

CAUS



Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents
BRISTOL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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April 15, 2014

Dear Leaders,

My name is Mark Benigni and I am the Co-Chair of the Connecticut Association of Urban School Superintendents (CAUS) and the Superintendent of the Meriden Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

As you know, not only do CAUS districts serve high-performing and diverse learners, we also serve a high percentage of students with some of the greatest academic and physiological needs. CAUS districts are disproportionately poor compared to non-CAUS districts, and as such poverty negatively impacts our children and families.

We do not look at this as an excuse. In fact, we look at it as an opportunity to partner with other agencies to provide holistic support for the students with the greatest needs. Many of our district schools serve as the hubs for academic, mental health, dental, and nutritional support for our students. Your report makes an overt attempt to look at the entire needs of the children we serve. Alone, and with insufficient resources, schools cannot positively affect all the conditions that are serving as obstacles. This plan wisely opens the lines of communication and partnership at the top level with the Interagency Council to support our school-based approaches that currently exist. We have data that shows these efforts are working!

CAUS has been in support of school reform efforts because we want to make sure that the work we are doing during the school day is the best it can be. The report includes school-based recommendations aimed at helping the students we serve. I am looking forward to supporting the plan as it puts a spotlight on the needs in our urban high-poverty communities, and more importantly effectively addresses the needs of our students. All students deserve a chance for a better life!

As a result of this plan, I will bring forward the recommendations at an upcoming CAUS meeting in hopes that all CAUS districts will actively support the legislative agenda that the Connecticut Legislative Achievement Gap Task Force, in collaboration with the Interagency Council, puts forth. I want to work with these two groups to make sure that our perspective continues to frame the policy and practice that affects our students. Thank you for the inclusive approach you have taken to involve stakeholders in this process. Nicely done! Our students and families need our help and they are counting on us.

All the best,

Mark