



Achieve Hartford! Public Comments – January 17, 2012

*Comments by Paul Diego Holzer, Interim Executive Director, Achieve Hartford!
Regular Meeting of the Hartford Board of Education*

Distinguished Members of the Hartford Board of Education and Superintendent Kishimoto: Good evening.

On behalf of Achieve Hartford!, I would to again acknowledge the upcoming transition of this current Board of Education, both to say thank you and to congratulate you for all your hard work and the governance you have provided together.

But you're not done yet! In fact, tonight you have a great opportunity to significantly enhance Hartford's growing portfolio of schools.

By creating an Achievement First neighborhood-high school option for families, this Board can add to the options that distinguish Hartford's impressive portfolio.

What's great about this proposed expansion is that families want it.

They have been promised high quality schools **in their neighborhoods** by this Board and Administration. They have legitimate concerns about the gaps between magnet and neighborhood school performance – and funding – and deserve top notch neighborhood schools.

The numbers are telling:

- Overall CMT gain at proficient **without Achievement First Hartford Academy** was 4.5 points from 2009-2011. Achievement First's gain over that time was 14.5 points;
- In New Haven, where the Amistad High School operated by Achievement First is an example to follow, average high school performance on the CAPT test last year without Amistad was 61.9, compared to Amistad's score of 92.6.

It is true that test scores are just one indicator of quality, as families remind us every choice season, when they select schools based on a number of factors. Among discriminating consumers, it is fair to say, Achievement First Hartford continues to be the most popular elementary school among parents in the North End.

We are glad that the District is conducting an enrollment study to project the populations for each school and the demographic shifts in each zone and neighborhood. But there is no need to wait for that.

You have every reason to move forward with speed:

- High school performance on state tests has been slow and erratic when compared to grades 3-8.
- CAPT scores in 2011 produced an average decrease over 2010 of 0.5 points at Goal, and a 1.0 point decrease at Proficient.

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- Since 2007, Goal scores have increased by only 3.7 points, an average of just under 1 point per year, while Proficient scores have increased by a total of 8.8 points since 2007, an average increase of 2.2 points per year.
- According to the latest report from the Board of Regents' P-20 council, one school we know is improving and that we all celebrate for its yearly achievement – Law and Government – still posts the lowest four-year high school graduation rate in the State, at 47.7%.

With a planned fall 2012 opening, time is a critical factor, and with a need to boost the overall performance of high schools in Hartford, there's no reason strong enough to postpone taking action on such a positive opportunity for our community.

Hartford is committed to expanding and replicating proven models. As it turns out, we have one right here, in the Achievement First Hartford Academy.

Thank you.