

Testimony for Magnet School Funding by Michelle Nicholls, 8th Grade Student at Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School (ACES)

Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Nicholls and I am a Hamden resident and an eighth grader at Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School. I have been at Wintergreen since kindergarten and will be leaving for high school at the end of this year.

Wintergreen has been a wonderful place for me. It has given me so many opportunities to grow academically and as a person, and I have built many close relationships many of which have lasted for almost nine years. I love that I know such a diverse group of people and have friends whose families come from all over the world. When new students come to our school they are welcomed with open arms, and they end up fitting in well with everyone else. The teachers are very supportive in many different ways including academically, helping each student to reach their full potential and helping students to work together as a whole community. I love that they have challenged me and given me more and more opportunities and responsibilities over the years. I used to be one of the shyest people in my grade, if not the entire school. I would always be afraid to raise my hand in class, and speaking in front of the class used to be one of my worst nightmares. Now it is much easier to raise my hand and participate, and I also have a lot more confidence speaking in public. Wintergreen has helped me to break out of my shell and to grow academically and as a person.

Wintergreen offers many opportunities for learning to its students. One of my favorite things about Wintergreen is the music department. In the younger years, I loved the music classes and I got to learn to play the violin. Starting in 4th grade I was able to try out all of the band instruments and then choose my favorite, which was the flute. Aside from band during music class I am also in the marching band and in the jazz band and they are some of my favorite activities at Wintergreen. I have also participated in the Enrichment program which has expanded my horizons in areas such as business, film-making, and art. Participating in Student Government has also strengthened my connections with the other students and teachers, while making the school a better place. I asked some of the other students what they love about Wintergreen and one of the most popular comments was about our diversity and our very close relationships with each other. Some of the other responses included the support they get from the teachers and administration, being able to take Spanish at a young age, the many opportunities to learn and grow that are given to us at Wintergreen.

For those reasons and more, I believe that magnet schools should be funded so more children can have the kind of educational opportunities we have at Wintergreen.