

CONVERSE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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David G. Stetkiewicz
Principal

Susan A. North
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Free Tutoring for Your Child!

September 9, 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Help your child succeed in school – sign up for free tutoring! As a result of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, your child may be able to receive extra help in the areas of math, reading, and language arts. You can receive this free tutoring because your child's school is in its second year or later of "school improvement," and your family meets the income limits under the law.

You can choose a free tutoring program that is best for your child. A list of approved tutoring programs in this area is enclosed. These programs have been approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and will provide your child with tutoring that is coordinated with what is being taught in school. Please call Mrs. Susan North, CMS Assistant Principal, if you have any questions about these services.

In order to receive services, parents/guardians must request the services and select a provider from a state list of approved providers. The Massachusetts Department of Education has designated approved supplemental service providers for students from our district. A brief description of three of these providers is attached. A complete list of providers in Massachusetts can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ses/results.aspx>

If you are interested in your child receiving supplemental academic services from one of the designated providers, please complete the form on the reverse side of this letter and return to the school by Friday, September 23, 2011.

All requests will be reviewed and you will be notified as to whether or not your child will be eligible to receive the services. The federal government establishes a maximum dollar amount that our school must make available for supplemental services. If funding does not allow our school to fulfill all requests, priority will be given to students based on objective criteria that relates to academic achievement. Transportation for your child to attend any of the outside programs will be your responsibility. If you are notified that your child has been selected to participate in this program, our school and the provider will enter into an agreement with you regarding the services.

Thank you.

David Stetkiewicz, Principal

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Supplemental Educational Services

Here is a description of the services supplied by three of the providers approved for Palmer.

Provider: Collaborative for Educational Services (Formerly Hampshire Educational Collaborative)

Program Description (written by provider)

The Collaborative for Educational Services is a public, non-profit educational service agency, based in western Massachusetts, that has been helping students learn for 30 years. The Compass Learning software system, found online at compasslearningodyssey.com, forms the backbone of our tutoring program. Our tutors are certified teachers who work with parents and classroom teachers to identify each student's unique needs and learning styles. Tutors first create individualized pre-tests for each student in math and/or English Language Arts. The tutors then work with groups of 2-5 students to guide them through their computer-based learning paths, and provide individualized, direct instruction to supplement the self-paced, on-line learning. One-to-one tutoring is available for students with significant special needs. Parents receive weekly reports that show students' daily activities, as well as detailed monthly progress reports. Tutoring is conveniently held in the student's school, immediately before or after school. Students generally meet with their tutors twice a week, for an hour to an hour and a half each session, for a total of 30 hours.

Evidence of Effectiveness (written by provider)

The main curriculum tool is Compass Learning software, a research proven, effective tool to improve student understanding of concepts evaluated by the Massachusetts M.C.A.S. test. Compass Learning is aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum standards and has been an integral part of the Collaborative's efforts in the past four years to boost student learning through Supplemental Educational Services.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, students enrolled in the Collaborative's SES program showed a percentage point gain of more than 50 points on 19 percent of the objectives they covered. A percentage point gain of at least 20 points was realized on 63 percent of objectives covered. In the 2009-2010 school year, more than 60 percent of students who enrolled met or exceeded the educational goals set at the start of tutoring. An additional 33 percent made progress toward their goals.

School districts across the country have found the Compass Learning Odyssey curriculum successful. In August 2009, Compass Learning Odyssey Math was found to have a potentially positive effect on math achievement by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse. The rating is the result of a study that found that fifth-grade students who used Odyssey Math in addition to regular coursework scored an average of 103 points higher on the mathematics portion of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) than did students who did not use Odyssey Math.

And at a middle school in the Brandywine School District in Wilmington, DE, school officials reported an 8 percent increase in the number of seventh-grade students meeting standards on the state. In math, 23 percent more students met standards. Similar results were found at the eighth-grade level, after students spend 60 minutes per week using the Compass Learning Odyssey online curriculum to supplement their classroom instruction.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

The Palmer Public Schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

Provider: Learning Styles L.L.C.

Program Description (written by provider)

Learning Styles specializes in providing 1:1 or very small group tutoring for students at all grade and ability levels. For over 25 years we have worked with thousands of students to improve each student's skills and strategies. Learning Styles is noted for our ability to work with students who have IEP/504 Plans. We work with parents and schools to determine challenge areas and focus on areas of greatest need. A Learning Plan is developed for each student and taught by a highly qualified tutor. Students set and achieve goals using programs and strategies designed to help them quickly learn the strategies and skills needed to be successful learners. Computers, educational games and other hands-on activities are part of every session. Sessions usually last from 1 to 2 hours.

When possible we work with families to find a convenient time for tutoring including after school, early evening and weekends. Feedback after each session explains what has been accomplished. These summaries, monitored by a learning specialist, can be e-mailed to home and school.

Evidence of Effectiveness (written by provider)

Learning Styles—A Professional Tutoring Service

Learning Styles is a local Massachusetts SES Provider serving students in the western and southeastern parts of the state. As an example of our effectiveness, of the students enrolled in 2009-2010, 86 % attended the first session and participated in pretesting. Using the Learning Styles guidelines for measuring progress (see below) 73% of our students who were pretested and post tested met or exceeded their goals.

