

# Strengthening Student & Family Engagement

## **Brittany Rabb**

Director of K-12 Initiatives,  
William Julius Wilson Institute  
at Harlem Children's Zone

## **Aaron Jennings**

Chief of Staff & Wellness,  
Chelsea Public Schools

## **Jinelle Hooker**

Acting Executive Director  
of Strategic Partnerships &  
Fund Development,  
Hartford Public Schools









**EdRedesign**  
OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL



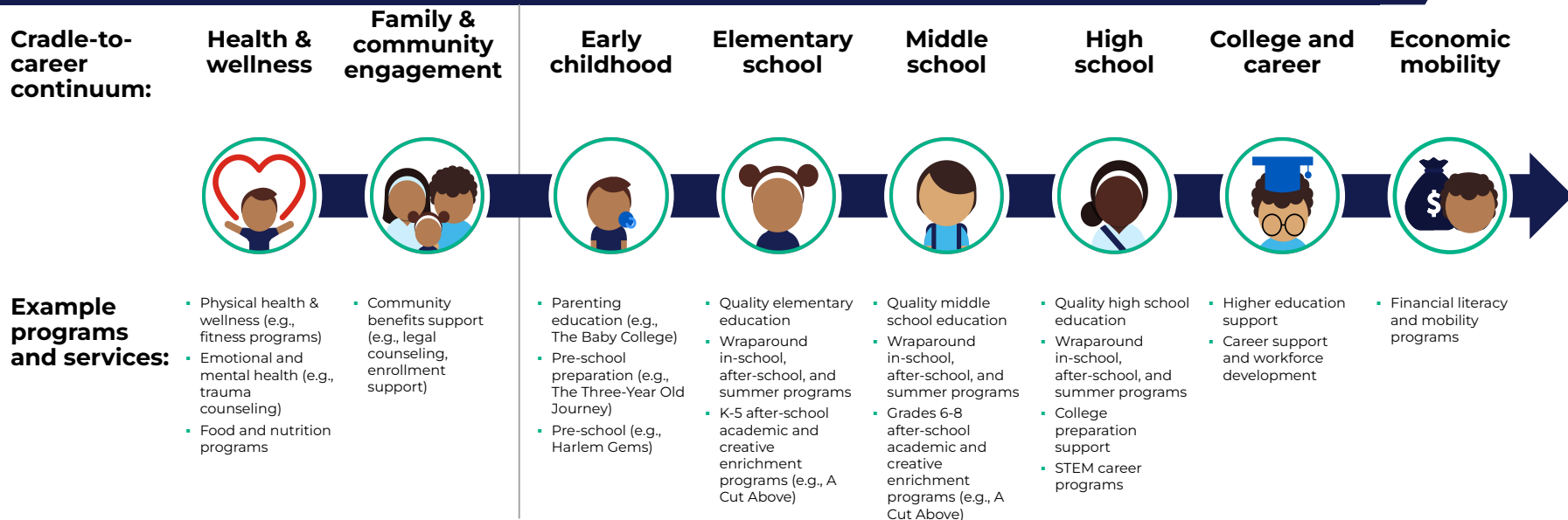
**#PowerofPlace**

# Six Principles of Cradle-to-Career

WJWI has outlined the following six principles of neighborhood-based, cradle-to-career strategies.

Continuity	Accountability	Neighborhood-Based	Systems Change	K-12 Engagement	Proximate Leadership
					
<p>Programming within a neighborhood <b>spans the full C2C continuum</b> with clear links between all developmental stages.</p> <p>Services may be provided by a single organization or a collection of organizations, but they should be <b>coordinated and connected</b>.</p>	<p>One organization / entity is <b>accountable for all C2C outcomes within the neighborhood</b></p> <p>Though multiple providers may deliver services, there is a singular centralized body <b>taking responsibility across the continuum</b>.</p> <p>Accountable entity <b>leverages data</b> to inform outcomes.</p>	<p>The programming is <b>rooted in and designed for a particular neighborhood</b> with a focus on the most historically underserved communities.</p>	<p>The effort <b>engages systems leaders and leverages conditions of systems change*</b> to support the formation and sustaining of contiguous, accountable, neighborhood-based strategies.</p> <p>Systems change/related efforts provide access to <b>sustainable funding</b> for efforts over time.</p>	<p>The approach includes a <b>focus on K-12 education</b>, given the central role the system plays in shaping children's outcomes</p> <p>This focus may involve working to <b>influence school systems</b>, operating / partnering with a <b>K-12 school</b>, or operating / partnering with <b>after school, weekend, and / or summer programs</b></p>	<p><b>Members of the community being served</b> lead the effort.</p> <p>Leaders should have <b>deep connections and longstanding relationships</b> within the community.</p>

