- The success of a parent has a direct correlation to the success of a child and to the entire family unit.
- The following success stories are representative of PLTI, PEP & Parent SEE graduates in Middlesex County and comparable in communities offering parent leadership training:

“Life Changing”- that is a quote used by the majority of our 400 PLTI, PEP and Parents SEE alumni when they talk about this program.

- Middletown parent leaders use the skills they learn in training to:
 - go back to work,
 - change careers,
 - finish high school,
 - go back to college,
 - become more involved in their children's school, and
 - become more involved in the community.
- Alumni have become PTA officers, Board of Education members, directors of nonprofit organizations, civic organization leaders, returning to school, led fatherhood initiatives, testified before the legislature, foster parents...
- **Over 100,000 volunteer hours have been logged by PLTI alumni from 2000 to 2015; at \$10 per hour that would be \$1,000,000.**
- **CLTI Projects impact:** “Going to College with Parents,” “Building a Community,” “Voting for Class Leaders,” book discussions, role-play. Parent Feedback includes: “grasp onto a sensitivity and

responsibility to others,” “exposure and understanding of children from different backgrounds” and positive outcomes from parent and child sharing classroom experiences on similar topics.

- **The Children’s Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) Projects impact:** “Going to College with Parents,” “Building a Community,” “Voting for Class Leaders,” book discussions, role-play. Parent Feedback includes: “grasp onto a sensitivity and responsibility to others,” “exposure and understanding of children from different backgrounds” and positive outcomes from parent and child sharing classroom experiences on similar topics.

To Sum Up

- PLTI, PEP and Parents SEE are currently funded through a collaboration of grants including the **Parent Trust Fund.**
- **Parent Trust dollars help local communities leverage dollars from other organizations/foundations.**
- Funding is needed from the Parent Trust Fund to continue to run these extremely successful programs.

Supporting and Empowering Families is happening in Middletown, New Haven and Norwich with the support of the Family School Connection (FSC) Home Visiting Program.

Family School Connection is the only intensive, research based, bilingual home visiting program for families with school aged children in Connecticut.

Children with families involved in the FSC program have demonstrated higher academic success in both reading and math; have experienced fewer referrals, tardiness and absenteeism. This program is helping to close our achievement gap.

Families access FSC when they are struggling with supporting their children’s school success in one or more of the following areas: truancy or chronic absenteeism; communicating with the school; a child’s behavior or mental health issue at home or school; a child’s physical, learning or developmental disability; a child’s academics; unstable housing or homelessness; domestic violence; and unmet basic needs.

Through weekly visits within the family’s home, Family School Connection Home Visitors can help parents with: family routines; increasing communication with school; setting goals for the family; using positive parenting tools; establishing homework routines; connecting to community resources; scheduling and budgeting; and helping children become more successful in school.

Middletown’s catchment population for FSC shows 56% of our children on Free and Reduced lunch, 31% of children in need of behavior and academic interventions, 20% of children screened showed school adjustment needs, and we have a significant increase in Spanish speaking families.

I ask that you **oppose the** governors proposed budget cut of the Parent Trust and Family School Connection.

Thank you.
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