

FRANKLIN NORTHEAST SUPERVISORY UNION
MEMO From the Desk of Jay Nichols
Superintendent of Schools
Serving the School Districts of:
Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburg, Montgomery, Richford

DATE:

TO: House Education Committee

FROM: Jay Nichols

SUBJECT: Expanded Learning Opportunities (H.391)

Good afternoon, my name is Jay Nichols; I am the Superintendent of Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union serving the communities and schools of Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburg, Montgomery, and Richford. I represent one of the poorest areas in the state of Vermont. We are currently blessed with Afterschool Programs in each of our school districts. These programs are supported in large part to 21st Century Program Grant funds.

These programs have been incredibly beneficial to our students, their families, and our communities overall. On any given day, we have 500 or more students participating in some type of Afterschool Program. In fact, 65% of our eligible students attend our program and 64% attend on a regular basis! National and state research discusses the vulnerability of children – particularly in latchkey situations – between the hours of three and six p.m. each weekday. Our LEAPS (Learning and Enrichment Activities that build Positive Relationships & Self-Esteem) program serves our students very well. In fact, we are finding in many cases that once students enter LEAPS, their regular day-to-day school attendance improves significantly!

Here are some of the things that are offered in our programs: homework club, free tutoring, nutritious meals and/or snacks,

Lego building, video gaming, minecraft, karate, Geocaching, team sports, drama, dance, chorus, CrossFit, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, sliding, horse management training, and the list goes on. We also are able to offer comprehensive field trip experiences that broaden student knowledge and understanding to places such as our area state parks, Jay Peak, and even the Ethan Allen Cruise Ship.

Many of these activities would never be experienced by the vast majority of our students were it not for LEAPS. After school programs give students living in poverty an opportunity to develop background knowledge, increase confidence, improve skills, and find a positive niche in their lives. All too often, the alternative is hanging out on the streets or sitting in front of the television watching mindless programming.

Our School Boards enthusiastically endorse our LEAPS program. Each school district has provided some form of financial support for the program in their town. Additionally, our faculty and support staff is very committed to our program. An extremely high percentage of the LEAPS staff are licensed teachers (60%) and other individual's who work at the school during the day (29%). The remaining LEAPS staff are dedicated local community members. This school staff-intensive presence allows for relationships to further develop and helps students see educators as adults who are invested in their well being in and out of the classroom.

I extend you all an open invitation to visit any of our LEAPS programs. You will be impressed by their high quality and the huge service LEAPS provides our area children.