

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners' Meeting
Public Comment Sign-Up Sheet

Meeting Date: May 14, 2014

Agenda Item: Fiscal Year 2015 Budget

Testifying For: Allocating funds to expand SUN program to expand School-based Social Services Coordination in Schools

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Written Comments to the Board in lieu of giving oral comments submitted 5-14-14 to the Board Clerk via email at lynda.grow@multco.us

Madam Chair Madrigal and Multnomah County Commissioners,

I am writing today in support of the Fiscal Year 2015 budget, specifically the portion of the budget allocating additional resources to 10 SUN programs within the city of Portland and local school districts.

I am submitting for your consideration a synthesis of research I conducted as Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University in the summer of 2013. Funded by a Roosevelt alumnus and the PGE Foundation, this study examined the impact of the School-based Social Services program developed in partnership with the SUN program and a PGE grant-funded school-based social services coordinator on the Roosevelt High School Campus where I served as campus principal (2005-2009).

The study results have been shared with numerous community members at the university, city, county, and state level, in addition to non-profit organizations supporting youth in poverty in our County. I believe many in our County and Sate are supportive of expanded school-based social services, as am I, based on the evidence indicating the strong impact of school-based social services coordination on the ability of youth in poverty to stay in school and graduate.

There were several findings from the data of the study:

1. Strong student-staff relationships are critical, regardless of the program in which the staff member works.

2. Knowing there is one person to go to on the school campus and that this person knows the student, cares for the student, and motivates the students is very important to the youth.
3. Clothing, food, school supplies, health care, tutoring, credit recovery, and job search assistance in the school help make up for lack of support in the home, homelessness, and hunger. Former students believe that access to a clothes closet was extremely important as a starting place for building a trusting relationship with adults who can help them access other resources.
4. It is important to youth that support is offered in the school, by local community members, who understand the community.

I will attach the report below for your consideration.

Youth underserved by our educational organizations in our county deserve our support, and the County's budget provides much needed school-based social services coordination. The Department of Human Services is also to be commended for their dedication to collaborating with the County and with SUN Schools to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness of programming for middle school and high school youth in poverty.

I also want to commend *All Hands Raised* for their continued focus on increasing attendance and graduation rates of under-served youth in our communities by increasing the collective impact of local, state, and County initiatives. Our youth are counting on each of us.

Sincerely yours,

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At-Risk High School Students: A Strong Finish

Economic Impacts of Poverty

The research is clear that additional supports and interventions in the early childhood years prevent future educational disparities. Rightfully so, early childhood interventions should be a high priority in Oregon.

However, abandoning support for our at-risk high school youth is unacceptable and has long-term costs to our community.

Economic conditions of the past 50 years have created vast societal disparities in the United States. Future workers who grow up in low-income families face strong barriers to moving up the economic ladder (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, and Saez; 2013). Children raised in poverty are more likely to be unemployed, earn less money in their working lifetime, receive more food stamps, are more likely to be incarcerated, become single parents more often, and have poorer health (Coley and Baker, 2013; Northeastern University, 2009).

In Multnomah County, 2010 data indicated that 75,369 families with related children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level (Greater Portland Pulse, 2011). Portland children whose families fall in the lowest 20 % income bracket have a 9% chance of future incomes in the top 20% (Coley and Baker, 2013).

Poverty impacts Educational Success

Unlike in previous decades, economic conditions now exceed the impact of race on educational outcomes (Reardon, 2013). A recent study quantified the impact of poverty on adult cognitive function, indicating poverty can reduce IQ by 13 points (Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E., and Zhao, J., 2013). Not surprisingly, childhood poverty significantly impacts how children perform in school. For example, food insecure children are more likely to miss class, have behavior issues in school, repeat a grade, and need mental health support (Coley and Baker, 2013).

Low-income families are less likely to provide after-school or out-of-school time (OST) activities and other enrichment opportunities, with affluent families now spending seven times as much as low-income families on their children's development. This further increases educational disparities (Reardon, 2013). It is well documented that OST activities support academic achievement while also preparing students for future success in our communities (Little, 2009).

