

Renee Paisano-Trujillo, Director, Elev8 New Mexico
An Initiative of the New Mexico Community Foundation
Testimony to the U.S. Senate
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (H.E.L.P.) Committee
Hearing on “Innovative Approaches to School Time”

August 24, 2010

Senator Bingaman and members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify today. As a long time afterschool advocate, I feel that an equitable education includes high-quality extended learning and afterschool to prepare students for future jobs and in fields we can't yet imagine. Furthermore, I believe we need to create cost efficiencies that avoid cuts to essential programs – programs that allow students to create, innovate, and defend their own ideas.

Elev8 NM, a public/private partnership working closely with the New Mexico Children's Cabinet and various other government entities, is advancing extended learning through a full-service community school approach – where community based organizations—many of whom are in the room — work alongside school staff and national service volunteers to provide comprehensive coordinated services. Services include extended learning; comprehensive school based health, family engagement, and various supports to families.

Exposing young people to a wide range of careers, similar to those advanced by Citizen Schools and MicroSociety, increases their social capital. Consider how afterschool and

extended learning can develop the multiple intelligences needed to compete in the 21st Century. It could be a robotics program that teaches science, technology, engineering and math; an afterschool music program that reinforces math and literacy skills; a theatre program that allows students to build confidence and self-expression; or cultural arts that allow students to connect to their native language and traditions. To achieve this, we need to expose young people to career professionals who come from similar backgrounds and to careers that may seem “out of reach.”

National research tells us that high-quality afterschool can support gains in standardized test scores, school attendance and bonding that keep students on the right path to graduation. In our Elev8 sites, through inquiry and project-based learning—connected to the school day curriculum—we have also seen:

1. A decrease in arrests from 60 to 1 on one of our school campuses.
2. An increase in math nearing proficiency from 2008 to 2009 in our reservation school. *And in the same school a 214% increase in proficiency from 7th to 8th grade.*
3. A decrease in disciplinary referrals across all of the Elev8 sites.
4. And, recognition that our Elev8 School Based Health Centers are among the top in NM meeting necessary productivity standards.

Schools cannot address student success alone, and nor should afterschool and extended learning be the only additional learning supports. School based health programs keep

kids in school and influence academic performance. Youth development practices help motivate learning. Community involvement is crucial but needs the support of a central coordination and engagement structure. The tipping point for success, however, occurs when services integrate seamlessly into the school; and when all partners are committed to a shared vision and responsibilities. Without integration, you get more of the same siloed work.

As this committee and Congress consider extended learning time in the reauthorization of ESEA, we believe we must:

1. Maintain separate funding streams for Full Service Community Schools and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
2. Increase authorized funding and annual appropriation for 21st Century CCLP, maintaining funds solely for extended learning and afterschool, not to be re-directed for use during the school day
3. AND, resource afterschool and extended learning evaluation.

In conclusion I want to tell you about Peter...now in the 9th grade:

At the beginning of his 8th grade year, Peter decided to run for Student Council Treasurer. His desire was complicated by the fact that he knew little about finances and was also a withdrawn student. When he entered MicroSociety, a nationally recognized program supporting Elev8 NM, his confusion ended. Beyond project-based learning or fleeting simulations, MicroSociety makes a connection to the actual world. Peter learned about the economy, citizenship and government. He also learned about savings, investing and how the Federal

Reserve Bank operates. He WAS elected Student Council Treasurer. One of his teachers credits Elev8 and MicroSociety for his new confidence and ability to navigate the ninth grade.

Senator Bingaman, distinguished Committee members, your support of Full-Service Community Schools cannot be understated. Though it takes a community, I'd like to acknowledge the Superintendents and Principals attached to Elev8 for advancing full-service community schools in New Mexico. TOGETHER, let's avoid the high cost of failed futures and invest in quality education and afterschool extended learning opportunities. Thank you!