

## **FOX, FOX and ASSOCIATES**

### **1999-2000 End-of-year Interviews with Parents**

Thirty-seven parents were interviewed across fourteen different sites to obtain their perceptions of the NSCC and its performance during the school year. Of this sample, the large majority considered the program to have been enormously successful, rating it as either "totally" (62%) or "generally" (27%) positive, with a small group of parents considering it to have been fifty-fifty (11%). The praise offered by the parents included general accolades such as "The program is good this year, they have mastered the plan", "great job, they do a lot", "keep them here", "excellent source of help for my daughter, "provides extra help in building her academic skills" or "they do everything for our kids". Other parents cited quite specific contributions the NSCC made to the school. One remarked, "The NSCC has provided programs that enrich our students lives. They offer tutorial programs for those in need of extra help in academics". Another parent commented, "I think they add a lot to the school. I know my son really enjoys the after-school stuff-he's not bored. He is happy and he likes the corpsmembers". Still two others commended Socialized Recess, one saying "Socialized Recess is a great time for kids to learn how to play together. I have noticed less fighting in school" and the other, "During the Socialized Recess program corpsmembers interact with the kids. I think this is generally positive".

In widening the perceived scope of NSCC impact, one parent noted, "The NSCC works well with school and parent population. NSCC members are always willing to offer an extra hand and participate in school activities". In six other settings, parents noted that the program does a lot of good for "children, parents and the community".

Another parent was impressed with the personnel of the program, "It seems that the team leader organizes the program well and the kids respect her and the rest of the team. The program seems to be designed in a way that matches the age level. It does not appear to be like a baby-sitting service". Other parents remarked that the corpsmembers were "very committed", "dedicated", "personable" and went "beyond the call of duty". The program was called "great", "outstanding" and the NSCC was considered to be a "great organization". The program was considered by some parents to be "especially good for low learning students" and praise was offered as well for the Homework Club, field trips, and the contribution the program made to students' "communication skills" and "writing skills". The only critique offered by the parents was the sense in one site that the NSCC was "not used to its full function" and had gotten off to a "slow start" and in another that some of the corpsmembers "are not committed to the children or the program" and are, therefore, "not accomplishing anything".

Most of the parents (86%) interviewed had children who had themselves participated in an NSCC program, while some of the parents (14%) had less immediate experience with the program. In an expression of their high level of satisfaction with the NSCC, when asked if the program could have been "more useful, or helpful to their children" two-thirds (68%) indicated "no". Many parents believed that the program "provides the services needed" (11) and that corpsmembers are already "doing all they can do always with the kids" (6) and

"meeting the needs of my grandchild". Parents mostly spoke of the gifts of the NSCC noting, for example, that "the extracurricular support has been advantageous to my daughter dearly, both academically and socially" or that "homework club helped my son to read" or "I have a seventh grade child and this program really helped her". The program was seen to "promote responsibility, commitment and self-esteem". One parent remarked, "I wanted my son to be in every program".

Of those parents whose children had been involved with the program, the NSCC offerings in which they were engaged can be broken down into six general categories as follows: academic (17); psycho-social (10%); Arts (6); sports (6); Socialized Recess (6) and Others (6). When asked to evaluate the degree to which their children enjoyed these programs, and the extent to which they were helpful, almost all of the parents (83%) indicated a very high level of enjoyment and usefulness, selecting either "enormous" (63%) or "substantial" (20%) to describe the level of enjoyment and help. The remaining fifth of parents (17%) selected "some" (6%), "little" (7%), "none" (2%) or "negative" (2%) to characterize their child's experience.

The programs less well thought of were Homework Club (3, "some", "little" and the one "negative"), Socialized Recess (2, both "little"), Mentoring ("none"), Little People ("little"), Arts ("some" and Environmental Club ("some").

