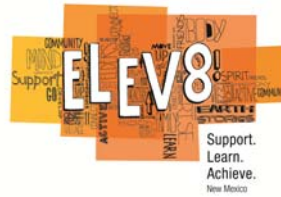




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**Renee Paisano-Trujillo, Executive Director, Elev8 New Mexico  
Testimony to the U.S. Senate  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee  
Hearing on “Innovative Approaches to School Time”**

**August 24, 2010**

Senator Bingaman and members of the Committee, I want to sincerely thank you for the invitation to testify today. The focus of this hearing addresses one of the most important issues affecting our communities locally and nationally. In particular, I believe we must address how we best serve our students and provide them with the most well-rounded and equitable education possible in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. It is my sincere belief that our youngest citizens are not prepared for today’s jobs and the jobs of the future.

***Beyond the Academic Outcomes***

In order to be successful in creating the most desirable outcomes, both economic and otherwise, we must re-evaluate and reform our approach to education in New Mexico and elsewhere. We must innovate in a way that involves broad community and consumers: the students and their families. Essentially what we are seeking is an ongoing process in which we redirect highly ingrained systems of education and close numerous and nearly immeasurable gaps. It will take long-term solutions and a plan to sustain New Mexico’s educational system, its economy, its quality of life and, quite frankly, its international stature well into the future. For Elev8 New Mexico, it all goes hand-in-hand, and it all begins with providing Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS). In a Full-Service Community School services are intentionally bundled. Those services include after-school learning and enrichment, “whole-child” and family health, mental health and dental care at school, and family supports such as financial literacy and access to available and much needed social services. It is the intent of Full-Service-Community-Schools to bring together the best educational and youth development practices in partnership with local educational agencies and community-based organizations. A key area of focus within a full-service community is family engagement where parents and whole families become sources of support not just for their students, but also for their schools. Full-Service Community Schools are about a

full cycle of support and accountability involving all that benefit and integrating all elements of the structure.

Aside from the strict academic outcomes that seem to be the emphasis of too much of the current discourse on education, the development of non-academic skills and competencies are necessary if we truly are going to prepare young people for the challenges of high school, the rigors of higher education and an ever changing 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and global economy. Non-cognitive factors such as enhanced emotional and social skills actually help improve cognitive functions and are a better indicator of success in school, the workplace, and life. There is a strong cause and effect relationship between non-cognitive factors (social intelligence, emotional intelligence, i.e., multiple intelligences) and the development of cognitive skills particularly during the middle school years.

### *Afterschool Enrichment*

One important component of my testimony before this committee is to discuss the value of afterschool programs but within an extended learning frame, which is what Elev8 New Mexico is advancing. Afterschool can be, in fact, a perfect laboratory to develop the social, emotional, and cognitive intelligences to best prepare students for postsecondary and career success. Afterschool can also be a place to develop critical thinkers who create and innovate, and who are equipped to articulate and defend their own ideas, which will ready students for careers that have not yet been defined. Developing these social/emotional and cognitive intelligences as a whole is particularly important for children of color and students in distressed communities. U.S. Census Data demonstrates that minorities are highly-concentrated in low-income, low-wage jobs with very little room for economic mobility. Without intervention, this basically means that young people will draw on the networks and opportunities that are available to them (e.g. the networks established by their parents and peers) which will almost certainly continue to perpetuate a cycle of poverty and low wage jobs. Afterschool provides the perfect opportunity to increase the social capital of young people by exposing them to a wide range of careers and professions through career exploration activities, internships, service learning and apprenticeships. When young people, especially those of color, are exposed to career professionals who come from similar backgrounds and look like them, careers that may have been perceived as “out of reach” suddenly seem more attainable.

In rural communities, career exploration activities are especially meaningful. Growing up on a rural reservation west of Albuquerque, my exposure to industries that are common in larger urban areas was minimal. Career exploration, service learning and apprenticeships in the afterschool space allow rural youth to aspire to become engineers, doctors, filmmakers and entrepreneurs by making these industries accessible and attainable. These activities also illuminate the pathways to careers by clearly outlining educational requirements, core competencies, the 21<sup>st</sup> skills needed, and available opportunities in emerging and existing industries.

Afterschool can also provide dynamic learning spaces for young people to cultivate their skills. Think about the traditional classroom. There is typically a teacher standing in front of a class, and the exchange of information is essentially one-way. In densely populated urban schools, student to teacher ratios can rise to 30:1 or greater. What this means is that academic achievement can become an individualized pursuit where young people have little opportunity to develop teamwork, interpersonal communication skills, and other social skills that can be cultivated through group activity. Afterschool helps fill this void by promoting project and inquiry-based team learning where young people can develop critical thinking, problem solving, negotiation, and intercultural communication skills that are sought after in today's 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace.

In properly and aptly preparing our next generation of leaders, we must not forget the important role afterschool enrichment activities play in a child's life. It may be a robotics program that teaches science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); an afterschool music program that reinforces math and literacy skills; a theatre program that allows students to build confidence and self-expression; or a cultural club that allows students to connect to their native language and traditions. Afterschool enrichment activities such as these cannot be dismissed as "fluff." They are essential in building social, emotional and academic competencies that are needed in school and life. What is important is that they be of the highest quality.

In a study of leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors, one of the most common variables was that the majority of leaders had participated in some type of music program in their formative years. Communities and leaders believe in the enriching power of arts and music education – be they art, music or any number of other enrichment programs – funded by local and national non-profit groups over the last several decades underscoring the correlation between academics and the arts and

encouraging communities and individuals to commit as seriously to these enrichments as they do math, reading and science.

There also exists strong evidence that enrichment activities make a difference in overall student achievement; not just in core subjects, but in every area of academia. A study of 25,000 students from the U.S Department of Education NELS Database showed that students with high-levels of arts participation outperformed students who were “arts-poor”. The study also showed that students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds benefited the most from enrichment activities.<sup>1</sup> We also know that sports activities in the afterschool space can be a vehicle to reduce health risks, such as obesity and diabetes.

### *Extended Learning Time and Increased Academic Instruction*

Another touchstone of the testimony I submit before you here today is what is known simply as Extended Learning Time, or ELT. As you will hear in other testimony throughout the day, there is growing momentum for extending the school day either by extending the hours for school teachers or by engaging nonprofit practitioners in the extended day space. Often referred to also as Expanded Learning Time, this strategy provides the additional time necessary to take students on deeper, more thorough expeditions of core subject areas, allowing full-time and second-shift educators a chance to lengthen, reinforce, and thus strengthen, lessons in core academic subjects.

As Eric Schwarz from Citizen Schools so eloquently stated in a memo to Education Secretary Arne Duncan:

*“Done right, Expanded Learning Time can deliver significant gains in academic achievement and promote hands-on learning, artistic enrichment, college preparation and career exploration. Done right, ELT can enlist a new workforce of “second-shift” educators who can bring learning to life, disrupt business-as-usual staffing and pedagogy, and complement the dedicated service of America’s classroom teachers.”*

ELT provides the intensive academic support that some students need to improve academically. While most ELT programs incorporate enrichment activities, many provide minimal time for these types of activities in the extended day.

I view afterschool enrichment activities and ELT on a continuum. Jeff Riley from the Boston Public Schools refers to this as the “layer cake approach.” On top of the regular

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<sup>1</sup> Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School. James S. Cattaraugus, 1998. Taken from Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning. The Arts Education Partnership.

school day, I view enrichment activities as a way to increase youth connections to their school by providing structured and semi-structured programming in areas like sports, music, drama, art and clubs. Enrichment is also a way to increase student attendance, which is a short-term predictor to long-term academic success.

An additional layer to the regular school day, is the ELT programs that are heavily focused on academic instruction in the extended day. ELT can help students advance academically and achieve proficiency in core subject areas. ELT can also have a significant impact on students with remedial needs or students that need increased support with their academics.

It is critical to understand that extended learning and enrichment are student-specific and one does not necessarily imitate the other. ELT and Enrichment need to be integrated; a bridge must be constructed to ensure balanced supports to learning and innovation. A successful bridge strategy has several core components to ensure successful integration:

- **Shared professional development opportunities for teachers and nonprofit practitioners.** Cross-walking approaches and pedagogy can help foster innovation in the classroom and in the extended day.
- **Services *must* support school goals.** School goals provide the necessary anchor to ensure that work in the extended day is intentional and promotes student and family success.
- **Engagement of talented “Second Shift Educators” and strong community/nonprofit partners to complement traditional instruction.** Involving strong nonprofit partners can provide fresh perspectives and lessen burnout of school teachers.
- **Integrate partners into existing school structures.** Integrating partner organizations into school structures, such as instructional council and curriculum committees reinforces classroom connections in the extended day space. It also provides a bridge for school staff to engage in activities that are happening afterschool.
- **Afterschool activities must be able to reach *all* students.** Some students may benefit most from increased academic instruction, while many others would

benefit most from enrichment activities. Schools need to offer both enrichment and EDL activities to increase school connections for students.

*And that speaks to the very heart of my testimony here today, Senator Bingaman – our schools need both.*

What I am proposing is a Full-Service Community School approach that combines the rigorous academics of a quality school with a wide range of services and supports to promote children's learning and development. A Full-Service Community School unites the most important influences in children's lives – schools, families, and communities - to create a web of support that nurtures their development toward productive adulthood.

Full-Service Community Schools build their vision from a comprehensive understanding of the developmental needs of children and youth, and seek to address the major developmental domains (cognitive, social, emotional, physical, moral) in ways that promote student success. A Full-Service Community School starts with a systematic assessment of needs – of each target population, school climate and community context. This assessment grounds decisions about resource allocation and partnership recruitment. Partner-provided and school-provided programs jointly meet school district and community goals.

There are several well-known Full-Service Community School models that have proven to be successful including:

- Elev8
- Beacons
- Children's Aid Society Community Schools
- Communities in Schools
- Healthy Start
- Polk Brothers Full-Service Schools

Students in Full-Service Community Schools are positively impacted:

- Research shows that middle school students who regularly attended high-quality afterschool programs demonstrated significant gains in standardized test scores and self-reported better work habits than their peers who did not participate in afterschool programs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the

- Regular participation in afterschool programs has also proven to reduce risky behaviors. For example, middle school students who regularly participated in afterschool programs reported less use of drugs and alcohol than students that did not participate in afterschool.<sup>3</sup>
- Afterschool is also proven to increase youths' self-perceptions, bonding to school, and school attendance.<sup>45</sup>
- In rural, native communities where there are high-levels of participation in after school, we have seen significant increases in math proficiency. Laguna Middle School, on a rural reservation west of Albuquerque, was able to achieve a 45% increase in math proficiency in one year. For 7<sup>th</sup> graders, math proficiency doubled from 2008 to 2009.
- We know that Full-Service Community Schools can have a positive impact on school climate and school safety. At Wilson Middle School in Albuquerque, youth arrests in the school and surrounding community went from 60 to 1 in one year.

### *Turnaround of Low-Performing Schools*

The sole responsibility of turning around schools and increasing student achievement should not be placed exclusively on the schools. It is my belief that turnaround by definition requires strong partnerships between schools, the nonprofit community and governmental agencies to achieve the results we all desire. In fact, as you heard in the *Edwards Case Study*, school turnaround was a confluence of strong school leadership, expanded learning time and more partners to address the needs of students. In New Mexico, I have found that more partners in the school space is merely a starting point. The tipping point for success in the Full-Service Community School model occurs when the partners and the services they provide are integrated within the school structure. Without the integration, you get more of the same siloed work that has minimal impact in turning a school around. Integration requires a strong commitment from all parties and a belief that through shared responsibility we can have a greater impact. As I

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Study of Promising Afterschool Programs. Deboral Lowe Vandell, Elizabeth Reisner and Kim Pierce, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> The Impact of Afterschool Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills. Joseph A. Durlak and Roger P. Weissberg, 2007

<sup>5</sup> The Afterschool Alliance. Afterschool Programs: Making a Difference. Retrieved on August 11, 2010 from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after\\_out.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after_out.cfm).

stated earlier: The Full-Service Community School structure is underpinned by accountability.

Through Elev8 NM, we have established strong relationships with state-level partners including the New Mexico Public Education Department, New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Children, Youth and Families and the New Mexico Children's Cabinet. These partnerships have allowed us to achieve greater alignment around:

- **Core mission and vision for serving our state's youth.** We accomplish this, in part, by aligning to our Children's Cabinet 5 Outcomes.
- **Investments for children.** Ensuring that we are maximizing investments from private, public and philanthropic institutions for the benefit of youth and families. It's not always about securing new resources. Sometimes it's about realigning existing resources to best support our target population.
- **Engaging our public partners in the planning, implementation and assessment of Elev8 programming.** Once again, it's about integration. Our public partners are involved in our Advisory Council, assessment and evaluation committee, and other leadership structures. Our public partners work with us to ensure rigor in both our assessment and our approach.

It is important to know the benefits of investing in extended learning. An independent cost/benefits evaluation showed that The Quantum Opportunities after-school program saved taxpayers and crime victims an average of \$16,428 in crime costs for every youth served.<sup>10</sup> This figure does not include decreased welfare expenditures and increased tax dollars from higher earnings. The impact of adequate funding for extended learning leads to a simple conclusion: failing to invest in quality after-school programs squanders billions of dollars.

### *Ensuring Student Success: Extended Learning in a Full-Service Community School Approach*

As Congress considers extended learning time in the reauthorization of ESEA and other funded programs we believe we must:

- Increase flexibility of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (and SES) allowable activities, including a community schools approach to ensure that the interests and intelligences of the students are part of the process toward student success. An integrative approach that ensures that youth development, mental



and physical health, extended learning, and family supports are appropriately incorporated into the school space is essential.