# Cradle-to-career 'ideal state' frame

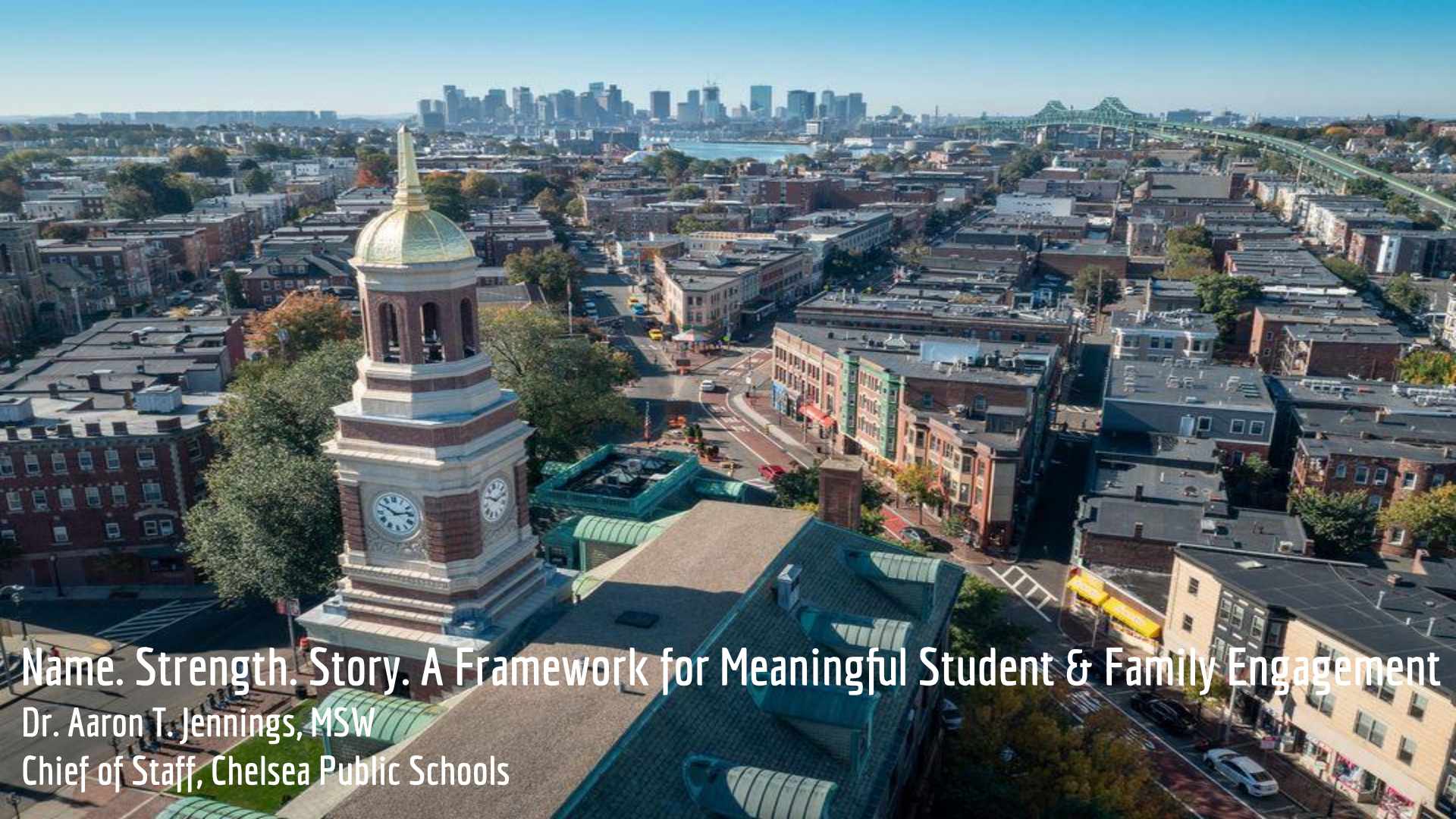


## Example programs and services:

In addition, ideal state programming accounts for the relevant socioeconomic needs of the population (e.g., provides immigration services in areas where relevant) and ties into relevant strategic opportunities

## Cross-cutting continuum enablers:

<b>Social environment and political capital</b>	Effects of social network context (e.g., family, friends, peers)
<b>Built environment</b>	Physical infrastructure (e.g., housing, transportation, broadband access, community centers)
<b>Economic environment</b>	Economic prospects available (e.g., job availability, entrepreneurship pathways)
<b>Public systems and infrastructure</b>	Federal, state, and local government infrastructure (e.g., safety net)



**Name. Strength. Story. A Framework for Meaningful Student & Family Engagement**  
Dr. Aaron T. Jennings, MSW  
Chief of Staff, Chelsea Public Schools



# Superintendent & Cabinet



Dr. Almi G. Abeyta  
Superintendent



Michelle Martinello  
Asst. Superintendent



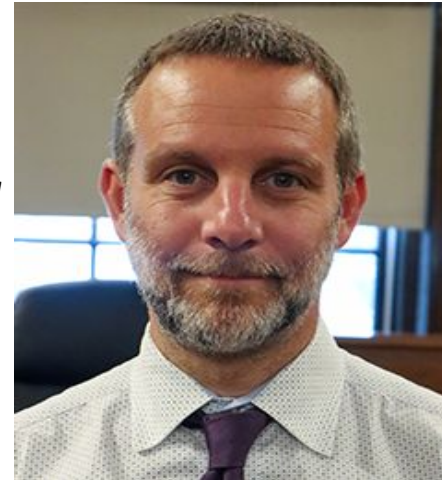
Michael Sullivan  
Communications Director



Dr. Aaron T. Jennings, MSW  
Chief of Staff



Dr. Tamara Blake Canty  
Asst. Superintendent



Malik Howshan  
Officer of Innovation,  
Access, & Opportunity





Good Morning  
 Doc Roehoe Panto  
 What's your name?  
 Yek! Tebes BTE  
 My name is  
 mines rost J  
 Thank You - ~~Diakuso~~ Diakuso



# Name. Strength. Story. District Leadership Team Survey

## Three Questions

1. What does *Name, Strength, & Story* mean to you, and how do you live it out in your role as an educator?
2. How do you practice Name, Strength, & Story within the context of student and family engagement?
3. If you have any additional thoughts, reflections, or comments on the philosophy of “Name, Strength, & Story,” please share them below.

## Question 1: What does *Name, Strength, & Story* mean to you, and how do you live it out in your role as an educator?

To me, Name, Strength, and Story means honoring the individual identities and capabilities of each of our students. This is something that I lead my visual and performing arts departments to do by ensuring that artists and works from as many diverse backgrounds as possible are included in our curriculum, and that this is showcased as our many community events that we host to highlight our students' achievements.

Name, Strength & Story to me means treating every family the way I would want my own family to be treated. As Director of the Parent Information Center, it's my responsibility to ensure that families feel seen, respected and valued from the very first interaction w/CPS. Each child we enroll has their own unique strengths and our role as a District is to help uncover those strengths, foster them and create the conditions for them to grow knowing that one day they will carry those strengths beyond our schools. Everyone has a story. Some families who come to us traveled long difficult roads in search of stability and opportunity. Others arrive looking for something they may not have found in their previous community such as connection, inclusion or simply looking for a fresh start.