The third (32%) who had indicated a feeling that there was more the NSCC could do for the children, offered specific suggestions on how the program could have been more useful to their children and the community. Among their recommendations were: "additional after-school programs" (2), "polling the students to inquire what programs they wanted"; "programs that helped students handle the ups and downs of life"; and increasing the frequency of mentoring sessions, with a special focus on providing "male role models". It was also suggested that the program needed "more structure" and that additional tutoring, such as "more help with reading assignments", would be advantageous. In one case a parent reported that his son "stopped attending programs and fell through the cracks", and he recommended that corpsmembers more actively "encourage participation".

Only a quarter (24%) of the parents were aware of any NSCC programs for adults or the community. The three-fourths who were not aware of existing outreach programs were asked what kinds of programs the NSCC could have developed which would have interested them or been of help to them or to the community. They had numerous suggestions, covering academic, remedial and enrichment ideas, including: a parent involvement workshop; ESL or English classes; GED classes; tutorial programs, especially in reading; an unspecified Summer program; evening sports program; cooking, an exercise program; music classes; sewing; job awareness; conflict resolution; arts and crafts; multicultural awareness classes and computer classes. Parents also requested parenting classes and recommended numerous themes including behavior management, relating to children, encouraging student performance, or dealing with stress.

General suggestions included offering workshops targeted for both parents and children; sponsoring support groups; a mentoring program for parents; and engaging parents more actively in educational programs at the school. One parent felt that the local family center already provides "all of the adult programs needed in the neighborhood".

Those parents who were already involved in NSCC adult programs, were asked to indicate which programs they had been engaged in and to indicate the levels of enjoyment and helpfulness derived from them. The list of active programs included: Family Literacy Workshops; a GED program (2); basketball games; computer classes; adult/parent workshops (2) and safe corridors program. Most parents did not choose to rate their program, but all of the few who did felt the program provided "enormous" enjoyment and was "enormously" helpful. One parent mentioned that they had registered for a computer class but was never contacted and therefore rated the program as having provided "no" enjoyment or help as they never attended the class. These parents, too, made a few suggestions of additional programs that the NSCC might constructively offer in their community and while some were the same programs those unaware had suggested: others were different: including: resume writing; GED programs; literacy programs; adult computer classes; special math program where parents and students could learn together; field trips and parenting classes as well as offering a parent support group. Obviously, some of these suggestions overlap with programs that are apparently underway, so improved promotion and public relations is still needed.

When asked for their final thoughts about the NSCC, parents took the opportunity to express their gratitude and praise for the program once again. They first commented on the strength of the corpsmembers in working with the students, "They get involved with the kids, they are well needed. They are wonderful with kids". Next, they remarked on both the academic and social contributions made by the NSCC, "The NSCC provides what my daughter needs to be successful in school, and it helped her self-esteem" while another felt that as a result of NSCC intervention the "behavior of students has totally changed". Another parent indicated that the NSCC was "very helpful" and specified that the fact that the NSCC "provides activities such as after-school and in-service training" has made a difference.

Parents also remarked about the collegial relationship between school faculty and the corpsmembers, "They are very helpful for the staff at the school and have made the school better with their contributions". General comments found the program to be "great" (3), "beautiful", and "excellent". The NSCC was said to be "always helpful" and "always available". The program was seen to have been "needed on many levels" and to have "helped the children a lot". Two parents expressed disappointment. In one case, the school had a new administration and the program seems to have had a "slow start" but this parent noted that, "if we are lucky to have the NSCC program return next year", they thought it was likely to "build on the grounds they have made". In the other case the parent "signed up for two programs" but was "never asked to come". One other concern expressed by a parent was the sense that "some NSCC staff members became too friendly with members of the opposite sex".

Most strongly, parents felt that the NSCC aided their ability to ensure their children had the needed level of support, "The NSCC is beneficial to me as a parent in that it provides and gives what I can't, tutorial help for my son". Finally, parents praised the degree to which corpsmembers care for the students, "Corpsmembers are very helpful and caring and have an interest of the children at heart". Another commented that the corpsmembers were a "very friendly group". One parent summarized the remarks of many, "The NSCC does a great job. They are important. The school has been made better because of their help and contributions. I hope that they continue. They work hard and I am satisfied with the job that they do."