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Achieve Hartford! Comments for 12.21.10 – Board of Education Regular Meeting

Good Evening Madame Chair, Board members and Dr. Adamowski. As you know, I am Jim Starr, Executive Director of Achieve Hartford! at 221 Main Street in downtown Hartford.

I wanted to touch base briefly on two topics this evening.

First, as you know, in support of the Superintendent search under way, Achieve Hartford! has conducted two community input sessions on December 8th and December 13th. The community dialog sessions were held to hear directly from the general public – including parents, educators, and other leaders – concerning their views about what is needed from Hartford's next superintendent. The focus was on the qualifications, priorities, and attributes that the community would like to see in its next District leader.

The two sessions were attended by nearly 100 individuals, with 50% made up of parents or former parents. Given the nature of the gatherings and the self-selection of those attending, the results – to be sure – will not be scientific, but should be useful as one of the many inputs considered by the search committee. We will have a final report and summary of the comments shortly for formal submission.

You are also scheduled tonight to hear from representatives from the Governor's Commission on Educational Achievement. The work done by the Commission was done with great thought and careful consideration.

The detailed recommendations that focus on raising expectations and creating increased accountability supported by enhanced uses of data, proven leadership methods and effective teaching are all components essential to meaningfully addressing Hartford's unacceptable achievement gap compared with the State. Our own Theory of Reform – and yours - already incorporates many of the recommendations.

We encourage the Board to take an active role in helping ensure that Hartford maintains its leadership of serving as a role model for many of the recommendations like Board training, school turn-arounds and data usage. Moreover, we encourage you to remain on the forefront of reform by enhancing your commitment to items in the report such as teacher training, professional development, and evaluation processes.

We believe there is no greater social or economic need than to close the achievement gap here in Hartford, and we believe the report to be timely and on target.

Thank you.