This phrase guides my work as an educator and really always has. I was thrilled that this phrase has become our mantra and mission in CPS. Our name is our identity, our strength is our "manna"- the soul strength and our story is how everything gets tied together- it is what we tell others about our journey and our lived experiences. In order to truly "see" and understand students, families and staff members for that matter, it is my role as principal to make this mantra part of my "lived work". I need to figure out in the case of students who may be closed, for very good reasons, how to get students to recognize that the school is a safe space and that they can choose to open up and be seen.



## Question 1: What does *Name, Strength, & Story* mean to you, and how do you live it out in your role as an educator?

When we do this well, it unites a Culturally Responsive Teaching approach and our Universal Design for Learning mindset, because it starts by centering the child and family's own goals, their strengths and assets -- and positions us to design an environment that can help make the most of them, while anticipating and addressing barriers that may get in the way.

Name, Strength, & Story to me means connecting with families and students beneath the surface. I live this out as a Family Liaison by really building relationships with our students and families and making them all feel supported, heard, welcomed and accepted. I provide a safe space for families to be vulnerable and be able to express themselves with no judgement and with confidentiality to better support them in what they need. I use my personal experience growing up in Chelsea and attending Chelsea Public Schools to show them that, I hear them, I see them and I relate to them and I am always here for them beyond their years at the ELC.

## Question 2: How do you practice Name, Strength, & Story within the context of student and family engagement?

- I practice Name, Strength, & Story by centering student and family voices in IEP meetings, focusing on strengths and personal experiences to guide our decisions. In SEPAC meetings, I elevate family perspectives to inform district practices and build a supportive community. I also engage with the broader community to strengthen connections and ensure families feel valued both in and beyond our schools.
- As a school leader, one tangible routine I have is to take photos of kids anytime I'm in classrooms or somewhere that kids are shining -- and then I send them to parents/caregivers through ParentSquare, with a little note about their focus on a tough task, or the way I saw them explain their thinking, or the way they were a leader with a peer today -- and maybe a datapoint about their progress or growth this year. I always try to convey how proud I am of how they are growing as a scholar -- and to thank the parent for working with us to raise a good human being.
- Something as simple as a family to learn about a school event in Arabic, Haitian Creole, etc. has proven to engage students and individuals who previously may not have felt seen because of a language barrier.
- Name: I encourage my team to lead with respect and never reduce a family to a LASID #
- Student intake interviews and home visits are safe spaces to share meaningful information and where I focus on listening.

### Question 3: If you have any additional thoughts, reflections, or comments on the philosophy of “Name, Strength, & Story,” please share them below.

- The best advice I can provide is to always look beneath the surface and encourage our students and families they are capable of so much! I am a prime example that when our educators take the time to really look beneath the surface and get to know not only our students but also the families they come from, there is so much to offer and there is always a story worth hearing. The time, attention and support from my teachers when I attended Chelsea Public Schools, fueled me to strive for more in life and give back to the community that built me.
- The philosophy of Name, Strength, & Story is a powerful reminder that education is most impactful when it is personal, inclusive, and student-centered. It challenges us to move beyond labels and compliance, and instead, to truly see and honor each student’s full humanity. When we lead with this mindset, we create schools where students feel a deep sense of belonging and where families are welcomed as essential partners. It’s not just a framework, it is a daily practice of listening, affirming, and building on the unique gifts each student brings to our school community.
- I think it grounds us in our mission and values so well. Chelsea is a community of immigrants. Valuing, celebrating and applauding the cultures and backgrounds of our families through the moniker of Name, Strength & Story is critical. In my role, I attempt to carry out that philosophy every day.

# **CHELSEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Where We Know Our Students  
By**





# Cabinet, cont.



Christine Lee  
Director of Human  
Resources

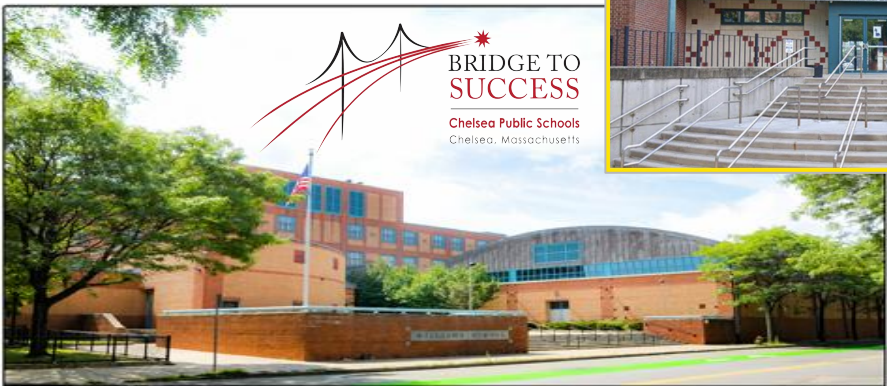
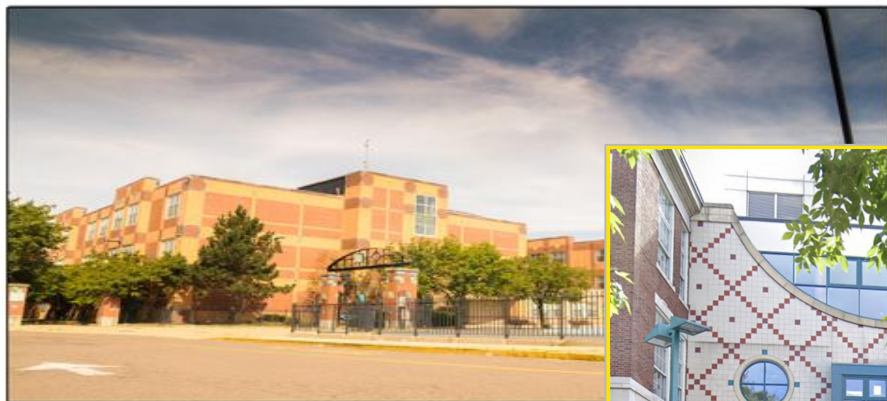


Billie Jo Turner  
Chief Financial Officer



Adam Deleidi  
Chief Academic Officer

# Who Are We As a Community?



# Chelsea Public Schools Demographics

2024-25 Enrollment

District Type

Public

Number of Schools

11

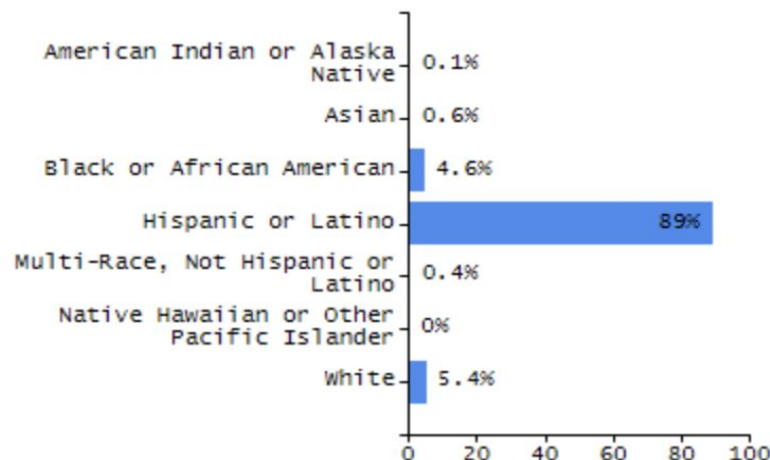
Enrollment

6,094

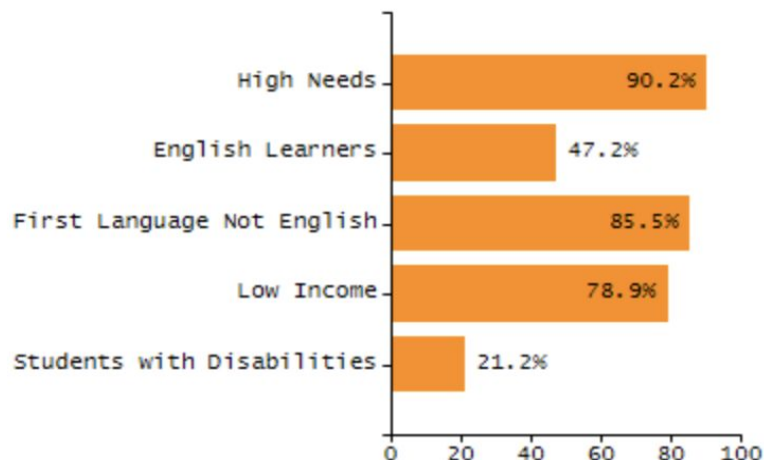
Grades Served

PK - 12

## Student Race and Ethnicity



## Selected Populations





# **CHELSEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Where We Know Our Students  
By**





# Name. Strength. Story. Not Just Words

## A framework for how we engage, listen, and lead

- **Name** - every student deserves to be **known by name** — not just for attendance, but as a signal of **dignity, identity, and belonging**.
- **Strength** - we must know our students by their strengths. Taking an **asset-based approach** means recognizing the **skills, resilience, and brilliance they bring** — and using those strengths as the foundation for growth and support.
- **Story** - each student and family carries a **unique story**. To serve them well, we must take time to know that story. Because *I can't serve you if I don't know you.*

# Name. Strength. Story. Family Liaisons



**Delmy Mejia**



**BUSY AS A BEE  
AT THE ELC**  
Johnnie Miller Early Learning Center



**Krishell Orellana**



**Yolanda Valles -Lead**



**Alexa Fernandez**



**Johnny Giraldo**



**Vivian Quiles**



**Marlene Garcia**



**Zuleima Perez**



**Dr. Tamara Blake Canty**  
Assistant Superintendent



**Jay Velez - Lead**



**Olga Escalante**

# Name. Strength. Story. In Practice

Proximate, familial, and an operating philosophy.

- It is **proximate** because you either grew up in Chelsea, attended Chelsea Public Schools, or went to school with many of your students' parents.
- It is **familial** because you are literally related to your students—as cousins, aunts, uncles—or because students see you as family, telling you that you remind them of someone they love.
- And it is an **operating philosophy** because you intentionally interact with students and families from a strengths-based perspective, grounded in **honoring their lived experiences and their stories**.

This is the heart of our work in Chelsea.









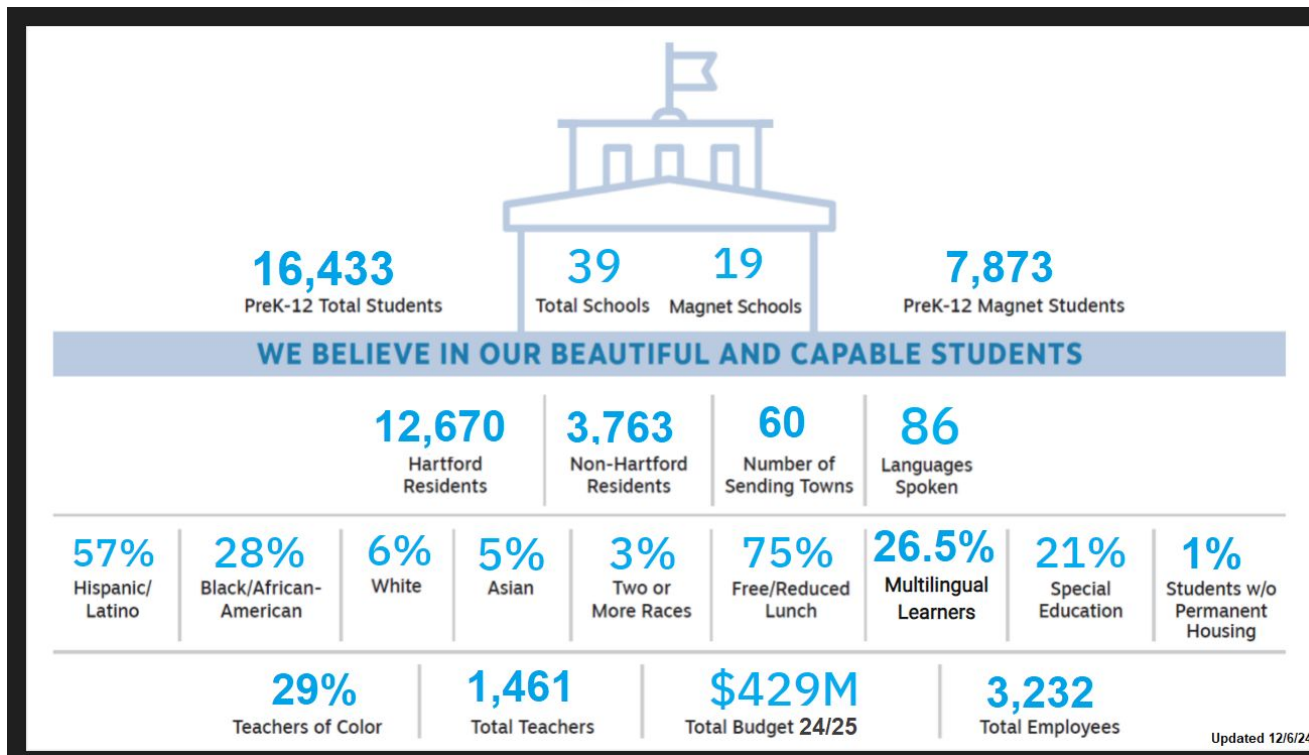
# Community Schools Redesign: Purposeful Partnership

Jinelle Hooker

Executive Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships &  
Fund Development

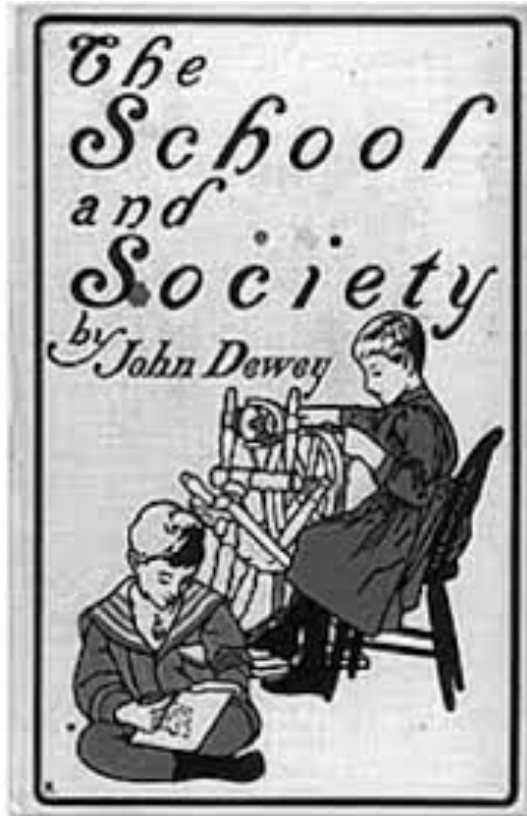


# Hartford Public Schools Demographic



Updated 12/6/24

# History of HPS Community Schools



**2007** - School/Community Partnership established

**2008** - Hartford Board of Education adopts a Community School Policy

**2008-2009** - Pilot Cohort of 5 schools is formed (Full service schools)

**2009** - Community School Initiative is formed

**2011-2012** - 2 additional schools added to cohort

**2018-2019** - HPS names all schools Community Schools utilizing a tiered support system

## DISTRICT MODEL FOR EXCELLENCE Strategic Plan



## Community Schools Redesign Contrast

From



To

A cohort of 7 Schools	13 schools (Tier 3 and 4); all 41 HPS receiving leveled supports
Implemented and operationalized by the Hartford Partnership for Student Success (HPSS)	Implemented and operationalized by Hartford Public Schools
Current Community Schools operating Monday – Friday	Increased access to schools on weekends for extended hours programs
Aligned community partnerships and resources	Intentional learning-focused partnerships
Student supports and services	Integrated / Individualized Student Supports
Lead Agency Model	Partnership efforts between the Lead Agency, Community Schools Coordinator, and school support staff
Identified resources per school/agency Some common resources across schools within the network	Leverage the zone model to streamline and scale up resources for all schools within the zone
No community school model at the high school level	Student Success Center as the pillar for the high school model At all three neighborhood high schools



# Whole Community Engagement



At HPS all schools are community schools

## Level 1:

- Attendance Strategies
- Higher Ed Partnerships
- Family & Community Engagement

## Level 2:

- + Intentional Community Partnerships

## Level 3:

- + **Expanded Learning Opportunities**

## Level 4:

- + Integrated Student Supports, Physical & Mental Health and Wellness (clinics)

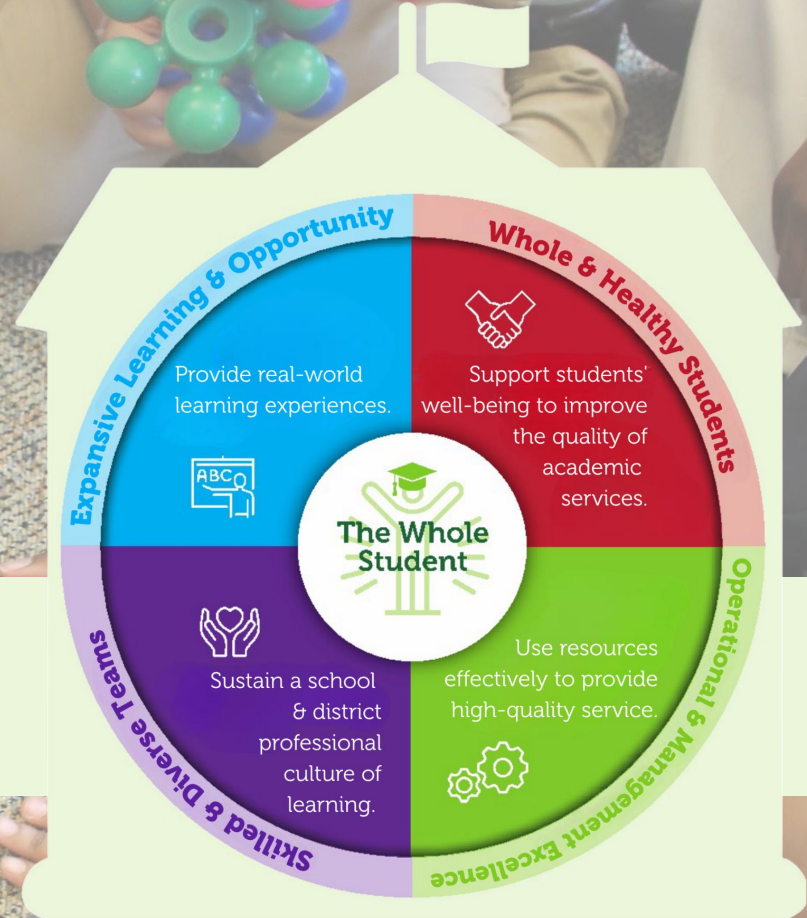


*HPS Community Schools*

## Place - Based & Cradle 2 Career Vision



## Focus on Transition Points



## Cradle 2 Career Vision



Michael D. Fox  
Elementary School

Alfred E. Burr  
Middle School

South End of  
Hartford

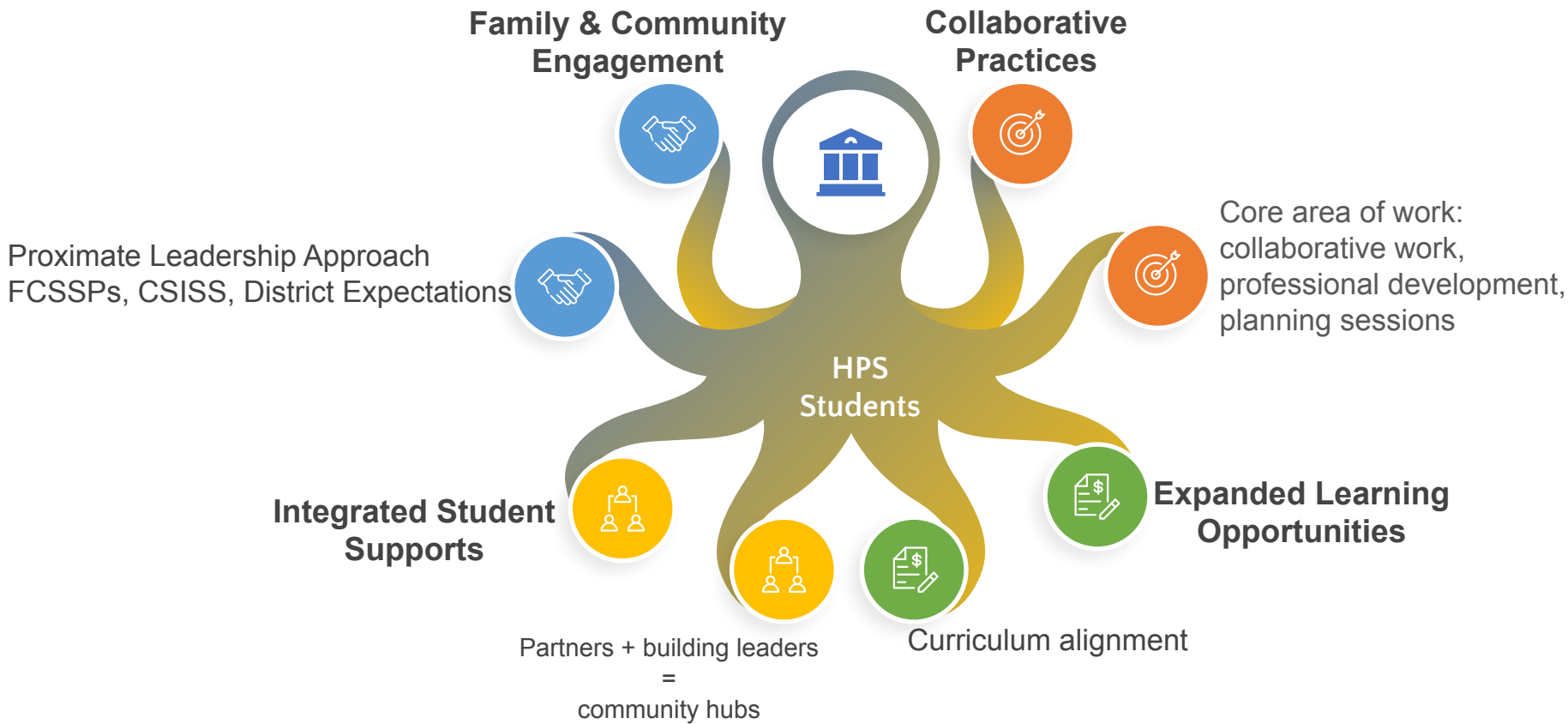
Morgan Gardner Bulkeley  
High School

MD Fox Elementary - 583 students enrolled

Burr Middle School - 263 students enrolled

Bulkeley High School - 561 students enrolled

Core Components to the work







# Hartford Public Schools Strategic Partnerships Protocol



# The Road Ahead



## Next Steps Roadmap

1

### Needs Assessment

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify specific gaps in services and areas where student support is most needed.

