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BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT 06604

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Superintendent of Schools

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February 16, 2007

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

The following open letter appeared in the January 4 edition of the Connecticut Post:

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the General Assembly:*

*Happy New Year from the students and staff of the Bridgeport Public Schools!*

*I know I don't have to tell you about the issues that our children and families face in Bridgeport or the technical and adaptive challenges faced by our school district and supporting community. The facts are clear. What I want to tell you is that, in Bridgeport, we understand what must be done to improve student outcomes. We understand how to help our students become internationally competitive. This knowledge was recently confirmed by our district's selection as a Broad Prize finalist. What we need is the capacity to put our newly adopted strategic plan and related knowledge into action. We need your investment.*

*I left my position as Deputy Commissioner of Education almost 18 months ago to become Bridgeport's superintendent. I found a system that has been stretched to its limits. The school district is grossly under funded. Because of the socio-economic conditions they are forced to navigate, children are dying here, both literally and figuratively, everyday. Again, I don't need to explain the dire circumstances to you. I simply want to appeal to you for your help through the ECS formula and other vehicles that might be available to you.*

*Thank you for your consideration. It would be our pleasure to meet with you or provide any information that you require.*

*Sincerely,*

*John J. Ramos, Sr., Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools*

I sent a similar appeal to Governor Rell.

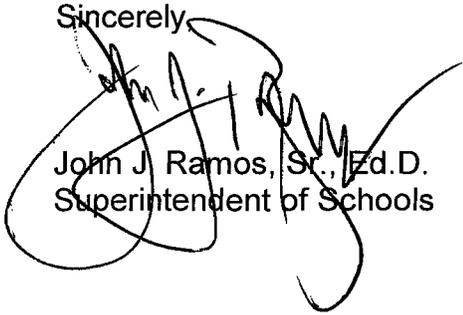
Obviously, I am here this afternoon to support the governor's proposal to bring sorely needed resources to the children and youth of Bridgeport. We need you, at this critical time, to stand beside the adults in our community as we work to maximize the propensity of every child.

The mission of the Bridgeport Public Schools and its supporting community, according to our newly adopted Strategic Plan, is to graduate ALL students college ready and prepared to succeed in life. We have a long way to go to achieve that mission. Still, if our students are going to be competitive in this "flat" world of globalization and technology, then we must achieve the mission. We need your help. We urge you to:

- Increase the ECS foundation level to \$9,700. per year;
- Use the number of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals as the measure of poverty because it more accurately reflects the students in the schools, with a 25% weighting factor;
- Increase weighting for English Language Learners (students from homes in which English is not spoken) from the current 10% weighting to 30%;
- Change the special education excess cost reimbursement formula from 4.5 to 3.5 times the cost of regular education per student;
- **Substantially increase funding for public schools in Bridgeport.**

Thank you for what you have done over the years, for recognizing our current circumstance, and for considering remedies that will provide equitable opportunities for ALL of our students. In so doing, you are dealing directly with the most important civil rights issue of our time.

Sincerely,



John J. Ramos, Sr., Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools