

Clare Struck Summary Testimony—April 22, 2010

The work of the Price Laboratory School (PLS) is to provide all of our children—from six weeks of age through high school—with a whole child education; one that ensures that they are **healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.**

As Congress begins work on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it is critical that the current overemphasis on standardized tests, punitive accountability system, and rigid mandates be replaced by a more student-centered, educator-supporting, instruction-driven model focused on teaching and learning and meeting the needs of all students, both in and out of school. PLS embraces this model of providing a whole child education to all its children and has seen tremendous results.

As the elementary school counselor at PLS for the past 27 years, I have provided pupil services in four main areas: curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support. Research shows that students do better academically when they feel supported by caring and qualified adults. Additionally, they are less likely to engage in risky, violent, or self destructive behaviors. Simply put, students who don't have access to adults who understand their social and emotional development are less likely to do well academically.

Pupil services providers are vital to fostering and sustaining a school climate that embraces the five tenets of the ASCD Whole Child Initiative—healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Congress can best support the work of pupil service providers by establishing policies that promote:

- Innovative and useful reforms that require state and local governments to dismantle the obstacles to collaboration between and among school systems and the social, health, and safety services that support children.
- Alternate pathways to graduation that are available to all students.
- An adult mentor for each student—one who supports individualized learning opportunities that engage students in relevant curriculum and challenging education plans.
- The facilitation of school partnerships with community service agencies and other local entities.
- Flexible grouping and flexible time frames to measure success, which enables schools to develop alternative approaches to the Carnegie Unit and other traditional conventions such as the traditional school day and year.
- Publicly reporting the ratio of counselors and support staff to students—with an effort toward meeting the goal of the ASCA recommended 250:1 student to counselor ratio.
- School turnaround strategies that incorporate the tenets of the Whole Child Initiative—with special attention to fortifying the relationships and interpersonal connections among students, staff, and families—to support student achievement.
- Content assessments that are valid, reliable, and comprehensible for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Now more than ever, we must provide students with a comprehensive education that imparts the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies necessary to succeed after graduation. This effort involves much more than a simplistic focus on a standardized test score in reading or math but requires a whole child approach to education. Pupil services providers such as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses can be a constant force in developing and maintaining a positive school climate and a culture of caring where all students feel connected, safe, and able to learn.

Children who are hurting, hungry, scared, and disengaged cannot learn. We must recognize and address these needs if we are to have any hope of educating all students to proficiency in all academic subjects. PLS joins with educators across the country in calling on policy makers to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.