

Testimony offered at Wednesday, April 18, 2012 City Council Meeting

Good morning. My name is Cara Althoff, and I am a parent at Buckman Elementary School. I've also taught with Portland Public Schools as a substitute teacher, and am well-aware of the difference a Schools Uniting Neighborhoods, or SUN, program can make for a school.

I know that City Council is aware of the advantages offered by a SUN program, too, based on the prominence SUN is given in the Portland Plan you will be discussing tonight. The Portland Plan calls for "thriving, educated youth" with the goal of ensuring "youth of all cultures, ethnicities, abilities and economic backgrounds have the necessary support and opportunities to thrive – both as individuals and as contributors to a healthy community and prosperous, sustainable economy." The Cradle to Career section enthuses that "every child will be supported inside and outside of school" and the number one goal listed under "Communities and Neighborhoods / Supporting Youth" is to expand SUN to all schools in the city.

SUN is an amazing program, offering proven academic improvements in students. The monetary benefits of funding SUN well outweigh the costs, both in the short-term (the Buckman SUN program leverages additional support from 40 community partners) and the long-term, with improved outcomes for students. I think an important point that is perhaps not appreciated is that all students at a SUN school benefit, regardless of level of direct involvement with the program. From the child whose family receives help to stay in permanent housing, to the student who attends write night and math night with his/her parents, to the child whose parent is able to work because of after-school academic enrichment classes – all students do better when families are having needs met and academic learning is supported.

It felt a little surreal, in preparing to speak this morning, to be reading so many strong endorsements of the SUN program in the city's own proposals, while trying to protect a vibrantly successful program at Buckman currently on the chopping block. Please take this option for balancing the budget off the table now, and in the future.

At the March 21 budget meeting at Cleveland High School I listened to Parks and Recreation director Mike Abbate explain some of the budget decision-making process. He said that a key consideration in recommending cuts was that the city believes the economy will be rebounding in a year or two, and they wanted to focus on programs that could be resumed with little negative impact from the time lost. As an example, he talked about the paint shop. Apparently some positions there could be cut leading to a \$500,000 savings, but he pointed out that maintenance for a damaged brick wall that could have been done for, say, \$2,000, would balloon to \$20,000 if not attended to in a timely manner.

It was bizarre and not a little offensive that a brick wall would be deemed more important than the well-being of a child – I know that's not what he meant, but I think this shows a fundamental problem with these number-crunching games. It is difficult, if not impossible, to measure monetarily the impact of lost services to children. More to the point, you cannot eliminate a program like SUN, which is so dependent on trust and relationships, and simply expect it to reappear in fine form one, two or more years later. That is not how such programs work.

It just doesn't make sense. This is a classic "penny-wise, pound-foolish" kind of suggestion. It would be a silly choice to eliminate already established programs and capacity only to have to reestablish SUN programs later.

The Buckman Pool, an important neighborhood resource for community health, is on the chopping block in all three (4, 6 and 10% scenarios), and Portland Public Schools has announced deep staffing cuts to affect all schools, including teaching positions at Buckman. I'm frankly disgusted that we as a society cannot properly support our children's education and health better than this, and urge you to find alternatives that don't affect our youngest citizens so heavily. A three-level cut in an economy like this is going to leave a huge scar on a struggling but successful inner-city school.

I'm so glad to live in Portland, but our schools have to be healthy to support continued economic viability for this city. Services for children – ALL children – have to be made available. You would be concerned to hear some of the discussions of parents on the playground, in terms of people feeling they may need to move to properly support their child's education. One of the best things about this city is how many children attend public schools. Once you tip the balance on that equation, it is hard to win people back. You can see that at work in many school districts across the country. Continued (and hopefully eventually increasing) funding of SUN schools is one way that Portland City Council can support the school district – key to happy, healthy, successful citizens and a stronger economy.

I know you have a lot of important decisions to make, and I appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing someday soon the City Council discuss and pass funding to expand SUN to all schools in the city; for now I urge you to maintain the successful programs that will help lead the way for those to follow.

Please, reject cuts to SUN pass-through monies that will endanger cost-effective programs that have been proven to work.

Thank you.

Cara Althoff  
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## Portland Plan

- **SUN is included in all three strategies of the draft Portland Plan:**
  - Thriving Educated youth – SUN is embedded throughout this strategy
  - Economic Prosperity and Affordability
  - Healthy Connected City
- **One of the specific actions the plan calls for is:**

**Expand presence of Schools Uniting Neighborhoods to all schools in the city/region**

SUN is the Place-based strategy prioritized in the Plan (Action 33)

## Summary of SUN Community Schools Collective Impact in 2010-11

### Serving the Most Vulnerable Kids & Families

**Of the 19,127 unduplicated children & youth served in 2010-2011:**

- **80% received Free & Reduced Lunch** (compared to 54% districts average)
- **70% were students of color** (compared to 46% districts average)
- **21% were English Language Learners** (compared to 14% districts average)

### Improving Academic Outcomes – measured on students who were served regularly

- Average daily attendance was **94.5%** [No Child Left Behind target is 92%]
- **74%** of students met state benchmarks or growth target in Reading [State target was 70% last year]
- **80%** increased reading scores and **81%** in math
- SUN CS students average score gains were **equal to or higher than** expected by the state in the majority of grades
- High School students earned **6.8 credits** on average [6 credits are needed per year to be on course for graduation]
- **79%** of seniors graduated; an additional 12% returned for a 5th year

### Interim Academic Indicators & Youth Assets – measured by teacher and student surveys

- **74%** of SUN CS students improved in at least one behavioral or asset area
- **86%** of students identify that they have at least one adult who cares about them

### Family Stability

- **96%** of families remained in permanent housing after receiving support

### Parent Involvement & Engagement

### Community Safety & Vibrancy

**Moore-Love, Karla**

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**From:** Cara Althoff [ccizalthoff@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 04, 2012 11:58 AM  
**To:** Moore-Love, Karla  
**Subject:** speaking at city council meeting

Dear Karla,

Hello! I would like to be added as one of the five citizen speakers at a future City Council meeting (I would prefer the April 18 meeting if slots are still available, and could also come April 25). Is that possible?

My contact information: 3960 SE Harrison Street, Portland OR 97214; ccizalthoff@gmail.com; 503-772-9905  
Issue: Budget cuts for PP&R, specifically pass-through funds for the SUN program (I am a parent at Buckman Elementary School) and the Buckman Pool.

Thanks so much,

Cara Althoff

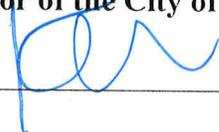
Request of Cara Althoff to address Council regarding budget cuts to pass through funds for the SUN program (Communication)

APR 18 2012

PLACED ON FILE

Filed APR 13 2012

**LaVonne Griffin-Valade**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		