

**Educating Our Children to Succeed in the Global Economy**  
**Summary of Testimony to the HELP Committee on ESEA Reauthorization and STEM Education**

**Heidi A. Sipe, Ed.S., Superintendent of Umatilla County School District #6R**  
**July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

I transitioned from teaching to educational administration in 2002 with the charge of implementing the mandates of *No Child Left Behind* throughout our school district. The Umatilla School District is a rural district on the banks of the Columbia River in the northeastern corner of Oregon. Umatilla schools serve the poorest student population in Oregon with 84.62% of the K-12 student body qualifying for free/reduced lunch. The majority of students in Umatilla are Hispanic and many are English Language Learners. When the first AYP reports were released, schools within Umatilla district boundaries produced less than satisfactory results. Since 2002, Umatilla educators have implemented focused, data-driven, school improvement teams to improve instruction for students. Improvement efforts have resulted in strong student growth at all levels as reflected on AYP reports.

While all Umatilla schools have shown marked improvement, Clara Brownell Middle School (CBMS) has emerged as a strong example of the strengths and challenges, of the *No Child Left Behind* mandates. Clara Brownell Middle school serves 316 high poverty (91.22% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch) students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. As one can see in the following charts, Clara Brownell Middle School was once a school with less than acceptable student performance, however, due to focused improvement efforts, CBMS has become a school with strong student performance in all student subgroups.

**Historical Performance of Clara Brownell Students as Reflected on AYP Reports**

<b>English/Language Arts</b>	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>	<b>07-08</b>	<b>08-09</b>	<b>09-10</b>
All Students	42.37	45.43	73.55	71.75	72.31	73.13
Economically Disadvantaged	36.97	37.79	68.35	66.86	68.34	69.24
Limited English Proficient	28.55	29.64	55.02	52.29	57.14	61.58
Students with Disabilities	31.23	28.95	38.87	64.15	67.52	61.57
Hispanic origin	31.76	34.10	63.60	62.95	66.12	67.93
White	60.36	63.92	91.71	90.93	89.24	89.16
<b>Math</b>	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>	<b>07-08</b>	<b>08-09</b>	<b>09-10</b>
All Students	56.94	67.22	73.42	75.98	79.94	82.19
Economically Disadvantaged	51.38	60.90	68.68	71.5	76.8	79.44
Limited English Proficient	39.59	50.27	56.17	62.07	64.73	70.36
Students with Disabilities	n/a	n/a	41.79	57.18	64.15	64.43
Hispanic origin	42.79	54.54	64.12	67.33	74.81	78.34
White	78.95	87.68	90.81	94.74	95.13	96.06

NOTE: In 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07, the AYP targets were 49% in mathematics and 50% in English/language arts. In 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10, the AYP targets were 59% in mathematics and 60% in English/language arts. Text in red indicates a failure to make AYP in the specified subgroup, text in green indicates making AYP in the specified subgroup.

In 2004, the school began a collaborative restructuring process. Teacher leaders and school administration worked together to identify student needs (based on assessment data) and develop strategies to meet student needs. Focused staff development was provided to all staff members and monitored by instructional coaches and peer feedback was provided during walk-through visits. In addition to specialized coursework during the day, after-school programs and summer school options were developed for students. School culture issues were addressed in coordination with associated student body leaders to encourage the school to become focused on learning and celebrations of academic success. When this work began, involved parties were told to be patient and stay focused as it would take at least two years for the results of the work to reflect on state assessment results. In the 2006-07 school year, the school reflected in the results of the improvement efforts when English Language Arts student performance jumped from 42.37% in 2004-05 to 73.55% in 2006-07.

Despite increasing AYP targets, in 2007-08 and 2009-10, CBMS made AYP and in 2008-09, the school was approximately four Limited English Proficient students shy of meeting AYP. Despite the success of Clara Brownell students, CBMS is classified as a school in year four of School Improvement under NCLB mandates and thus, must abide by various sanctions such as Supplemental Education Services and restructuring.

Though the district offers a strong after-school program for students, the Umatilla School District must set aside 20% of its Title IA allocation to offer Supplemental Education Services to students of poverty of in schools in improvement sanctions. The chart below compares the after-school program offered to Clara Brownell Middle School students by the district and Advantage Point Learning's Supplemental Education Services. It is important to note that Supplemental Education Service providers are not required to instruct students toward state assessments and can instead set goals based on their own assessments which are often not aligned to the goals/standards of the school. In one recent example during the 2010-11 school year, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student was working on place value (ones, tens, hundreds) in his supplemental service time despite having mastered this skill in the first grade according to multiple school assessments. Many Supplemental Service providers recruit students with promises of expensive prizes. In the 2010-11 school year, various SES providers advertised Wiis, Playstations and Ipods to students when recruiting. The services provided by Supplemental Service providers are expensive and divert funding from classrooms toward private companies with varied results for students.

