

## Hartford Public Schools Convocation

Hartford Public Schools Teachers, Principals, support staff, administrators, nonprofit partners and well wishers like myself gathered the day before classes were to begin at Dunkin' Donuts Park for a convocation/pep rally that included encouraging words by Mayor Bronin, School Board Chairman Craig Stallings, Teacher of the year Sonia Turner and of course Superintendent Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez.

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez was introduced by one of the students who performed later as part of the one-hour program. She then introduced Mayor Bronin who after asking for a moment of silence to remember the residents of Houston, spoke of the challenges but also the opportunities ahead including the newly opened UCONN downtown branch and that the leadership of CREC was there side by side with HPS.

In each speech, the speaker included a realistic acknowledgement of the challenges ahead. Mayor Bronin mentioned the challenges that Charlottesville revealed, Dr. Torres-Rodriguez reminded everyone that the school consolidation plan has still to be finalized and Sonia Turner spoke of the fortunes of Hartford rising and falling over the past decades but all of them were quick to point out that the most important thing was the students. Ms. Turner read from a letter from one of her graduating students to remind everyone present why they come to work and ended her talk with the question "Are you ready to change a life?" and to a standing ovation.



As if to make the point even clearer, there were musical performances by students from Hartford Magnet at Trinity College, and Classical Magnet School interspersed between the talks. It all concluded with Dr. Torres-Rodriguez leading everyone in a call and response of "Hartford - Schools" "One - Team" "Students - First" "Number - One" and a marching drum performance. More photos are

available at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vk7FPTwy5iK2r4qJ3>