



COVENTRY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To Whom it May Concern:

Re: Letter of Support – Value of STEPS Collaborative in Coventry

We are seriously disheartened to learn that the funding for STEPS and local early childhood collaboratives across the state is in jeopardy. The Governor's proposed budget cuts to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) effecting the STEPS collaborative would have a severe negative impact on our programs in Coventry. Currently our program receives between \$19,000 - \$21,000 in funding each year from the OEC. These funds are matched by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. This match results in state dollars going even further!

I urge legislators to consider HB 6004 which will require "*...the Office of Early Childhood to collaborate with local early childhood collaboratives in the implementation of early care and education and child development programs at the local level and to ensure the continued allocation of state resources to local early childhood collaboratives that are currently in place.*"

Locally, Coventry prides itself on the emphasis that is placed on educating students in the community. This emphasis is seen in many ways, but one outstanding initiative is Coventry's Early Childhood Collaborative, STEPS, which seeks to ensure that all children, birth to age 8, are nurtured, healthy, engaged, and successful learners. STEPS' charge is to increase the community's awareness about the importance of quality preschool education, to strengthen the early-learning experiences for all Coventry children, and to offer resources and support to families as the first teachers of their children. In essence, STEPS is the foundation of all early-learning initiatives in Coventry and is the building block for future school success in the Coventry Public Schools. Many representatives from our public school system, including the superintendent's office, building principals, and teachers, work closely with STEPS so that children will be able to arrive at the kindergarten door with the best early-learning experiences possible.

The Board of Education has continually supported the early childhood initiatives of STEPS by redeploying staff to sustain the work of STEPS and supporting parenting education. Most recently STEPS has partnered with the district in developing our submission of the Smart Start grant. This particular partnership began last year when a Preschool Feasibility Committee was formed and the Coordinator of Coventry STEPS was asked to Co-chair the committee. In addition, the district looks forward to the possible development of a Family Resource Center.

The collaboration between the Coventry Public Schools and STEPS has made a great impact on Coventry's youngest citizens. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further information.

Sincerely,

David J. Petrone
Superintendent of Schools

