

## Perth Amboy Board of Education – Public Statement of 2/9/12

The last several months have been extremely challenging for the Board of Education, the administration, the staff and the community.

Due to the immediate needs of our students, the Board through the guidance of the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Caffrey, has implemented many new educational initiatives. These initiatives were presented by the administration during last Saturday's retreat. These presentations were extremely well-received by those members of the public who attended the Board meeting. We strongly encourage every teacher, staff member, parent and every member of this community to watch the Board meeting of February 4<sup>th</sup> to learn more about the exciting positive initiatives taking place in Perth Amboy Public schools under the guidance and direction of Dr. Caffrey. The meeting can be viewed in its entirety on the Perth Amboy Public School's website.

In addition to these initiatives, there have been many changes over the last school year. First and foremost, our schools are led by a new Superintendent, in addition to many new administrators. For the first time, in a very long time, this new Board of Education recognized that something drastic had to be done to move our children forward. And although difficult, this Board and this administration had to admit that our schools are at risk of failing many of our students. This new Board of Education, as leaders and as parents, could no longer "bury our heads in the sand" and just keep the status quo.

However, these drastic and quick changes also presented the Board of Education, the administration, the staff and the community with many difficulties. When faced with controversial issues, all of us at this table have had difficulty communicating with each other and at times, have behaved in a less than exemplary manner before the public. For this we apologize. This will stop now. And although we are not perfect, each member of this Board of Education has an unwavering commitment to the children of Perth Amboy. Each and every member of this Board of Education has committed to working cooperatively with each other to ensure efficient communication and conduct during Board meetings.

There has been discord between members of this Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools. There has been a significant break down in communications, which is imperative to the efficient operation of this school system. This too will stop now. The Superintendent must be given deference with respect to the educational decisions made to better our schools. In turn, the Superintendent must defer to the Board of Education on important issues that directly impact our unique community and staff. Over the last several months, members of the Board and the Superintendent have met to discuss the strained relationship. The Board's concerns have been firmly conveyed to the Superintendent. Both the Board of Education and the Superintendent have committed to a plan of action which includes effective and timely communications, to avoid such conflict in the future.

Our attempt to improve the culture and environment of our schools was met with resistance by a portion of the staff. This in turn failed to improve morale. We recognize that our attempts to empower the staff and teachers in the schools with strong professional development programs were disfavored by some staff members. We share your concern with staff morale. Events over the last several months have caused a significant disconnect between our teaching staff, administrators, and Superintendent. We implore the teaching staff, our administration and the Superintendent of Schools to stop.

Let's be clear. The Board did not support the Superintendent's unilateral writing of the articles for the Star-Ledger. We also heard the community and took appropriate action. However, it is now time to stop the harshly negative comments, the inappropriate references and the writing campaigns against our leadership. The Superintendent has admitted to making mistakes, the Board took appropriate action and she has apologized for the hurt it has caused our community. We challenge our staff to keep the Board informed through the meetings to be jointly held with the Board under the Staff Relations Committee, to continue to attend our Board meetings, and to make constructive comments so that we know what areas continue to need our focus and attention. Each member of this Board of Education is committed to improving staff morale. It will not be easy. But, we believe each and every one of you will see a difference. The Board of Education also challenges the Association and the Negotiating Committee to settle the contract. Let's work together to move this school district forward.

Lastly, we challenge the parents and community to get involved and find out about all the wonderful positive things that are happening in Perth Amboy Public Schools. Please come to our Board meetings and ask questions. Tell us where you need to see improvement. We encourage our PTOs in each and every one of our schools to work with the Board of Education in identifying areas in need of improvement. However, also celebrate your school's accomplishments and let us know the positive things that are happening.

The Perth Amboy Board of Education will continue to be vigilant and assertive in continuing to monitor and address these challenges. The Superintendent and the administration know that this Board will hold them accountable for the implemented initiatives and increasing staff morale. However, the Superintendent has advised the Board that she welcomes this accountability. And although the last several months have been difficult, the Board of Education is confident that these difficulties can be overcome with effective communication, cooperation, leadership and a focus on the children of Perth Amboy.

Thank you.