

**OPENING REMARKS BEFORE THE
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

**William P. Davenport
Nominee for Member of the Connecticut State Board of Education
February 18, 2016**

Good Morning Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is William Davenport and it is an honor and privilege to be appointed as a member of the State Board of Education by Governor Dannel P. Malloy.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to speak to my desire and interest in serving on this board. I served on the State Board of Education for a short period of time 8 years ago as I was appointed by then-Governor Rell to fill a short-term vacancy that occurred, so I am familiar with the role as a member of the State Board of Education and its important work to be done in the future.

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Litchfield where I have lived my entire life. I attended the Litchfield Public Schools and later earned my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Animal Science from UCONN. I also earned my 6th Year diploma in Administration and Supervision from Southern Connecticut State University. I was hired as an agriscience and technology teacher, formally known as a vocational agriculture teacher, in July of 1986 in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Program at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, and have enjoyed teaching there for the past 30 years, which has been my entire teaching career. Since 2004, I have also served as the Director of the Agriscience program, in charge of recruitment, program growth and expansion. Our agriscience program has grown to 350 students, which is close to half of the entire high school population, and has been recognized nationally as one of the premier agriscience programs in the country, out of over 7,800 high schools that offer such a program across the U.S. I am very proud of what we have accomplished in our program and firmly believe that Connecticut's regional agriscience programs are excellent, time-tested models of successful education and were truly the state's first magnet schools since they began in 1920. The combination of a career-focused, hands-on, applied and personalized learning program, with a built-in required work experience externship program and the FFA student leadership development component, develops students for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. I am also a firm believer and supporter of the state's technical high schools, since they too train students for success in careers that are in high demand in our own state.

If I were to list my goals for what I'd like to help accomplish as a member of the State Board of Education, they would look like this:

1. Urge schools to embrace the term "career ready" and not just "college ready" as that should be the ultimate goal of all students. College is a path towards a career for most students, but not all; I feel we lose sight of that too often.

2. Identify and celebrate schools and educational models that work, and replicate their best practices that make them models of excellence for others to learn from.
3. Encourage all schools in Connecticut to embrace a more personalized learning approach instead of the outdated notion of "one size fits all."
4. Research successful regionalization/consolidation plans from surrounding states and then implement more regionalization of schools in Connecticut to provide a higher quality education for all students while making more efficient use of limited resources available for education.

Since I have spent my entire career of 30 years as a high school teacher, I am most familiar with the secondary level of public education; however, I also have two daughters, ages 13 and 15, who are in public schools as well. So I feel I can also provide some insight from a parent's perspective for all levels of education as they continue their journey through public education. In 2004, I was very proud and humbled to be recognized as the Connecticut State Teacher of the Year, and spent that year learning more about education in Connecticut as I visited many schools and spoke to several groups of educators, parents, administrators and members of boards of education. I believe that my career in public education, coupled with my experience in working with students, parents, fellow staff, administrators, the state legislature and several boards of education, attest to my qualification to serve on the State Board of Education. I hope to be able to help the Board make a difference in improving the state's educational opportunities for all students in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration in recommending my appointment to the Connecticut State Board of Education. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.