

July 1, 2019

Dear Learning Community:

I am pleased to celebrate our collective work this academic year. It has been an honor to serve our 21,500 students and approximately 3,000+ employees. We have many accomplishments, celebrations, areas of growth and opportunities that I am unable to capture all in this letter. These past several months, we have invoked equity, greater accountability and excellence. I will identify some strategies and actions we have implemented to obtain our goals, which are aligned with the standards of the Connecticut State Department of Education, *the New Haven Public Schools' Superintendent's Evaluation Assessment Tool* and our *District Continuous Improvement Plan*.

Our planning, thinking and implementation were undergirded by our District's core values, which include:

1. Collaboration - We believe in a strong collaborative school system, and therefore, we must take collective responsibility for our students' success and well-being by working together, communicating openly and honestly, valuing the professional expertise of individuals, and strengthening and expanding community partnerships.
2. Growth and Innovation - We believe the need to dramatically improve student learning in our schools is urgent, and therefore, we will work tirelessly and as a team to encourage risk-taking, challenge each other to innovate, engage in no-fault problem solving and empower students, parents and educators so that we take bold steps into the future together.
3. Equity - We believe in an equitable school system for all students, and therefore, we must have high expectations for all students throughout the district and provide culturally relevant and personalized learning through rigorous classes that meet individual student needs and prepare all students for success at their next level.

The next few pages captures the actions and successes in which we have engaged this year identified in the *District Continuous Improvement Plan*. The established five priority areas and theory of action are comprised of the following: Academic Achievement, Talent Management and Development, Organizational Efficiencies & Effectiveness, Culture and Climate, and Youth, Family, and Community Empowerment.

It is important to note that this plan evolved as part of the collaborative efforts of the Transition Team, The Board of Education, District, Central Office and school level leaders, teachers, and parents.

This letter will also include successes and opportunities to reach our vision, which is that all kids learn, achieve and rise to a bright future. Our current collective mission is to provide an excellent

education that extends beyond graduation and prepares our students to the next generation of leaders, innovators, and problem solvers.

### **Academic Achievement**

We are excited that we have had several academic and athletic accomplishments this year: Strong School was named a School of Distinction for its increase in Mathematics Performance by the Connecticut State Department of Education, Engineering Science University Magnet School (ESUMS) was honored as a Magnet School of Excellence and Mauro Sheridan as a Magnet School of Distinction by Magnet Schools of America. We have very memorable legacies of Champions for this past year including students who placed locally, statewide and regionally in multiple areas such as the Entrepreneurship Business Plan, Robotics, Science and Engineering, Culinary, Girls and Boys Basketball, Girls and Boys Track and Field, Writing, and Drama.

Twelve hundred forty-four students graduated in June 2019, with millions of dollars in scholarships awarded by various entities, including New Haven Promise, New Haven Scholarship Fund and Presidential Scholarships. Students self-reported that they would be engaging in the following post-secondary experiences:

- College: 976
- Work/Employment: 74
- Undecided: 69
- Trade School: 49
- Off Campus Classroom: 29
- Military: 28
- Gap Year: 9
- Job Corps: 7
- Boarding School: 3

Additional academic accomplishments in which we are proud include two classes who graduated from the Gateway to College Program, the implementation of a Developmental Play Based Early Childhood Framework, statewide recognition of Clinton Avenue School by the Connecticut State Department of Education for implementing high leverage instructional practices, the creation of an Early Learning School Planning and Management Team, and the creation a Headstart Summer Learning Program. We launched our Networked Improvement Communities and School Quality Review Meetings to build communities of practice who focus on instructional improvement. We also built on the work on our already successful Saturday Academy and after school enrichment programming.

Quantitative academic and behavioral performance data is still being collected and will be available later this summer to report on our progress.

