

NEW LONDON GREEN PARTY EDUCATION PLATFORM 2015

Connecticut has a wealth gap that is among the widest in the nation, and this inequitable distribution of resources has created an “opportunity gap” which affects children's experiences outside and within the classroom. New London's high rate of poverty creates the need for our city and Board of Education to make closing the opportunity gap its highest educational priority.

At the core of education is respect - for students and their families, teachers and other staff, and the community at large. Respect manifests in many ways: maintaining clean facilities, making sure students have materials they need, and communicating tolerance and caring throughout the day.

We call for the acknowledgement that every student has a unique educational need that must be respected by allowing all students to reach their own potential through self-directed learning and by providing a diverse and cohesive learning environment.

Respect also includes a commitment to fulfill students' physical needs during the course of a school day. The importance of rest, play, and healthful food cannot be overlooked as we strive for academic excellence.

For teaching and learning to occur, **a safe school environment is essential**, but punitive and exclusionary controls like suspension and expulsion, used more frequently in urban schools than in wealthier and less diverse districts, frequently lead to academic failure and increased drop-out rates rather than safer schools.

We call for a new approach based on Restorative Practices to create a harmonious and peaceful school environment. As students learn to communicate, empathize, solve problems and consider options for restitution, they become stakeholders in creating a sense of community and improving school safety.

Schools can and must become **an integral part of the community**. New London is astoundingly rich in culture: history dating back to Colonial times; music, theater, dance, and graphic arts; institutions of higher learning; a lively mix of languages and traditions; and civic participation and activism. Our district is currently forging connections, but our schools can do more to take advantage of the resources available within easy reach.

We call for the district to take a more active role in welcoming and fostering parent involvement, to open our schools wholeheartedly to community events and organizations, and to increase the visibility of our students in the community-at-large.

New London deserves **adequate and equitable learning opportunities** driven by a budget that supports individualized attention and a broad spectrum of experiences.

We call for a budget that guarantees sufficient staffing to ensure smaller class sizes comparable to neighboring districts, and prioritizes funding arts, music, second language

learning, and elective classes, recognizing that these disciplines are just as essential as math and reading. We also support the work of CCJEF (CT Coalition for Justice in Education Funding), which seeks adequate and equitable funding for all districts throughout Connecticut.

The success of this city and its appeal to current and potential residents is dependent on the quality of the public education it offers. We need to ensure that New London schools meet the educational needs of all students and prepare them for a lifetime of opportunities. The Green Party values of social justice, nonviolence, respect for diversity, and responsibility can uplift our educational system, the lives of New London's young people, and our entire community.

Approved on July 22, 2015.