2

### Data Analysis

Analyze program participation data (attendance, demographics, outcomes) to evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

3

### Alignment with PSEA

Ensure all programs are aligned with the Hartford Public Schools' strategic plan and individual school improvement plans.

4

### Resource Mapping

Create a comprehensive map of all available resources (programs, services, funding) to avoid duplication of efforts and identify potential collaborations

5

### Sustainability Planning

Develop long-term sustainability plans for successful programs, including diversified funding strategies and staff development plans.

6

### Formalize Partnerships

Develop formal agreements (MOUs) with partner organizations to clarify roles, responsibilities, and resource sharing.

7

### Evaluation Framework

Establish a clear evaluation framework to measure program outcomes and impact on student success (academic, social-emotional, attendance).

# Initial Wins!



Michael D. Fox  
Elementary School

Alfred E. Burr  
Middle School

South End of  
Hartford

Morgan Gardner Bulkeley  
High School

## MD Fox Elementary - 583 students enrolled

SY 23/24 School ADA	SY 23/24 CBO ADA	SY 24/25 School ADA	SY 24/25 CBO ADA
88.3%	90.8%	88.6%	91.7%

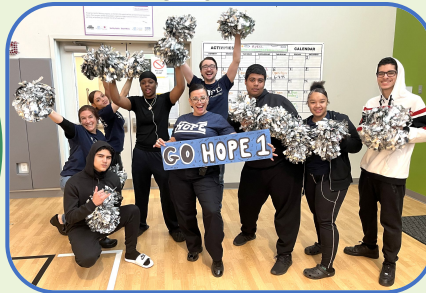
## Burr Middle School - 263 students enrolled

SY 23/24 School ADA	SY 23/24 CBO ADA	SY 24/25 School ADA	SY 24/25 CBO ADA
86.8%	88.6%	86.8%	87.4%

## Bulkeley High School - 561 students enrolled

SY 23/24 School ADA	SY 23/24 CBO ADA	SY 24/25 School ADA	SY 24/25 CBO ADA
73.8%	87.5%	76.6%	85.4%

# Cradle to Career



**SUMMER**  
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT LEARNING PROGRAM

FOR AGES 14-24

ARE YOU BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14-24 AND LOOKING FOR PAID WORK EXPERIENCE THIS SUMMER?

THE SYELP APPLICATION IS OPEN

Capital Workforce Partners is an organization that supports young people by connecting them with jobs and providing opportunities to explore their interests and career pathways, develop workplace skills and engage in learning experiences that help in developing their social, civic and leadership skills.

WWW.CAPITALWORKFORCE.ORG/SYELP

For Questions, Contact: [syelp@capitalworkforce.org](mailto:syelp@capitalworkforce.org)

**LEVEL UP YOUR FUTURE**

JOIN US FOR A FUN DAY OF OPPORTUNITIES:

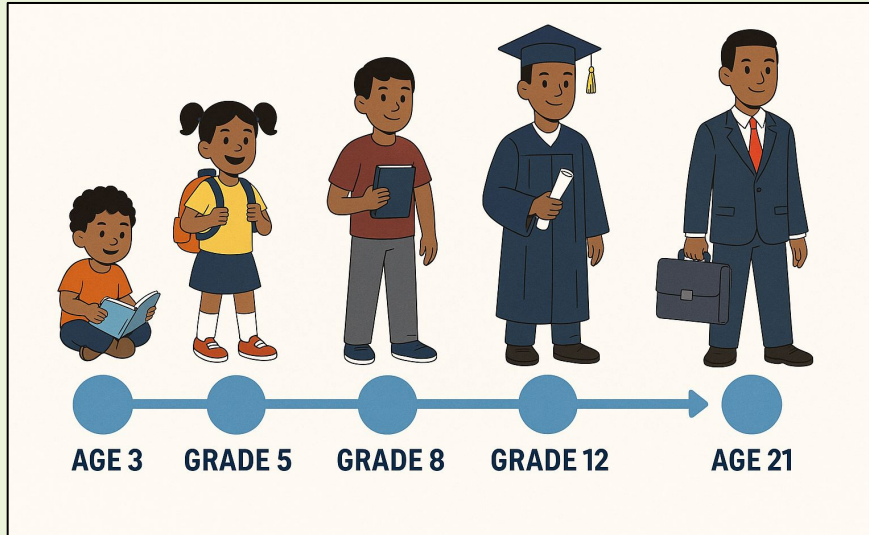
- workforce development
- trade schools
- certification programs and more!

FREE TRANSPORTATION • FOOD • RAFFLES • PRIZES • AND MORE!

Tuesday May 27, 2025  
09:00 am - 01:30 pm

Parker Memorial Community Center  
2621 Main Street, Hartford CT 06120

\*ONLY to seniors from Bulkeley, Weaver and Hartford High School



**ReadyCT**  
EDUCATION - THE ENGINE OF OPPORTUNITY

**9th**  
Freshman Academy  
Introduction to Engineering Design

**10th**  
Biology  
Automation & Robotics I & II

**11th**  
Principles of Engineering  
Chemistry

**12th**  
Intro to Comp. Manufacturing Technology  
Engineering Design and Development Capstone

Certifications:  
OSHA, Google, QPR, HUMAN, STOP, etc.