High school dropouts experience significant additional societal and employment barriers. High school dropouts are 47 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers who graduate from four-year colleges. Black male dropouts are disproportionately imprisoned, with 23% of Black male dropouts incarcerated compared to 6 or 7% of Asian, Hispanic, or White male dropouts (Northeastern University, 2009).

Multnomah County estimates that more than 50% of the high school students in its boundaries, representing 11,250 students, are not graduating with a large percentage of the dropouts representing African-American and Latino youth. Multnomah County cites the importance of Noguera's work (2007) in which he comments that schools must recognize and address non-academic barriers to school success, a call echoed by Reardon (2013) and others in the May, 2013 ASCD publication of *Educational Leadership*. It is estimated that in one Multnomah County school district alone, Portland Public Schools, there are 1100 dropouts a year (Hammond, 2012).

Beyond the impact of dropping out of high school on the individual youth who has dropped out, the societal impact of providing for each dropout is estimated at \$292,000 per lifetime (Northeastern University, 2009) with total annual federal poverty costs estimated at \$500 billion per year (Coley and Baker, 2013).

Multnomah County has targeted funds to mitigate the impact of poverty on high school youth by funding four Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) high school programs. Potapchuk (2013) has identified the characteristics of the Multnomah County SUN programs, including the service model and students served, while also outlining two additional community schools models that could inform future Multnomah County SUN programming at the high school level.

Recommendations for replication of the Roosevelt model at additional Multnomah County high schools (Appendices B and C) include components of the Potapchuk (2013) analysis, and reflect the models implemented in the South Puget Sound area (Washington) and in Los Angeles (California) schools.

At-Risk High School Youth: The Roosevelt Experiment

In 2007 an organization comprised of business and civic leaders called *Employers for Educational Excellence* (E3) visited the Roosevelt High School Campus in North Portland with the goal of increasing their members' understanding of the challenges facing schools with high poverty.

Then principal and current assistant professor and principal researcher for this study Deborah Peterson was invited by the Portland General Electric (PGE) Foundation to propose an intervention that would impact the success of high school students living in poverty. Like many Multnomah communities that have experienced a significant economic slump in recent years, 75% of the students in the Roosevelt community qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program (Oregon Department of Education a) and 7% of the families are unemployed (United States Census Bureau). While Portland's general population indicates that 3% of the K-12 students are homeless (Dunga, 2012), it is estimated an average of 15% of the students in the Roosevelt community were homeless, according to the federal Title X definition of homelessness (Lehnhoff, 2011).

Then Principal Peterson proposed funding social services coordination; within weeks PGE granted Roosevelt and E3 \$160,000 for a two-year pilot project. The cost of coordinating the program was \$75,000/year for service to 150-200 students per year.

Study Information

After six years of successful implementation of a social services coordination model, community leaders requested an evaluation of the success of the model and contacted the researcher to conduct this study. This study is a mixed-methods study that identifies 1) the components of the school-based social services coordination (SSSC) and OST model and 2) the impact of the model on youth.

Study Methodology and Procedures

This study is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) study using mixed methods: document review, survey, focus groups and interviews. The document review included 32 documents publicly available regarding any aspect of the social services coordination and out-of-school time activity coordination. The 8-question survey was completed by 33 adults 18 years of age and older; 14 were former students who accessed services and 19 who provided or donated services to youth. The researcher also conducted interviews or focus groups with 12 adults who provided, donated or accessed services.

Components of the School-based Social Services and OST Model

The study sought to understand what the components of the SSSC and OST model were and how services impacted youth. The study sought to understand these issues from the perspectives of those donating, providing or receiving services.

This study found that high school youth from low-income families succeed in school when they receive wraparound support services that mitigate food insecurity, homelessness, lack of access to health care, and clothing needs and where students also have access to OST mentoring, tutoring, and credit recovery. This confirms findings of numerous other researchers, including Coley and Baker (2013), Little (2009), and Potapcuk (2013).