	<b>Umatilla School District After-School Tutoring</b>	<b>Advantage Point SES</b>
<b>Qualifications of Tutors</b>	Oregon State Certified Teachers	No minimum certification requirements ( <a href="http://www.advantagepoint.org/Page.asp?NavID=26">http://www.advantagepoint.org/Page.asp?NavID=26</a> )
<b>Cost to District/Hour</b>	\$21.62 (salary+payroll benefits)/hour Wage per hour/teacher: \$16.63	\$65.00/student/hour Advertised wage per tutor/hour: Between \$19 and \$30/hour ( <a href="http://www.advantagepoint.org/Page.asp?NavID=26">http://www.advantagepoint.org/Page.asp?NavID=26</a> )
<b>Cost to District/Hour for Ten Students</b>	\$21.62	\$650.00

<b>Total Instructional Hours Offered Per Student Each Year</b>	Approximately 168	Approximately 22
<b>Staffing Cost to District Per Year for Ten Students</b>	\$3,632.16 (168 hours of instruction/student for small group of ten students by certified teacher)	\$14,300 (22 hours of instruction/student for small group of ten students by tutor)
<b>Meals</b>	Full supper is offered to all participating students.	Not offered.
<b>Transportation</b>	Busing is provided for all participating students (District paid).	Not offered.
<b>Incentives</b>	Not offered.	Ipod Shuffle, Ipod Nano, Ipod Touch, Visa Gift Cards
<b>Program Availability</b>	First week of October through first week of May, four days per week. Offered to all Clara Brownell Middle School students.	Dependent upon student schedule. Services end when student has reached \$1,431.00 (approximately 22 hours of instruction/assessment). Services offered to low-SES (free/reduced lunch qualifying) students only.
<b>History of Effectiveness</b>	<p>The last full program audit found students who attended 30 or more demonstrated the following success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% of students passed the Oregon State Assessment in math.</li> <li>• 81% of students passed the Oregon State Assessment in reading.</li> <li>• Students showed an average gain of 10.4 rit points in math.</li> <li>• Students showed an average gain of 6.6 rit points in reading.</li> </ul>	<p>A+ Advantage Point Learning served 1170 Oregon students in 2009-10. 94.2% of these students met or exceeded their academic goals. Throughout our organization, we helped over 3,200 students in the Pacific Northwest develop reading and math skills. In Reading, the average grade equivalency gain was 1.8. Math students demonstrated an average grade equivalency gain of 2.6. (Information supplied by Advantage Point Learning).</p> <p><b>NOTE: Goals are not required to align with Oregon State Assessments.</b></p>
<b>NOTES:</b>	In addition to payroll costs, curriculum materials and supplies for this program are approx. \$2,500/year	All program data supplied here is representative only to services provided to Umatilla School District. Services/qualifications may vary by location.

Elements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* have had a profoundly positive impact on Clara Brownell Middle School. The emphasis on student subgroups, in lieu of overall student performance, led the school toward greater student success by forcing the school to closely examine and improve its professional practices for individual students. This change has greatly benefited students of poverty and English Language Learners. School improvement funding and federal dollars have been essential in professional development support. Collaborative teams and strong professional development practices (paid professional development time, team time to review and utilize student data, instructional coaching and peer feedback during walk-through visits) have led to increased student achievement.

Elements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* have had a profoundly negative impact on Clara Brownell Middle School. Labeling schools as “failing” based on moving targets is damaging to the morale of staff, students and community members. Though CBMS was just four students away from three years of AYP success, it is labeled as failing and identified as a school “in need of improvement.” In fact, with historical test scores in the top of schools with similar demographics, Clara Brownell Middle School is far from failing. A label does emotional harm, yet the sanctions that come with the label require significant resources and dilute other services to students. Of largest concern to me as a school leader is the lack of research behind the sanctions. Supplemental Education Services are costly, yet have unproven effectiveness. The models required as solutions in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) process are based on model schools- many of which also fail to make AYP. It is difficult to maintain staff motivation and morale when the sanctions they must work to avoid are severe and unproven.

As Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act moves forward, I urge our leaders to rely upon proven strategies to help our students succeed. Please maintain high expectations for student learning, transition from monitoring subgroup achievement to monitoring individual achievement, provide strong support for sustained professional development, offer funds for strong afterschool programs in lieu of unproven SES services, and avoid asking schools to change course without first giving them the time necessary for reforms to yield results. Education reform takes time and funding, sustaining the reforms takes reliable funding and continued momentum. Please consider an ESEA proposal that balances the need for action with the patience required for change to occur and the funding to allow reforms to be fully implemented and appropriately monitored. America cannot afford to continue to chase unresearched educational reforms.