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January 23, 2025

**Statement from Dr. Tony Gasper, Superintendent of Schools, New Britain, CT**

**“Recent claims regarding the Consolidated School District of New Britain’s actions toward a staff member are both inaccurate and misleading. To clarify, the matter involves the teacher’s decision to prominently display a religious symbol—a crucifix—on the front wall of her public-school classroom, which violates both federal and state laws requiring public schools to remain neutral in religious matters,”** said Dr. Tony Gasper, Superintendent of Schools, New Britain, CT.

The placement of this symbol in a highly visible position in the classroom infringes on the religious freedoms of our diverse student population. This issue extends beyond the display of the crucifix. **The teacher’s actions included incorporating her personal religious beliefs into her instruction,** which led to concerns from students and staff of different faiths. Reports indicated that students in the classroom felt uncomfortable. Students and staff raised concerns about the environment being overly influenced by the teacher’s religious views.

**“We will not allow any teacher to use their position of authority to impose their personal religious beliefs or infringe on the civil rights of our students,”** said Gasper. **“Our commitment is to ensure a learning environment where all students and staff feel respected and valued, regardless of their faith or beliefs.”**

Over the past several weeks, the district has worked diligently to resolve the matter in a cooperative and collaborative manner, following legal guidance at every stage of this process. The teacher remains on paid administrative leave while discussions continue with her and the union. Despite repeated efforts, the teacher declined multiple opportunities to address the concerns in a manner that respected both her faith and the diverse religious beliefs of students in the classroom.

*Additional media inquiries can be sent to Ann Baldwin, Baldwin Media, at 860-985-5621.*