Common Themes Among Participants

There were several common themes among the respondents.

5. Strong student-staff relationships are critical, regardless of the program in which the staff member works.
6. Knowing there is one person to go to and that this person knows the student, cares for the student, and motivates the students is very important to the youth.
7. Clothing, food, school supplies, health care, tutoring, credit recovery, and job search assistance in the school help make up for lack of support in the home, homelessness, and hunger. Former students believe that access to a clothes closet was extremely important as a starting place for building a trusting relationship with adults who can help them access other resources.
8. It is important to youth that support is offered in the school, by local community members, who understand the community.

Key Policy Implication

The most important implication of the SSSC and OST model is in regard to public policy. Schools need to expand their perspective on the role of the school for children living in poverty. As one donor who is active in state level educational policy commented,

“The overarching theme [regarding how to help at-risk youth succeed in high school] is the primacy of the school in the lives of children, whether it wishes to be or not. School administrators must recognize that their role goes beyond simply providing a curriculum to making sure that students have the physical capacity and correct mindset to learn and graduate.”

The participant continued in this line of thought, saying,

“School districts and school administrators don’t believe this is their problem to solve. My experience with other districts as well is it’s not their job to make sure [the youth’s] needs are met, just curriculum and good teaching. I think it’s a naïve approach and pretty common, until you have administrators who fund [student support] differently.”

Former Student Perspective

Former students reported the most important aspect of the SSSC and OST model was the importance of a strong student-staff relationship. Every former student reported having at least one staff member who pushed them, knew them as a person, and believed in them. As one former student said,

“So you are our extended family. [Our families] are busy breaking their backs to get food on the table and keep a stable household, which is unstable due to poverty, and poverty plays a major element in it, and you’re surrounded

by people who have no clothes, abuse, and if they wouldn’t have had [a staff member who knows them] what would have happened?”

When asked which after-school program made the most impact on him, no single program stood out. As one student said,

“I don’t think it’s one specific program. It’s more about the people forming relationships. As far as education, if a student has one person to go to, to sit down and listen and sincerely cares about seeing them progress, that makes the most difference.”

This concept of care within the relationship was also connected to high expectations, as expressed by another student:

“Certain teachers, feeling like your teachers care about you, not just there to teach; of course, you’ll have certain teachers, but some say, ‘Did you do your homework today?’ It affected me when I felt like my teachers cared.”

Former students also indicated that school-based services such as clothing support, food assistance, school supplies, health care, homework help, and job search assistance helped them stay in school and graduate. While many might not understand the importance of providing food to hungry students, one student indignantly commented, *“How could you possibly learn and do well in school if your basic needs to survive are not met?”*

Not surprisingly, former students indicated that it was important that the clothes closet was readily available and didn't embarrass them or cause them to be set apart from others.

Former students also indicated that after-school programs such as tutoring, homework assistance, and credit recovery programs were valued as they didn't have support at home or didn't have a stable place to sleep.

Next, it was important to the students that the SSSC and OST model provided support in the local community and with the support of local community organizations who understood the particular culture of the community. This sense that others in their community believed in them contributed to the students' ability to stay in school and graduate.

Former students indicated that the primary services they accessed were:

- a. Food assistance 54.2%
- b. School supplies 54.2%
- c. Health care services 54.2%
- d. Job search services 45.8%
- e. Clothing assistance 45.8%
- f. Shampoo, soap, deodorant, feminine products, etc. 37.5%
- g. Assistance paying bills (rent, electricity, etc.) 25%
- h. Help finding housing 29.2%
- i. Laundry facilities 16.7%

Students reported accessing the following after-school or winter/spring/summer school program access:

- a. Tutoring or homework help: 54.2%
- b. Credit recovery: 41.7%
- c. Arts program: 25%
- d. Writing program: 25%
- e. Science program: 16.7%

Provider and Donor Perspective

Service providers had comments similar to the students on the importance of relationships. As one provider said, *"The biggest impact I've seen around social services coordination is when the people providing the social services can provide support but also build relationships with the kids and families and that more than anything is what moves them to graduation, strong relationships with adults in the building."* Another

provider spoke about the usefulness of relationships in holding kids accountable:

They know all the adults in the building are aware of those services so they feel like they can connect with the adults to access the services; it allows the teachers and the coordinators to have the discussion and they know we touch base about it so the accountability is higher for coming to school, attend[ing], and participat[ing].

