

September 9, 2013

The superintendents who have chosen to sign this document have enjoyed hundreds of years of experience and have led schools in the state of Tennessee to accomplish tremendous outcomes. Each signee aspires to accomplish more and utilize state and community resources to continue with the challenging task of comprehensive and sustained school improvement. The schools we are working to improve are in the communities where we live and serve our children.

As leaders, we have participated in some of the most comprehensive reform efforts in our nation. Our participation has been intentional with a goal of providing a brighter future for the children in our charge while improving increased economic, educational and social opportunities in our state.

During the last year, the signees have developed a belief that the office of the Commissioner of Education in this administration has no interest in a dialogue with those of us providing leadership for school systems. We have begun to feel that the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education considers school teachers, principals and superintendents impediments to school improvement rather than partners. While no superintendent will have all the answers, we are confident that many of the efforts underway by our state would be enhanced by our active voice and genuine participation in the decision development process.

Superintendents have attempted to accomplish participation in the decision making process through the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, through the Superintendents Study Council and through more informal measures. Instead of a receptive ear, our overtures have been met with scripted messages and little interest in accomplishing great change by changing culture.

It has become obvious to the signees that our efforts to acquire a voice within this administration is futile. We have been patient, professional and focused on the needs of each of our communities but the expertise we have and the passion we feel must become a part of the efforts to improve Tennessee education.

The superintendents signed hereto have been willing to take this extraordinary step not as an act of resistance rather as a plea out of a sense of responsibility for each of the communities we serve. Today we feel that we are not respected or valued and that the unique culture of our state is not valued. Today we feel that we are unable to lead many improvement efforts due to our charge of attempting to address morale issues of many of our employees who feel voiceless and powerless.

We are not content with the current leadership and feel that we are not best serving our state in this manner. We request that Governor Haslam and members of the Tennessee General Assembly consider carefully and prayerfully the future of free public education in our state and address our concerns and the concerns of many of our parents, teachers and principals.