

A personal view: Jim Starr, Executive Director, Achieve Hartford!

Our work at Achieve Hartford! is focused on raising awareness of the many issues and challenges that Hartford, as a struggling but improving urban school district, faces. The focus also includes holding the district accountable for ongoing positive change and engaging parents and the entire community to help ensure that change is permanent. This is work asked of us by our funders, supporters and the community. On a very personal level, I find the work extremely rewarding, and I am so grateful to work in a community whose hard work is beginning to bear fruit in the form of a better education for students. Hartford's climb has a long way to go, but we certainly believe the work the community is doing – as well as Achieve Hartford! – to support the improvements and strong efforts by the District is having an impact.

Our work requires us to comment or provide insight into many issues that impact long term improvement, largely at a broad level. Because of our frequent focus on macro issues facing the district, we don't often highlight the incredible, passionate work being done at the ground level by many committed individuals who are making differences in the lives of students on a daily basis.

At this week's Board of Education meeting, five individuals were recognized, all of whom have won state and/or national awards as a result of the work they are doing on behalf of Hartford's students. Their efforts not only highlight how Hartford's progress is being recognized on national and state level, but they also highlight the fact that none of this progress happens without the heroism of individuals, armed with a sense of purpose and expertise that allows them to create special learning environments where children's lives are changed. Hearing how these five individuals impact students, improve achievement, and raise expectations was truly moving to me. It affirmed why I come to work each day to support Hartford's school system.

I want all to hear these people's stories and hear how their commitment is not only altering the lives of students on a day to day basis, but also helping to drive overall change in Hartford. These individuals are examples of why businesses and organizations commit to the hope of Hartford and invest in its future. *It is why the momentum of the reform needs to be protected.* Their work inspires me to keep driving for the ongoing innovation needed in Hartford, and I am proud that Achieve Hartford! is supporting positive change at the district level so that their individual work can continue to touch students in an environment of increased expectations. Our *Education Matters!* readers – and all who care about Hartford schools moving forward – need to appreciate their impact, and I want to personally thank them.

The individuals are noted below, and I am sure they are only a sampling of many great educators in the school system. Over the coming weeks, we will highlight the work of these five people and the impact they have had, in the hope that the stories will be as inspiring to you as they are to me. Thank you to all who support educators and leaders within Hartford Public Schools

- Mr. Timothy Sullivan, Principal, Classical Magnet School, Connecticut Secondary Principal of the Year
- Ms. Corrine Clark, Teacher at Clark Elementary, 2010 Hartford Teacher of the Year
- Ms. Lauren Lieberman, Teacher at Moylan School, Read 180 Outstanding Educator
- Ms. Rachel Manzer, Teacher at Annie Fisher STEM, Aerospace Education Teacher of the Year
- Mr. Desi Nesmith, Principal, America's Choice at Sand, Connecticut Outstanding First-Year Principal Award