

August 20, 2010

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3102

Dear Senator Bingaman:

It is my honor to testify before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on "Innovative Approaches to School Time." As you are aware, Albuquerque Public Schools is the largest school district in the state of New Mexico with more than 90,000 students attending school each day. As the largest school district in the urban area of Albuquerque and surrounding communities, we face challenges every day with meeting specific educational goals of students during the traditional school day. A typical high school student will attend school from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day. However, this schedule poses particular problems for some students who are working to help or fully support a family or who face a multitude of other issues in their life.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the district formed the "Extended Day Program" with no new funds. This program took existing resources that were allocated to Evening High School and diverted them to this program. This also focused resources in alignment with the district's number one goal of improving student achievement and increasing graduation rates.

Each comprehensive high school received a teacher allocation of two additional class periods to implement the program. This made the program available at each high school in our community, which directly increased participation. Students who traditionally would have attended Evening High School, faced transportation and other challenges of getting to the school which was located at Albuquerque High School. Albuquerque High School is located in the middle of the city, more than a dozen miles away from most other high schools.

The focus of the "Extended Day Program" is on students who need to recover credits that they are missing or for students who have failed a course that needs to be made up to stay "on track" towards graduation. In addition, schools have been able to identify students who need to remediate a course for next fall and will begin right as school begins for the 2010-2011 school year. High school counselors have played a pivotal role in the program because they have identified students that need to be placed in the program.

After the first semester the number of students who participated in the program, dramatically increased. During the first semester there were 700 students enrolled in the program and during the second semester 1,700 students were enrolled. The courses were offered from 2:45 p.m. to 5 p.m. and were a hybrid of direct, face-to-face instruction and on-line instruction. The individual comprehensive

high schools chose the offered courses based on the courses at their school that had the greatest number of failures.

Since this was a pilot program, the Albuquerque Public Schools evaluated the data from the “Extended Day Program.” The findings show that there were 2,523 non-duplicated students participating in the program with slightly more males taking courses than females. Hispanic students make up 69 percent of the students participating in the program. The outcomes need to improve with only 26 percent of students completing courses, 59 percent still enrolled in courses and only 15 percent dropped the course. Enclosed with this document you will find a breakdown by school, gender, ethnicity, and letter grade received.

Students in this program have been able to provide testimony about the impact APS’ extended day had on their high school success. Young men who found themselves engaged in risk behaviors and leaving school found the extended day an opportunity to ‘catch up’ to their peers and graduate with them. Students who had gotten off-track for high school success due to failing core requirements found an appealing way to recover those credits. These students took challenging courses and moved at their own pace through the extended day program, some taking more than 2-3 courses to finish.

There is no better measure of a program’s success for high school students than graduation. This past year, 296 seniors completed extended day courses that allowed them to graduate either with their peers or within the allowable 5-year time period for on-time graduation.

Sincerely,

Winston C. Brooks
Superintendent