

## ***The Power of Co-Curricular Activity: After School Rules***

***by Martha Frommelt***

Ithaca City School District Superintendent Dr. Brown is a good story teller. Since his introduction to the district community, Luvelle Brown has been sharing powerful stories of the impact of co-curricular activities. Ask him about the middle school boys he was charged with as an associate principal and the impact of enrolling those boys in orchestra. Ask him about the power of his own experience in athletics. Dr. Brown's doctoral studies in educational leadership lead him to research the power of co-curricular activities. The research is clear: after school activities have an impact on learning.

My children often lived for the extra-curricular activity at the end of the day. Their grades improved, time management was excellent and adult interaction inspired them to push themselves. Linking after school and in-school work brings together the whole student, connecting the school day to "their" day. Think of the dramas and musicals, the choirs, the teams, ensembles, the clubs, the math team and Code Red Robotics. The interest is high. For example, this year the Ithaca High School musical auditioned 90 students. The Boynton Theatre Project accommodates any student who wants to participate. One hundred students are in the Ithaca High School after school choir. DeWitt Middle School students are meeting before school to study Vivaldi, funded by an IPEI Teacher Grant. Fall Creek Elementary students are rocking in their School of Rock. LACS students are partnering with BOCES students to study *Keesha's House* with dancer Lisa Tstete, funded by a Fine Arts Booster Mini-Grant.

For ten years, the Fine Arts Booster Group has advocated for and celebrated the arts and co-curricular activities. In Fall 2010, a successful campaign called Arts Alive was launched to restore co-curricular activities. With all activities back, the district is considering a new plan called EDGE (Enriching the Day Generates Excellence). The title of this program says it all.

According to the district, EDGE seeks to involve all students in grades 6-12 in co-curricular programs in a "pro-active effort" to support the positive student outcomes. Our district is fortunate to have many offerings after school, and a key focus of EDGE will be reaching all students. Anticipated outcomes of this program include "increased student achievement, development of independence, development of decision making skills, increased school attendance, reduced dropout rate, increased self-esteem, increased educational aspirations and attainment, increased parental involvement, increased leadership abilities, increased abilities to develop positive relationship building, reduced discipline, reduced smoking and /or illegal drug use". The EDGE Program goals correlate to the Board of Education priorities. Research studies confirm the impact on learning.

The Fine Arts Booster Group (FABG) believes that the arts are for all and hold the vision of "all the arts for all the kids". This vision is a big one, but one that is in sync with EDGE. Whether in the arts or some other interest, join us in celebrating student learning all day long. After school rules!