**HARTFORD PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL**  
ENGINEERING & GREEN TECHNOLOGY CTE PATHWAY



# HPS Partnerships at Work



## 200+ Community Partners

University of Hartford  
Community State College, Capital Campus ( Capital Community)  
UCONN  
University of St.Joseph's  
My people clinical  
Village for Families and Children  
Build a Better You  
Mothers United Against Violence  
Hartford Communities That Care  
Brother Carl Hardrick Institute  
Wilson- Gray YMCA  
Connecticut Children's Hospital  
Trinity Health of N.E  
Hartford Specialty  
Spectrum in Motion  
Hartford Stage  
Capital City Track Club  
Phillips Metropolitan CME Church Hartford  
United Methodist Church  
Parent Power  
AFCAMP  
Center for Leadership and Justice  
Black and Brown Student Union (BBSU)  
NAACP  
African-American Alliance  
The Gifted Onez  
Knockout Fitness  
Veronin Violin  
Center for Leadership and Justice  
Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants  
The Mission Piece  
Connecticut ELKS Association Charities Inc.  
Violin Virtuoso  
Hands on Hartford  
CRT  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
North Hartford Collaborative Partnership  
Patrina Dixon, "It's My Money"  
Families Building Wealth  
Webster Bank

Hartford Area Health Partnership  
Otis Elevator  
CT Community Schools Coalition  
URISE ( Youth Entrepreneurship)  
Greater Hartford Harm Reduction ( Drug Education & Prevention)  
Men Standing Up Against Violence ( Mentoring)  
D-9 Fraternities & Sororities ( Mentoring)  
Center for Latino Progress ( Youth Development)  
Children's Museum- West Hartford  
Girl Scouts of the United States of America  
Mirthalys Melendez Choreography  
Hartford Lion's Soccer (in pipeline)  
Salvation Army  
Hartford Public Library  
United Way Readers  
Village Clinician  
211  
Charter Oak Cultural Center  
HPDL Soccer  
Girl Scouts of America  
Hispanic Health Council  
Hartford Police Community Services Unit  
Brighter Beginnings  
She Who Cuts LLC  
Heroes In Training LLC  
Enigma Entertainment  
HartBeat Ensemble  
Career Resources Inc  
Cheerleading Program  
The Gifted Onez  
Hartford Knights.  
Young Women's Leadership Corps  
Center for Leadership & Justice  
Fresh Start Technical School  
Advocacy to Legacy  
The Village "Ascend" Family Navigators  
CT Foodshare  
Cigna  
The Hartford  
SHEBA

Midwest Food Bank  
Anita Ava House  
Hartford Seminary.  
Junior Achievement of Southwest New England  
STRIVE  
Casiano Clinical Services LLC  
Food Justice Educator  
Hartbeat Ensemble  
Girl Scouts of Connecticut  
Charter Oak Cultural Center  
United Way  
The Children's Museum  
Hartford Premier Development League  
Hispanic Health Council  
Husky Ticket Project  
Foodshare  
Job-Pro  
Advocacy to Legacy  
ConnectiKids  
Black Diamond Double Dutch  
Life Changer Center LLC  
Joe Young (Animation)  
URISE  
Alma McLean Fashion Club  
Training Champs Hair Domanique  
Franklin Trust Federal Credit Union  
Hartford Communities that Care  
Art from Da Hart  
2-4-1 Sports  
Ready CT  
Day in Clay  
Attorney Jeffrey Dressler  
Public Allies  
Hartford Knights- Biddy Ball  
United Way Readers  
HPDL Soccer  
Homework Help w/HPDL  
Exceptional Youth Educational Services (E.Y.E.S)  
Bucket Drumming  
The Children's Museum

Village Food Pantry- VFC Fox Den Marketplace  
Zayas Law Firm  
Knox Hartford Inc.  
Hands on Hartford  
Upward Mobility  
Bank of America  
Jewish Federation Reading Program  
Children's Museum- West Hartford  
Girl Scouts of the United States of America  
Hands on Hartford  
Mirthalys Melendez Choreography  
Life Changer Center  
Charter Oak Cultural Center  
Alma McLean Fashion Club  
Ande Murray: Soccer Clinic  
Advocacy to Legacy  
Lauren Little Edutainment LLC  
Auer Farm  
St. Michael's Volunteers  
Charter Oak Cultural Center  
UCONN  
Loomis Chaffee  
United Way Readers  
Hartford Public Library  
Village Clinicians  
Charter Oak Cultural Center  
Bring The Hoopla  
Hartford Premier Development League  
Ascend and Upwards Mobility  
The Bushnell  
Connectikids  
Knox Foundation  
United way readers  
Hartford Public Library (HPL) @ WMCS  
Great Exploration's Program  
The Guilty Kitchen & Lounge  
Raytheon Technologies Family Resource Center at  
Connecticut Children's  
Wadsworth Athenueum  
Junior Achievement

OTIS/SBD  
My local Chefs  
Parent University  
College & Career Specialist  
SPPT-Supporting Pregnant & Parenting Teens  
Faith Fitness Nutrition  
SGC  
Beginnings, She Who Cuts LLC  
Heroes In Training LLC  
Anita Ava House  
Hartford Seminary  
Active City  
Saint Peter Claver Advent Giving Tree  
Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies  
American Job Centers  
De'Jave Dance  
Knockout Fitness  
Center for Leadership and Justice  
Veronin Violin  
Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants  
The Mission Piece  
Connecticut ELKS Association Charities Inc.  
Nourish the City  
Hoop Wave Mentoring  
UCONN Health  
Open Door Outdoors  
My People Clinical  
Big Brother Big Sister CT  
Dream Chasers  
Loomis Chafe Highschool  
New England Science & Sailing (NESS)  
Hartford Premier & Development League (Soccer)  
Hands on Hartford  
E.Y.E.S.  
United way readers  
The Mission Piece  
Hoop wave Mentoring  
Hartford Area Health Partnership

# Take Home Q's

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- 1. What would it look like in your context to shift from a “name and need” approach to a “name and strength” approach?**
- 2. What barriers exist in your system that get in the way of authentic, strength-based engagement—and how might you begin to address them?**
- 3. Where along the cradle-to-career continuum is engagement strongest in your community?**  
*(Is it in early childhood? Middle school? Postsecondary? And where are the gaps that need more attention?)*