

The Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Public Hearing, February 16, 2016
Testimony In Support of Magnet Schools

Good evening. My name is William Rice. My family and I are residents of Derby, Connecticut. My wife Paula and I feel strongly about the positive benefits of our children attending ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. We are here tonight in support of our school, and the educational opportunities that it provides to its students.

We have two children currently attending ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. Kelsey is a grade 7 student, and Kyndal is in grade 2. Our oldest daughter Kaelyn is a sophomore at Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden, and she is a graduate of ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. We felt so fortunate for our children to attend ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. After the Christian School, Kaelyn and Kelsey were attending closed we were in search of a school that would provide them with exposure to an ethnically diverse population that would educate their minds and cultivate their creativity. We found that at ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School.

All of our children enjoy and have enjoyed attending ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. Our oldest daughter Kaelyn was well prepared for high school and made lifelong friends. She played the piano at the graduation ceremony. Kelsey is doing very well in her classes, and the school has cultivated her creativity and love for arts. Kelsey plays the flute, has choreographed dances for the school plays, acted in the school plays and this year has worked with the staff to help to write the script for this year's play. Kyndal is enjoying being a Wintergreen student. She plays violin with the beginners, participates in the talent competitions, and has a part of a humming bird in the Theater Works play.

We were so impressed with the fact that the school does a great job making students feel safe and confident enough to be who they are and pursue their passions. I know that Kelsey and Kyndal look forward to going to school every day. Upon walking into the school, we feel comfortable leaving our children there for the day. The lines of communications are always open between parents and teachers.

We also really like the entire academic curriculum, and while it seems that many schools are moving away from the creative projects that once comprised their curriculum, we feel very fortunate to have our children at a school where creativity is embraced, and the teachers work hard to find ways to bring out the best in students. We are very happy with the academic and social growth we have seen in our kids since enrolling at the school.

For all the reasons stated above, it is essential that there is equitable funding for magnet schools so that the school can continue to provide great service to the students of Wintergreen and expand opportunities for current and future students. As you know being flat funded when expenses continue to increase means that the school is being underfunded. Underfunding the school will have a detrimental impact on the educational experiences for all the students who attend Wintergreen.

As parents of Wintergreen students, we ask for equitable funding and support for our school and magnet schools like it. Equitable funding will ensure equitable educational opportunities. It will also ensure that all the things that make Wintergreen great stay intact. With equitable funding, ACES Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School and other schools like it will be able to take advantage of new opportunities and programming such as a wide array of afterschool programs and additional activities that can continue to cultivate a sense of community for a school with families from many different towns.

Thank you for your time and attention.

William & Paula Rice
Derby, CT