

BOX ELDER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DISTRICT NO. 13-G, HILL COUNTY
BOX ELDER, MONTANA 59521

EXHIBIT 10
DATE 3-19-07
HB 566

March 15, 2007
Testimony on House Bill 566

Dear House Appropriation Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of after school programs for our students at Box Elder Schools in Box Elder, Montana. I have been involved with our 21st Century Community Learning Center grant for the past five years and have seen the positive academic and school climate changes that have helped move our school district from being low performing to now being recognized as a model school.

Last month our elementary school was awarded State Title I Distinguished School honors and in January we received the National Title I Distinguished School award from the National Association of State Title I Directors. In April of 2006 our elementary school earned Exemplary Status from the Catching the Dream Foundation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Our elementary school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) the past two years and has exited School Improvement Status. Our high school made Adequate Yearly Progress last year and we will find out in August if we made it again so that we can exit School Improvement Status with that school as well. Our middle school has restructured and is looking forward to making AYP both this year and next year.

The common link between our schools is the 21st CCLC after school program. Our elementary students have developed a love for learning and are excited about the various programs that we offer them. Our most popular programs continue to be after school cooking and tutoring. Our middle school and high school students appreciate the additional math instruction and homework assistance.

I believe that in order to increase the graduation rate in schools with our demographics that we really need to make sure that students are reading at the third grade level by the end of the third grade. We offer our struggling 1st and 2nd grade students an opportunity to become good readers and better math students. Various departments and consultants have helped us help our students succeed. I would ask that you consider funding after school programs so that no child gets left behind. Thanks for taking the time to read this and for allowing me to speak.

Sincerely,



Kevin Barsotti-Counselor and Federal Programs

Kevin Barsotti Speech Notes for HB 566 Testimony on after school programs.

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee
(If Chair is absent) Or Madame Chair, Members of the Committee

I want to thank the House Appropriation Committee Members for allowing me to testify today in support of House Bill 566. It is a privilege and an honor to be here. My name is Kevin Barsotti and I serve as the school counselor and the federal programs director at Box Elder Schools in Box Elder, Montana. We border the Rocky Boy Reservation and 98% of our students are Native Americans.

We've recently received both national and state recognition for improving our school and our elementary school was the only Native American elementary school in the nation to receive the Distinguished Award from the National Association of State Title I Directors earlier this year. Our elementary school has exited school improvement status and our high school made AYP last year. Our middle school has restructured and we're looking forward to seeing our 7th and 8th grade students make Adequate Yearly Progress this year.

It has taken a lot of hard work and teamwork to see these kinds of results and a number of different individuals and departments have helped us succeed. A major piece for helping students succeed has been our 21st Century Community Learning Center program which has provided after school programs and summer school for our students.

We have a problem with diabetes in our area and our cooking classes are popular and diabetic friendly. You should see the excitement in our young elementary students when they get to go to cooking. This is exciting but the best story that I have for you is the success that our young readers have experienced through our after school Reading Intervention program.

About four years ago we started this program for struggling first grade readers because we knew that we had students who knew very few letters or sounds. We started looking at what we could do for these students and we knew that there was just not enough time during the regular school day to help these kids close the achievement gap.

We called parents and offered them an opportunity to have their children attend our after school Reading Intervention program two nights each week and at the year's end these readers had made significant progress in closing the achievement gap and now three years later all of these students are reading at grade level.

One of these students who only knew two letters when he entered our program (he didn't even know the letters in his own name) was able to read several books at the end of the year. Because of our success in reading we are now able to offer a math manipulative class one night each week and still offer reading intervention, cooking, and prevention activities the other nights.

High school students also have seen a dramatic turn around in their academic careers because of after school tutoring. One 21st CCLC student just earned February student of the month honors. His science teacher said, "Gary is a young man who has shown tremendous growth, both personally and academically. He has gone from being a student who struggled in his science classes to currently being the top student in Chemistry. He has developed a work ethic that will ensure his future academic success. He realizes his academic challenges and has attended tutoring religiously in order to maintain good grades."

Climate wise, behavior wise, and academic wise things have improved greatly at Box Elder Schools. I close with a reminder from the old Fram oil filter commercial. The mechanic says, "You can pay me now, or pay me later." I'm a believer in preventative maintenance and after school programs prevent problems down the road and help us get to our destination where we leave no child behind.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Barsotti". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kevin Barsotti-Counselor and Federal Programs Director