- Resource the role of intermediary organizations as a support structure that eliminates burden on school leadership and staff and ensure the successful implementation of extended learning with other school supports such as health, family services and engagement, extracurricular activities, etc. Our intermediary operates to support extended learning providers and school systems by providing training, quality assurance, sustainability, convening, neutral facilitation, planning support, and other services.
- Maintain 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program's focus on ensuring that kids have safe, supervised learning environments beyond the traditional school day; continue to balance academic programming with enrichment activities; and add physical activity, health and nutrition education as allowable activities.
- Increase authorized funding and annual appropriation for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and we must assure that 21st CCLC funds be maintained solely for extended learning use and not be re-directed for use during the school day. Currently many more children and youth need afterschool: more than 15 million children are unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends. Increased funding authorization levels are critical if allowable activities and focus of program are broadened. Further, we must align federal funding to ensure that qualified citizen teachers/community based providers support extended learning in full partnership with classroom teachers and school leadership.
- Fund an afterschool infrastructure that ensures mixed method evaluation and quality improvement strategies that connect to state educational standards. For New Mexico, we propose that all afterschool programs be systematically measured for quality and continuous improvement. Measures of student success must show growth and improvement over time and student achievement and success to include preliminary indicators such as improved school day attendance, better classroom grades, positive attitude towards school, daily program attendance, on time advancement to the next grade level and on a pathway to high school graduation and career- and college-readiness. Data collection should include the above indicators.
- Continue to support service and volunteerism programs like AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA to ensure low-cost, no cost support to afterschool programs,

thereby ensuring a more expansive citizen support base that increases educational opportunity and *economic* mobility for whole communities.

### **Conclusion**

In New Mexico, Elev8's Full-Service Community Schools are a bridge that works to increase student success. At Gadsden Middle School, Elev8 is helping students like Peter succeed:

*During his two years at Gadsden Middle School in Anthony, Peter was known as a very quiet and reserved student. Early in his 8th grade year, Peter shocked his friends by announcing that he wanted to be the Treasurer of Student Council. In his interview with the Student Council Selection Committee, Peter shared his new love of finances. A year earlier, Peter had been interested in, but very confused about banking and investments and how finances worked in general. That was before he became an active participant in the MicroSociety extended learning program. Beyond project based learning or fleeting simulations, MicroSociety makes a connection to the real world come alive for students. MicroSociety teaches about economy, citizenship and government, humanities and arts, business, technology and more. A strand like economy and its sub strands, like banking, consist of core subjects, such as, math, and encompass all aspects found within an actual society. Peter took an interest in the banking industry, in Gadsden Middle School's MicroSociety. He told the interview committee how much he had learned about deposits, credits, saving and investing. He described how the Federal Reserve Bank operated, not an easy feat even for the majority of adults. He said he knew that finances were complicated but said he was prepared to handle the enormous responsibility. He was elected Treasurer, served his term and has since graduated to Gadsden High School. One of his teachers, Mrs. Corona, said that MicroSociety is what helped Peter to become a confident leader who now really believes in himself as he navigates high school.*

This is but one of many amazing stories of success occurring across the five Elev8 New Mexico sites, attributable directly to Full-Service Community Schools in action.

We saw a decrease in student arrests from 60 to one at an urban school site. We saw a decrease in teen pregnancies to zero for the last two years in a rural border school. We saw a leap in math proficiency by 45% in a reservation school. At the systemic level we have led collaborative processes for ensuring the quality of extended learning and school based health. Additionally, we have worked collaboratively to increase the number of children receiving free nutritious meals in the state.

These impacts do not occur in a silo, but rather as part of a Full-Service Community School approach that brings together educators, students, administrators, business and community leaders, families and a vast network of caregivers and researchers – all of whom contribute experience and knowledge to a common outcome. Though cliché, it is

true through our experience that to tackle 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges we must address the whole challenge facing our students today.

Education that supports economic mobility for all must include health, wellbeing, and sociological components so that today's students are ready for the jobs the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will bring. That is especially true in a state like New Mexico, where cutting-edge industry and innovative technology are already playing an enormous role in the future of our economy. Beyond future employment and higher education, today's students are faced with more life challenges than any generation that has come before.

The Full-Service Community School approach becomes part of the answer in addressing the multi-decade decline in meeting important student and youth outcomes. It does this through a well integrated system of whole support to ensure success for all and not just some. Elev8 wants to be part of the forward educational thinking and system-wide reform that makes certain all citizens are educated, working, and contributing to the whole. I stand proud and hopeful before you here today, Senator Bingaman, distinguished Committee members, and esteemed panelists in saying that the work has already begun. The importance of your support and active involvement in Full-Service Community Schools cannot be understated. Thank you.