

I would like to address the Litchfield Concerned Parents group that met last Friday evening at the Litchfield Firehouse. The reported purpose of this group was to give parents a forum for expressing views on the Litchfield Public Schools and their operations. Since there was no representation from the Board of Education or school administration at this meeting, I would like to clarify some misconceptions and to refute the perception of lack of transparency on the behalf of the Board.

First, clarification is needed in regards to the purpose of a school board meeting. Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the business of the schools.

While these meetings are held in public, they are **not** public meetings.

However, public comment is encouraged during each meeting.

While the Board of Education does not engage in dialogue during public comment, efforts have been made to answer questions on a timely basis after meetings. The Board has been informed that the superintendent or her designee has been diligent in answering public comment concerns. While it may be perceived that these answers are inadequate, some information (i.e., employment performance, evaluation, employment dismissal, student information) cannot be shared with the general public which is protected by state statute.

This Board of Education is committed to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction. It is a shared belief that all students have the ability to learn and that the school system is able to teach all children at high levels. The Board is accountability- driven by focusing on policies that improve student achievement. Subcommittees are data savvy, monitoring data to drive continuous improvement. Along with the superintendent, the Board of Education makes an effort to lead as a united team with collaboration and mutual trust.

The members of this Board of Education are committed to all students in the system during the decision-making process. There is a significant difference between **opinion** and **knowledge**. There is a significant difference between **information** and **understanding**. **Knowledge** and **understanding** are prerequisites for responsible decision making. The members of this Board of Education have spent countless hours ensuring they understand the information needed to advance the vision and mission of this school district.

A concern voiced by the Litchfield Concerned Parents group was the length of time that current members have served on this board. This year is an election year. Any resident of the Litchfield community has the ability to run for this office. Three seats are open during this election year. Anyone interested

should indicate their desire to run to their respective Town political parties. In the meantime, a great resource is “Be a School Board Member” found on the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education website ([www.cabe.org](http://www.cabe.org)).

An effective Board of Education has a collaborative relationship with staff and community. The public has always been encouraged to attend Board of Education meetings and subcommittee meetings. Perhaps future consideration for a collaborative relationship would include focus groups or study circles that may be put into place in an ad hoc committee. Increased communication may also be achieved through a Board of Education newsletter on the school district website ([www.litchfieldschools.org](http://www.litchfieldschools.org)).

Finally, please be reminded that when there is a concern with a student, the proper channels to voice concerns start with the teacher, next the building administrator and finally, the superintendent. The Board of Education should not be involved in the day to day operations of the school district. Their role should focus on advancing the district improvement plan.

We look forward to developing new ways to collaborate with and inform parents and the community as we continue to work together to provide rich learning experiences and the best education possible for all of our students.