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Most analysts regard the period from 2006-2011 as a generally successful, if not remarkable, first phase of Hartford school reform. The next five-year phase will be crucial to sustaining – and hopefully accelerating – this progress. Contributions by the five Mayorally-appointed members of the Board of Education, and overall high performance by the entire nine-member Board, will be instrumental in determining whether children’s – and Hartford’s economic – futures are realized. This is why these appointments are so very important.

With the Hartford Court of Common Council’s new confirmation process being announced earlier this week, we kindly offer our suggestions for ideal areas of focus and questions to be asked of the nominees.

Mirroring what we proposed the Mayor focus on during his selection process, we encourage Council to generate questions that assess that which is most critical to advancing student success: (1) high expectations for student achievement, (2) support for the District’s overall reform strategy, (3) unbiased support for what works, and (4) a clear understanding of the role that a high-performing Board of Education does (and does not) play in driving school improvement.

Questions for the New Board of Education Appointees

For Each Candidate

1. What is the unique perspective and/or skillset that you bring to the Board of Education?
2. How will you bring yourself up to speed on the Hartford Public Schools’ reform strategies put in place over the previous five years?
3. Looking at the authority and role of the Board of Education, where do you draw the line between issues it should – and should not – address?
4. In that vein, where do you see the line between a valuable, impassioned view and an inappropriate personal bias?
5. What accomplishments – and areas of further improvement – stand out to you, as you assess the past Board of Education’s functioning?

6. What are your priorities in the short term, and what deadlines do you have in mind for what you want to see the Hartford Public Schools accomplish?
7. What do you think of the district's current goals and overall strategic direction, and how do you envision the Board supporting them?
8. What is your experience in using data to make informed, impartial decisions; how important is such a research-based approach, in your view?
9. Do you know of any conflict of interest between your career/affiliations and what you will have to vote on? Is there anything you foresee having to recuse yourself from?

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Respectfully submitted to City Council, January 26, 2012.