February 21, 2012

To Whom it May Concern

The Litchfield Public Schools is pleased to have the opportunity to send resident students to a local program of choice, the agriscience program located at Wamogo Regional High School in Regional School District No. 6. Connecticut's agriscience programs are the state's original magnet schools, with 90 years of successfully preparing high school students for careers in our agriculture industry. These programs are models for personalized and career based learning, and successfully achieve significant parent and industry involvement through advisory committees that work closely and directly with the schools. In spite of the benefits to students of the agriscience programs, they remain underfunded, resulting in hardship to both the host and sending school districts.

I am writing as a sending school district superintendent and a member of the State Agriscience Consulting Committee to request that the State Board of Education support increased funding for these programs of choice, to reduce the gross inequity in state support for these programs compared to that provided for magnet and charter schools. Specifically, host districts face a significant gap between the sending town tuition and actual per pupil costs. The current $1,417 per student state support should be increased by at least $4,000 to cover their operating costs. Sending schools now pay tuition of $7,992 per student attending an agriscience program, along with related transportation costs, with no reimbursement from the state. The 50% tuition reimbursement to sending towns needs to be reinstated to support districts in making available this program of choice.

In closing, I would like to share an anecdote with the Board from my days as a central office administrator in Region 6. During a conversation one afternoon with a Wamogo agriscience student, he shared that while in high school not only had he already started his own herd of dairy cows, he had saved a substantial amount of money to purchase land. To say that I was impressed is an understatement. This is the real life application of the skills and concepts learned by our agriscience students. I strongly urge the Board to support increased funding for these valuable programs.

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Wheeler

Deborah S. Wheeler, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools