

# Education Strategy

Evaluation briefs describe the goals of major programs and strategic initiatives, what we have learned through monitoring and evaluation, key conclusions and examples of impact.

**EVALUATION CONDUCTED BY:**

Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD)

**TYPE OF EVALUATION:**

Outcomes evaluation – utilizing surveys, interviews, administrative data, and document review.

## THE CHALLENGE: WHY IT MATTERS

Children’s development, learning, and educational success depend on a web of supports provided by their families, schools, and communities. This web’s strength is contingent upon robust stakeholder partnerships.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving’s (HFPG) education strategy is based on the understanding that these partnerships focus on building stronger, coordinated, and responsive systems that increase high-quality learning opportunities for all children. HFPG uses grantmaking, convening, network-building, development of effective models, and research to:

- Strengthen partnerships between the Foundation and community stakeholders and among agencies, schools, and families.
- Develop systems of services and supports to ensure equitable access to high quality learning opportunities, inside and outside of school.

## EVALUATION FOCUS

The evaluation of HFPG’s education strategy investigated five questions related to partnership and system development outcomes including:

- Partnership Capacities
- Partner Collaborative Actions
- Infrastructure and Policy
- Improved Practices
- Improved Experiences for Children and Families

HFPG’s education strategy encompasses several early education and K-12 investments. To narrow the scope of inquiry, the Foundation worked with evaluators to select five areas to be examined. These areas included the use of data on children’s development to engage stakeholders in system development; testing funding models to support quality improvement in home-based child care; growth of a Hartford-based family support micro-system; Manchester Public School’s (MPS) family and community engagement efforts; and Bloomfield Public School’s (BPS) efforts to increase learning opportunities in an extended school day.

## KEY FINDINGS

Partnership capacities:

- A steering committee of family services organizations established the Capital Region Alliance for Family Support and Empowerment (CRAFSE). Membership has more than doubled since its inception.
- State and regional stakeholders developed Renovate to Educate – a jointly-funded pilot project to help home-based providers make facility improvements. Relationships built during the pilot enabled HFPG to advance several home-based care supports.

## Education Strategy

- HFPG supported the implementation of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) which collects child development data at kindergarten entry. HFPG supported a “community café” model to engage parents and community members in addressing issues highlighted by EDI results

### Partnership collaborative action:

- The CRAFSE steering committee collected data to identify network-wide issues, develop network responses, and establish 2018 goals.
- EDI data is seen as part of East Hartford and Windsor school districts’ family, school, community engagement plans.
- MPS and the City of Manchester forged a new partnership focused on children and families, including a co-located office and coordinated activities.

### Infrastructure and policy:

- Based on the success of Renovate to Educate, the City of Hartford approached HFPG to replicate a version of the model with a Spanish-speaking family child care network.
- Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) staff were invited to participate in All Our Kin’s Family Child Care Network which is replicating parts of HFPG’s research statewide. Replication results will inform the Connecticut framework for family child care supports and networks.
- The MPS board of education adopted new policies and shifted district resources to engage parents and community stakeholders as full partners in children’s learning.

### Improved practices:

- CRAFSE offered training to front-line staff on a variety of topics around a common agenda.
- HFPG linked bilingual consultants to statewide initiatives in order to build regional capacity to support Spanish-speaking home-based child care providers.
- Redesigned and new Family Resource Centers are now operating in all MPS elementary schools, with expanded programming beyond traditional models.

### Improved experiences for children and families:

- Through its Brighter Futures Family Centers, ECI offered parents the opportunity to develop leadership skills that they can leverage to pursue education, employment, and activism.
- BPS’ new enrichment program was very strong and embraced by elementary students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Activities in these areas have been underway for only one or two years, but partner commitment can lead to long-term sustainability. To build on this groundwork, HFPG can:

- Continue to support partnerships to weather the current fiscal storm in Connecticut.
- Document the long-term repercussions of proposed state budget cuts that impact children and families.
- Use the full array of tools beyond grantmaking to help partnerships reach their full potential.
- Further explore strategies and shared interests that link its early childhood and K-12 partnership and system building efforts.