

June 25, 2024

Dear Trustee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the SEA Executive Board, Building Reps, and our members.

As the trustees of the Stamford Board of Education prepare to cast their votes about whether to renew the contract of district Superintendent Tamu Lucero, the Stamford Education Association (SEA) would like to offer the following reminder: The mission of any school Board is to address the social-emotional well being of students, to provide an equitable distribution of resources to ensure the needs of all students are being met, and to attract and retain the best staff possible. These goals are not being met across our district under our current leadership.

The SEA can provide some poignant reminders of the damage that has resulted from an isolationist, non-collaborative approach to “leadership” and the adverse impact this has had on the school community.

The Superintendent consistently demonstrates an unwillingness to interact with parents and staff or to acknowledge and accept responsibility for what takes place throughout the district. This was painfully apparent in recent weeks when it became clear that the district was not following Board approved policies or state statutes to create safe working and learning environments in our schools. Even more painfully apparent was the lack of oversight and unwillingness to comment and accept responsibility after receiving numerous complaints of verbal and physical assaults against staff members who were not only trying to provide classroom instruction to their students but protect them from threats posed by others in the building. Ultimately, a teacher was hospitalized, and police were called to handle the situation. Although the SEA expressed their concerns about this ongoing problem directly to the Superintendent, to date, she has still not responded; no explanation or apology have been offered by the Superintendent to the staff or students that were affected, or to the students’ families whose children attend Turn of River Middle School and face regular disruptions to their learning experience. It is the teachers and students who have been put in harm’s way by her inattention to warnings given by the SEA about acts of verbal and physical assaults in our schools which have been allowed to spiral out of control. As the saying goes, “The buck (in this case, 459,000 of them), stops at the top”, yet there is no accountability for what has been permitted to go on in our schools.

During this past school year (2023-2024), teachers from our three high schools and two middle schools announced a vote of “no confidence” against the Superintendent in response to her unilateral imposition of schedule changes that did not take into consideration the impact on instruction. The district spokesperson stated in the newspapers that this would be addressed after the budget was completed but nothing has since been mentioned. A previous vote of “no confidence” against the same Superintendent was announced during the 2021-2022 school year for lack of support and leadership, a pattern which has since continued.

The Superintendent's most recent budget also stands to have a negative impact on our EL (English Learner) students by cutting staff and reallocating responsibilities. Details outlined in a May 22nd article in the Stamford Advocate indicate that this was done to save \$3 million at the expense of EL students by eliminating 25 teachers, including an EL Coordinator. The explanation given in the article was that "the proposal would not affect instruction and would only impact how responsibilities are distributed among central office staff." How is it possible that students will not be impacted by these cuts? The answer: they will be.

Most recently, as the school year came to a close, over 30 SEA job changes were introduced late in the game, surpassing the June 15th deadline for teachers being informed of their upcoming job assignments for the 2024-2025 school year. There were no extenuating circumstances necessitating this delay but rather the elimination of current positions which resulted in combining previously existing positions into one, increasing staff workloads for no additional compensation. Budget cuts also impacted the district's art program, leading to the elimination of 2 positions and additional loss of staff. Many teachers also recently learned that they would not be offered full-time positions next year, but rather reduced schedules or involuntary transfers. The result was the loss of additional staff as teachers chose to resign and seek employment in other districts.

Although you may or may not have children enrolled in our district's schools, the SEA is urging you to strongly consider what impact your vote to renew the Superintendent's contract will have on the children of the community whose parents have elected you to serve as trustees, as well as on the safety and well-being of a dedicated staff of teachers who give their all each and every day.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Corcoran, SEA President