



## **FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN**

Too often we hear about Board of Education members and Superintendents in serious conflict. Sadly, such has been the case over the last few weeks in two of Connecticut's largest school districts. Do we all understand the serious detrimental impact this has on the very students these systems serve? Are we aware of how this deepens the pervasive achievement gap? As we celebrate the birth of our country, let's remember that our country is built on a sound education experience for every child. Surely, if the adults responsible for the children in their care continue to engage in public conflict, they deny students their inalienable right to learn in a school community with dignity and respect.

We have many examples in Connecticut of Board members and Superintendents working together, and exemplary outcomes are realized for children. When Board members and Superintendents work together, they provide students with the foundation needed to learn and grow. When Board members and Superintendents know and respect each other's roles and responsibilities, a powerful partnership exists in which students, educators, and families can flourish in spite of the many challenges they face. All members of the school community work together to ensure that educators understand and embrace their declared goals, and the children the Board and Superintendent should be serving, become the center of the district work.

Board members must have a clear understanding of their work. Their job is to set policy, adopt a budget, and hire the superintendent to lead and manage the school district. They must let the superintendent do that job. It is not the role of Board members to second guess decisions such as teacher transfers or to micro-manage acquisition of goods and services the Superintendent and his or her team thinks the district needs. A Superintendent cannot effectively do the job if his or her decisions are constantly reversed or micromanaged.

The Superintendent must engage all stakeholders -- educators, Board, parents, and elected leaders -- in the work of the school district. There must be transparency and inclusiveness in all decisions that are made, and every decision must be made with the students' best interest as the only concern.

The constant turnover of superintendents in any district results in confusion rather than coherence of teaching and learning in a school district. It broadens and deepens the achievement gap. Educators, rightly so, wonder what's next? Moreover, poor public behavior from those whom we should hold in high esteem -- lack of respect, rudeness, and venomous attacks -- creates chaos and license for students and staff members to behave in the same way.

If Board members care about the quality of education in their communities, they must stop the inappropriate and disrespectful behavior and model respect, collaboration, and civility for the sake of the children we all serve.