



Hope and Victory Directives

Student demands to address political empowerment, subpar facilities, school curriculum, and student safety

This ambitious and desperately needed demand list was compiled through a rigorous process of idea generation, dialogue, power mapping, and consensus democracy. It started in December when over 50+ students from 5 different high schools were asked to elaborate on their vision¹ of a better school system.

Then, a committee of 10 union workers, youth activists, community organizers, and specialists² convened over the span of four months to sort through and synthesize the 400+ inputs³ students responded on the worksheet.

Finally, we worked with student leaders in the April Student Congress meetings to review, amend, and ultimately vote on this list of demands. We believe this is merely the start, and we are excited to work with the Board of Education, teachers, and community advocates to implement them.

Harmony Solomon Cruz-Bustamante

John Carlos Musser

Student Representatives to the New Haven Board of Education

¹ [Visioning Worksheet: A Better School is Within Our Reach](#)

² [Community Intelligence Committee Members List & Meeting Records](#)

³ [Visioning Worksheet Responses Spreadsheet](#)

Directive 1: Power back to The People!

We demand that democratic control of schools be a guaranteed right for all students.

We ask that the Board of Education pass a **resolution** to:

01. Establish a “*student committee*” in middle and high schools that fit the following criteria:
 - a. Is certified and vetted to be democratic, based on consensus and mass movement, focused political advocacy, and student defense
 - b. Have student workers and officials that are properly trained in facilitation, community organizing, political advocacy, logistical work, and other skills necessary to ensure that these *student committees*
 - c. Are in close contact and work together with community organizations, labor unions, mass movements, and student representatives on the Board of Education to actualize campaigns and express needs
 - d. Is free from overt influence and control of school staff and administration
 - e. Is free to conduct their activity with autonomy and support
 - f. Have their teacher-sponsors properly compensated (if applies)
 - g. Provides services and activities that improve school climate and exercise legitimate political authority in deciding school policy, making decisions with administration, and acts as a union to defend and advocate for students
02. Ensure that each school has at least four (4) *People’s Assemblies* where initiatives and school policy can be made, altered, or eliminated. These People’s Assemblies are to:
 - a. Include all students and relevant staff in the building, whether it be all at once or in cohorts
 - b. Occur at least once every marking period
 - c. Have its agenda short-list set by the student committee (see point 1) in coordination with the administration, teacher-leadership, and community organizations
 - d. Have legitimate authority in creating and maintaining policy while being within the boundaries of city, state, and federal law
 - e. Have students and teachers directly comment, vote on, and decide on the items on the agenda– whether it be through votes or activities
 - f. Provide feedback and vision for school and district priorities; decide where school funds should be allocated and how the curriculum is to be structured
03. Mandate that the Board of Education, central office staff, and district leadership work directly with student committees and youth organizations to decide where district funds are allocated and how the curriculum is designed

Directive 2: Clean and Functioning Facilities

We demand that all students have clean, well-maintained facilities. This includes ensuring that bathrooms, health facilities, and turn-around rooms are accessible to all students.

We ask that the Board of Education and district leaders work together to:

01. Audit current processes for putting in work orders and analyze efficiency and efficacy to then develop a plan to streamline, improve, and democratize work order processes
02. Provide a timeline for providing at least 3-6 gender-neutral bathrooms in every school that is easily accessible to all students
03. Require that school administrations and facilities teams provide reports to *student committees* and *people's assemblies* detailing areas of improvement, accomplishments, and spaces for feedback and mutual accountability

Directive 3: Lessons that Make Sense

We demand that our curriculum and lessons be relevant to our lives, give us the tools to exercise our pool, promote critical consciousness to combat oppression, and promote a sense of community and SEL.

We ask that the Board of Education and district leaders work together to:

01. Audit existing curriculum for all district elementary, middle, and high schools (and redesign and amend as needed) with central office workers, teachers, students, and community organizations
02. Enhance health classes by mandating that they include:
 - a. Queer and heterosexual sex-ed
 - b. Nutrition and holistic wellness based on Science
 - c. Mental health skills and psychological first aid
 - d. Harm reduction and addiction *without* an emphasis on moralistic abstinence
 - e. Relationship skills and community-actualization wellness
03. Enhance teacher and student-led professional development. Direct curriculum supervisors and central office staff to create processes that provide teachers with the tools to make lessons and curriculum that are:
 - a. Culturally responsive
 - b. Relevant to everyday life
 - c. Align with the principles of critical pedagogy
 - d. Foster political, cultural, and civic involvement

Directive 4: Safe Schools for All

We demand a school district that values and centers the community, mental health, and lives of students and their humanity as well as building new systems of accountability to repair harm within the community.

We ask that the Board of Education and district leaders work together to:

01. Invest at least \$800,000 into a new training program developed by community partners, students, teachers, and advocates that focuses on training teachers and students in restorative and transformative justice
02. Build relationships with organizations that can help build systems of de-escalation in schools outside of using traditional punitive methods of discipline.
03. Implement High School in the Community's FLY Awards Initiative to be replicated at all high schools to improve student morale through non-punitive positive reinforcements beyond honors students and athletes
04. Co-create a transformative justice program within the school that allows peer-to-peer mediation like *Pa'Lante* in Holyoke High School in Massachusetts