

Talking Points for Dr. Tony Baker
Testimony Before House Appropriations DHS Subcommittee
Wednesday, October 2, 2013 -- Noon

- Good afternoon, Chairman MacGregor and distinguished committee members.
- Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today.
- On behalf of our Superintendent Teresa Weatherall Neal and the entire Grand Rapids Board of Education, I first want to take this opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to Representative MacGregor.
- Since being elected, as a member of the West Michigan delegation, you've always worked with us, took interest in the unique issues facing GRPS and urban districts across the state, and really took the time to learn about the remarkable transformation occurring in our district. So thank you!
- My name is Dr. Tony Baker, I am a member of the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education and a board member for the ELO Network – representing 60 organizations serving more than 21,000 children in 180 sites.
- I am here today to share our thoughts and concerns about after school programming – particularly the dramatic reduction of after school services due largely to federal funding cuts and sequestration
- First and foremost, I hope we can all agree after school programming is a critical service to children and families alike.
- Students who are engaged in after school programming are more likely to perform better academically, they are more likely to stay in school and graduate, and as importantly, they are less likely to get in trouble.
- It engages them in school, helps with social skills, it provides cultural experiences, they may otherwise not have, it provides students support with homework, helps students make connections, build relationships with positive adults, etc.
- It is disguised learning that students enjoy, provided by caring trained professionals. This helps students that may otherwise be disengaged from learning after the regular school day.
- In addition to the academic and educational development benefit, after school programming is also a crime prevention issue.

- We know that afterschool -- between 3-6pm -- students who are not in after school programming, athletics, or have some other activity to keep them busy, they are more susceptible to getting in trouble.
- Grand Rapids has embraced after school programming.
- The ELO Network has worked hard to provide quality and access and are very concerned about the 21st CCLC dollars drying up that has resulted in over 12 defunded sites affecting nearly 600 children in the greater Grand Rapids area.
- Specific to GRPS, in 2008-2009, we had 34 after school sites funded with \$5.1 million in federal pass through dollars.
- Today, we have only 25 sites with \$3.2 million in federal dollars.
- 9 sites eliminated with more than \$1.9 million in funding cuts!
- While these cuts are largely due to federal funding cuts and sequestration, the reality is the private funding is not there to make up the difference -- and we believe that our great state of Michigan needs to step in and help.
- Just like with early childhood funding, after school programming is a smart, strategic investment -- one that pays large dividends in the long run with improved academics, increased graduation rates, and reduced crime in our neighborhoods.
- We welcome this committee to come to Grand Rapids for a site visit so we can walk you through how our programs are run so you can learn about the very effective and efficient way we manage these vital after school programs.
- Thank you.