Learning Styles Guidelines for Measuring Progress of Students

Using standardized achievement tests or subtests in the designated area of need, the following guidelines were used to judge student progress:

Exceptional Progress: A year or more of progress from pretest to post test during the tutoring period of approximately 5-6 calendar months or a standard score increase of 5 or more points during the tutoring period. **Good Progress:** Progress from pre to post-test was more than the number of months tutored or an increase in standard score from pre to post-test of 1 to 4 points.

On our 2009-2010 SES program feedback questionnaire Learning Styles students were asked to answer the following question: Overall, what level of quality would you rate [Learning Styles] tutoring? On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being excellent, our students rated the quality of tutoring as 4.68. Under comments, a sixth grade student stated, "Tutoring is the awesomest school-helping thing ever invented!" With reference to her work in decoding and fluency, a third grader wrote, "I learned a lot of sounds that make me read better." When parents were provided with this survey, they rated our tutoring services at an average of 4.65 out of 5. One parent commented, "[Learning Styles] is "...an excellent resource to help my son succeed. [The tutor] was kind, compassionate, and patient—just the perfect fit for my son. Thank you." Another commented: "Estoy muy satisfecha con la maestra y las tutorías. Mi hija se ha aprovechado muy bien y ha mejorado notablemente en la escuela." (I am very satisfied with the teacher and the tutoring. My daughter has taken advantage of this opportunity and improved notably in school.) Among many others we also received this comment "...this is an invaluable service provided by our schools. We would definitely be interested in returning next year!"

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Provider: Sylvan Learning: Massachusetts Learning Systems

Program Description (written by provider)

The Sylvan Learning Programs have been designed to build student skill mastery of the core skills required for success in reading and/or math at each grade level. Sylvan employs a diagnostic approach to identifying needs and a systematic, motivational approach to ensuring individual student success. Sylvan Learning Center is the nation's leading provider of supplemental education services and our programs have been delivering results for over 29 years.

Evidence of Effectiveness (written by provider)

Sylvan Learning Center students comprise a diverse population, including those from low-income families and minority groups.

At Sylvan we assess our impact on student achievement, in part, by analyzing Grade Equivalent gains. We measure these gains using pre- and post- program performance on a nationally recognized standardized assessment, the California Achievement Test (CAT/5).

In 2005, 81% of Sylvan's more than 38,000 reading students increased at least one grade equivalent on the CAT after 36 hours of instruction. In 2005, 87% of Sylvan's more than 22,000 math students increased at least one grade equivalent on the CAT after 36 hours of instruction.

In 2007, in our Sylvan Learning Centers, 81% of our 75 reading students increased at least one grade equivalent on the CAT after 36 hours of instruction. In 2007, 84 % of our 57 math students increased at least one grade equivalent on the CAT after 36 hours of instruction.

Ace it! Program Overview

"Ace it!" Tutoring is a new and innovative program designed by Sylvan Learning, Inc. to serve students through third party funding and under the No Child Left Behind Federal Law. During the 2004-05 school year "Ace it!" Tutoring was piloted to ensure academic results.

"Ace it!" Tutoring pilot had 30 programs throughout 12 states. The programs were distributed between rural, suburban and urban school districts and were geographically spread throughout the country. The "Ace it!" Tutoring programs were in western and southwestern states such as CA and TX, southern states such as TN, NC and GA, northern states including MN and ND, and the eastern states including PA and CT.

A total of 2,102 students were enrolled in "Ace it!" Tutoring for the 2004-05 school year. The students were evenly distributed between reading and math.

There were an average of 70 students per program, with a single location having as many as 697 students at one time. The program length included an average of 30 hours of instruction and a two-hour pre assessment and two-hour post assessment.

Academic Growth

Students were given a pre assessment at the start of the program and a post assessment at the end of the program. The assessments used for program placement and to measure student growth are the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and the Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE). Both assessments are published by AGS Publishing and are nationally normed and criterion referenced.

The scores used in evaluation of academic growth include the Growth Scale Value score (GSV) and Percentile Rankings. The GSV score is a developmental standard score that is used to track students' growth between tests and across grade levels. The percentile rankings evaluate the percentile change after instruction. Both the GSV and percentile scores compare the students to the norm group.

After an average of 29 hours of instruction, 53% of our reading students met or exceeded the median growth as compared to the norm group of students at the same grade levels over an entire school year. "Ace it!" reading students moved up 8.6 percentiles on average.

After an average of 33 hours of instruction, 70% of our math students met or exceeded the median growth as compared to the norm group of students at the same grade levels over an entire school year. "Ace it!" math students moved up 17.1 percentiles on average.

The results show that "Ace it!" Tutoring is successful at making substantial growth in students' core reading and math skills in a condensed amount of time.

The entire Sylvan Learning /Ace it! curriculum is based on research, best practices and common sense approach.

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Supplemental Educational Services

Please return this completed, signed form to your child's homeroom teacher
by Friday, September 23, 2011.

FREE TUTORING FORM (Complete One Form for Each Child)

Please Check:

_____ **YES**, I would like my child, _____, Grade _____, to receive
free tutoring. (Print student's name)

_____ **I HAVE SELECTED THE FOLLOWING PROVIDER:**

First Choice: _____

Second Choice: _____

Third Choice: _____

_____ I need help selecting a provider. Please contact me at: _____

_____ **NO**, I would not like my child to receive free tutoring.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Phone Number

Date

By signing here I also authorize Converse Middle School to release information about my child to the selected SES provider to assist them in providing SES tutoring services.