### **Talent Management and Development**

In an effort to build pedagogical and content knowledge for teachers and paraprofessionals we created the Literacy, Numeracy, and Social Emotional Learning Academies. We also launched an English Learner Fellows program and increased the number of teachers pursuing TESOL certifications through the ARCTEL Program. We partnered with Yale University in designing a

*Lunch and Learn Series* for our Central Office Clerical Staff and recently submitted a grant proposal to the Graustein Memorial Fund to recruit, hire and retain Teachers of Color. All staff were required to take Mandated Reporter Training and Sexual Harassment Training through an online platform entitled *SafeSchools*. We implemented an Executive Leadership Learning Academy for certified and non-certified leaders and Connecticut's first and only school district created School Law Institute.

### **Youth, Family, and Community Empowerment**

We strengthened our Governance Model by empowering the Student Senate, School Planning Management Teams, and launched FaceTime with the Superintendent to evoke action and improvements within the District. Opportunities were provided for multiple internal and external community members to participate in a number of community engagement efforts including Community Forums, Coffee & Conversations, Town Hall Meetings, Budget Forums, the Principal Selection Process, Strategic Planning, mentorship, and professional learning. Our Youth, Family and Community Engagement Team and our lobbyist hosted sessions with parents to provide guidance to petition legislatures to increase educational funding.

### **Culture and Climate**

There were a number of initiatives launched this year to support this priority. We designed a districtwide Social Emotional Learning Conceptual Framework with university and non-profit partners. Citywide Student Council meetings were facilitated monthly and we supported Student Advocacy efforts, including student-led social justice projects at each high school. We distributed *Great Things Happening* an E-newsletter, recognized staff and students at the Board of Education meetings, created *You Are the Light* Employee and Student Recognition Ceremony to highlight and celebrate the multiple achievements throughout the District. We have engaged in discussions within the City of New Haven at community engagement meetings with civic, business, college and university partners. We also launched *the Rise and Shine* initiative to improve the academic outcomes of males of color including mentorship, and empowering them with sessions designed to promote positive pro-social behaviors.

### **Organizational Efficiencies and Effectiveness**

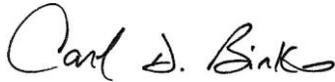
There were multiple efforts implemented to support this priority, including the development of a detailed budget mitigation plan for the 2018-2019 academic year, which maximized state and federal grants, and budget proposals for the 2018- 2019 and 2019- 2020 academic years. We provided the Board with budget mitigation scenarios for the 2019-2020 academics year, along with estimated proposed expenditures. We engaged stakeholders in the research and development of staffing guidelines, which were based on enrollment, staffing ratios and collective bargaining units, and conducted multiple Budget Forums throughout the District. Financial updates on proposed expenditures were presented bi-monthly during Finance and Operations Meetings and Board of Education Meetings.

Some of our areas of growth and opportunities include the need to realign our talent and resources to promote our District and school improvement efforts by ensuring equity and capacity to sustain departmental and school needs. Part of our work will involve creating tighter systems, structures, and practices within the Office of Talent Management. We will continue to partner with our internal and external community in our District Continuous Improvement efforts and strengthening relationships with the Board of Education and multiple stakeholder groups.

Our goal is to re-engage more Board involvement in the Strategic Planning and Learning and Teaching processes, as we unpack and communicate the findings of the Curriculum and Special Education audits. We plan to elevate a Balanced Literacy Curriculum and scientifically researched based practices, as well as incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy and restorative practices at scale throughout the District. Finally, we will continue to celebrate student and staff accomplishments.

I would like to thank you, our Learning Community and extended partners, for your collective work and ongoing dedication to our students. Our accomplishments over the last fifteen months were vast and aligned to our District priorities. I appreciate the support you have provided thus far and look forward to our collaborative work as we continue our commitment to providing high quality instruction and learning for every child, every day, in every classroom. I am deeply committed to engaging all parts of the community in a collective effort to ensure that each and every one of our children graduates ready to embrace their future. Together we can work to have the highest performing school District in the nation.

In Service,



Carol D. Birks, Ed.D.  
Superintendent