

Walsh parents say program working

BY MICHAEL PUFFER | REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

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WATERBURY — Nicole Nelson recently moved from New York City and enrolled her three children at Walsh Elementary School.

While some people look down at the struggling school, Nelson said she's happy with the program. One of her children struggles with a learning disability and behavioral issues, but has improved greatly in the new setting.

"My daughter is bringing home B's," said Nelson, one of about 15 parents attending a family night at Walsh Wednesday. "I like the fact they have stations and can get one-on-one with the teacher."

This is in the second year Walsh is in the state's Commissioner's Network program, aimed at turning around the state's lowest performing schools.

Wednesday's family night was to help show parents how the reform program works.

Each school in the state network designs its own reform plans, which are approved and funded by the state.

In the first year, Walsh added extra staff and offered extra teacher training. This year, the school has partnered with a private education firm to offer "Project Child." Walsh reforms will add about \$785,000 to the school's operating cost this year.

In Project Child, teachers specialize in subjects: reading; writing/social studies or math/science. Students stay in the same group in kindergarten through second grade, and have the same teachers each year.



Walsh Elementary School third grader Dyana Jimenez, 8, demonstrates a writing exercise for her parents, Romeo and Ana Jimenez, as her younger brother, Dylan, 2, looks on during a family night at Walsh Wednesday.



These students then get a new cluster of specialized teachers for grades three, four and five.

"That affords us the chance to really get to know your children well," explained Project Child specialist Lynn Channey.

At Walsh on Wednesday, children and teachers showed visiting parents exercises at various "stations," focusing on topics like writing or math.

During the school day, students will rotate through various stations during the course of a class.

Parents seem happy with the new program.

Parent Wendy Bryan likes that children move in clusters and stick with the same teachers through the grades. It will help them feel more comfortable and able to ask questions without feeling self-conscious, she said.

"I think they are doing good, trying new ways to help our children," parent Romeo Jimenez said.