Another provider made a similar statement about high expectations:

“In this program we have tried to build a culture that it is good to have good grades; whereas many of the students who flounder are ‘too cool for school’ which means to say there are no adults who praise them for good results.”

The perspective of donors and providers converged with students in areas related to the impact of hunger and homelessness on educational success. As Lehnhoff (2011) said, “A student who doesn't know where she's going to sleep tonight is not going to be fully attentive in class -- no matter how good the teacher or curriculum.”

While no former student mentioned the importance of mental health counseling, many adults commented on its importance. Lehnhoff's (2011) comment best describes their common view: “Like it or not, these non-academic barriers -- substance abuse, domestic and community violence, mental illness, absent or neglectful parents, homelessness, poverty, hunger, etc. -- present enormous challenges that have to be addressed at a societal level, rather than by focusing only on the educational architecture.”

Limitations of the Study

This small-scale study was designed to provide initial findings on the impact of SSC and OST coordination on the ability of high schools students who are living in poverty to stay in school and graduate. As with any small-scale study, there are limitations.

One limitation is the small sample size of those completing the survey and of those participating in the focus groups and interviews. Ideally, all students in a high school would be surveyed and current students receiving services would participate in the focus group and interviews.

Another limitation is that this study did not access student records and thus could not determine the impact of accessing social services and after-school supports on school attendance, GPA, disciplinary actions, on-time graduation, 5-year graduation, and post-secondary attendance.

Finally, this data was collected after services were received. It would be important to collect data on barriers to student success from the students' perspective prior to developing a service model, as well as during and after service delivery. School data from students receiving services with those of similar demographics who are not receiving service should also be analyzed.

Replication of the Roosevelt Experiment in High Poverty Multnomah County High Schools

An additional request of the community partners sponsoring this study was to determine how and where to replicate this model.

How. To replicate this model, it is essential to determine which components of the model are important in a specific community and what a one-year implementation plan might look like. The following steps would be required in a replication model:

1. identify high poverty Multnomah County high schools;
2. determine scope of work and partnership agreement parameters;
3. identify funding for replication and expansion services;
4. secure School District – County partnership agreements;
5. identify advisory board representatives;
6. develop a single framework for SSC and OST programming;
7. determine student needs in each setting;
8. ensure community-based programming and partnering;
9. share student outcome data between service providers and schools;
10. facilitation of quarterly meetings to maximize efficiency and effectiveness among partner schools;
11. solicit input from advisory team on quarterly basis;
12. use student outcome data to evaluate the impact of SSC and OST coordination and report findings to policy makers, funders, and researchers;
13. conduct cost-benefit analysis of SSC and OST coordination.

The study proposes a one-year replication plan and a proposed budget and timeline for replication (available from the author upon request).

Where. As many as 6,087 students total youth in seven high poverty high schools in Multnomah County could benefit from the SSSC and OST model as shown in Table 1.

Expanding the model to include all schools in Table 1 would increase the number of students served by approximately 2100 students.

Table 1: Multnomah County High Schools with the Highest Rates of Free/Reduced Lunch

School	Percent Eligibility	Total Eligible	Total Students
Reynolds Learning Academy	91.2	228	250
Centennial Learning Center	79.8	91	114
Jefferson High School*	76.2	336	441
Roosevelt High School*	74.7	559	748
David Douglas High School*	72.2	2296	3180
Parkrose High School*	72.0	720	1000
Reynolds High School	70.1	1857	2648

*has existing Multnomah County SUN program

Source: Oregon Department of Education. *Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch*. Retrieved June 27, 2013 from <http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0061Select2.asp>.

Details Regarding Implementation

Framework. Using a single framework for all schools considering school-based social services and after-school coordination is a strong starting place. However, each community will have unique needs based on its demographics, existing support systems, student needs, and existing school programming. Therefore, each community may want to work with an experienced social services coordinator and facilitator to adapt the model based on local conditions. However, it is the school administrator who facilitates the partnering with appropriate agencies, service providers, and community stakeholders.

Determining Student Needs. Secondly, understanding the student perspective is key to developing a successful school-based model as the adults and students have differing perspectives regarding student needs. While the Roosevelt Social Services Coordinator developed a survey to determine the needs of its students, each community will want to administer the survey to its student population to ensure the services provided meet the needs of the local students. The fact that former students identified food, school supplies, health care, and clothing as a high need while adults believed that mental health services were a high need, it appears that offering a clothes closet, supply closet, and food pantry may be an avenue for developing trusting relationships in which staff could suggest mental health counseling.

Community Based One recent study regarding victims of Hurricane Sandy indicate that 58% of families impacted by the Hurricane turned to families, friends, and neighbors for support while only 16% turned to the federal government and 7% to the state government (Thompson, T., Benz, J., Agiesta, J., Cagney, K, and Meit, M., 2013). Youth in this study regularly indicated there were adults in the school to whom they could turn for support. While this study did not ask specifically whether students accessed governmental resources, it might be that they are similarly more likely to turn to school personnel before they would turn to the federal, state, or local governmental agencies. Certainly the youth in this study trusted those who understood their unique local culture. Implementing school-based social services coordination may be a cost-effective, efficient model for maximizing the power of community engagement, sustainability in tough budget times, addressing educational inequities, and truly creating schools in which race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status do not predict educational outcomes.

Data Sharing. Schools and governmental agencies must follow all legal requirements of the Federal Education Rights Privacy Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, as well as any additional federal, state, and case laws and district policy related to student records. Data must be shared by those providing services to youth in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and to analyze the impact of the model on student success in schools.

Using Data for Program Evaluation. Third, existing school data (GPA, attendance, drug and alcohol discipline data, suspension/expulsion data, and graduation rates) must be collected and analyzed to determine the impact of social services coordination on student success in schools. While the data from this study indicate the impact of social services and after-school coordination on students from the student and provider/donor perspective, using school measurements will be an additional way to determine the financial value of funding such a model.

Cost-Benefit Analysis. Next, the issue of fiscal efficiency must be explored. Is it a sound financial practice to fund a school-based social services coordinator? Public schools were designed to educate children, not to care for their basic needs such as food, clothing, or housing. However, if schools fail to address their basic need for shelter and food, can the children learn? If the answer is that our schools should provide support for non-academic barriers to success in schools, then we will want to know how to fund the support.

If schools were to fund the school-based social services coordinator in a school with 800 children, you would need to add one child to each class in the school in exchange for a social services coordinator. The pro-active interventions of providing clothing, housing support, and food might allow the students to focus more in class, reducing the need to pay for repeat courses or credit recovery. Another way to analyze the cost-benefit is to

examine the cost of a student repeating a class. If you have 800 students in a school and 25% are homeless and every homeless child fails one class due to hunger, not having a good night's sleep because of homelessness or staying home from school because she doesn't have clothes to wear, then addressing the issue of food, homelessness, and clothing through a social services coordinator will pay for the service coordination. When students pass a class, schools do not have to pay for the student to re-take a failed class.

Next Steps

Communities experiencing high poverty need to consider how the school, governmental, non-profit, and faith-based communities will come together to support all youth in their community. This model can be easily replicated in an efficient, cost-effective manner (model available upon request). While early childhood education is a key starting place, we can invest a small amount of money in the high school years to ensure a strong finish. As one former student commented on social services coordination,

“These services may not seem like a lot, but for some kids these things may be the difference between them staying [in school]--- or just staying alive.”

At-Risk High School Students: A Strong Finish

Appendix A: References

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