Hartford Community Schools

Final Evaluation Report (2014-2015)

October, 2015

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Executive Summary

ES. 1 Introduction

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) have developed and implemented a community school model that encompasses a broad array of services and interventions for students and parents/families including the provision of afterschool programs. In 2015, HCS developed further the Theory of Change underpinning its strategy which now includes even greater clarity and detail around planned outcomes and how and why HCS expects to achieve its goals.

The community schools have continued to focus on aligning afterschool programs and daytime provision, on building a stronger academic element into afterschool programs and on developing activities specifically targeting students falling behind academically and facing particular problems around attendance and behavior. Schools have also worked on activities designed to support other key preconditions for student success including developing a welcoming school climate and promoting parent/family engagement.

ES. 2 Highlights of Results

The continued focus on building an academic element into the afterschool programs has led to very significant results from this key component of the community school model. In particular:

- Participants in afterschool programs have once again done better on MAP scores in both reading and math than other students. In fact, MAP scores for afterschool participants have increased in 2015 despite a reduction in MAP scores for schools overall.

- MAP score improvements are even greater for afterschool students who have participated in afterschool programs over time. The MAP results show there was a statistically significant increase in MAP scores in reading and in math of students who participated in afterschool programs for three consecutive years compared to students who had not participated in afterschool for this duration.

- The academic impact of afterschool programs is also supported by responses to the afterschool student survey. The number of students reporting that they had learned reading, writing and math skills in the afterschool program increased over the year, as 71% of students reported learning such skills in the afterschool program at the end of the 2014-15 school year.

- Although MAP scores in both reading and math decreased in most of the community schools (with the exception of afterschool participants) the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in both reading and math (which are measured from fall 2014 to spring 2015) increased in all schools.

- This apparent discrepancy between decreases in raw MAP scores between spring 2014 and spring 2015 (the end of each academic year) and very substantial student growth figures (i.e. students who improved one or more levels which are measured from fall to spring) may indicate some level of "summer learning loss" in 2014. However, the figures suggest that this is not just an issue for HCS but for the Hartford Public School district as a whole.

- Less progress was made in MAP scores for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education (SE) students. Scores for ELL students in reading increased in two out of seven schools and decreased in the others. ELL scores in math however, increased in five out of seven schools. MAP scores in reading for SE students on the other hand increased in two schools and declined in the others. Equally in math scores Special Education students increased in two schools and declined in the others.

- More progress was made for ELL students where they were targeted by the community schools for more intensive interventions. This was particularly the case in Clark and Burr who focused on delivering intensive supports for small numbers of ELL students yielding very substantial improvements in MAP scores in reading and math for the students concerned. Similarly in the case of Special Education students. For example, Milner School concentrated particular resources on a target cohort of Special Education students, resulting in substantial improvements in MAP reading and math scores for the students concerned.

- Less progress was made in addressing attendance problems, and chronic absenteeism in particular. Even where cohorts of particularly "at-risk" students were targeted in relation to chronic absenteeism the results were less positive than expected.

- Considerable progress was made in developing further the HCS Theory of Change which provides an important basis for evaluation and for planning. This has led to the inclusion of additional outcomes, including new pathways of preconditions considered necessary to achieve some key priority areas, including better attendance, reductions in chronic absenteeism, positive student behavior and parent/family engagement. One of the most significant additions was the identification of the importance of leadership at the level of both the school and at district level to develop and implement the most effective community school model.

1. Introduction

This is a report of the external evaluation of Hartford Community Schools (HCS) for the academic year 2014-2015. This is the third year of the evaluation work undertaken by ActKnowledge and the evaluation is once again based on the HCS Theory of Change. This year however, the Theory of Change has been developed further to include even greater clarity and detail around planned outcomes and how and why HCS expects to achieve its goals. This Theory also provides a framework for identifying where areas of implementation need to be strengthened or where there needs to be a refocus of efforts.

The report begins with a brief overview of the community school model in Hartford, including the further developed HCS Theory of Change and how the model has been implemented. It then goes on to outline the key outcomes in 2015 compared to other years for:

- Students - including academic results and also progress on preconditions for academic and other components of student success such as attendance, positive behavior and safety and belonging in the school.
- Parents/Families - focused in particular on progress made in creating a welcoming environment, respect for and accommodation of diverse families and parent/family involvement in their children's education.

The report then outlines a set of conclusions and recommendations for HCS based on the evaluation findings.

1.1 Overview of Hartford Community Schools (HCS)

Hartford Community Schools comprises seven community schools in all, each of which is partnered with a lead agency to plan, implement and sustain services and initiatives centered on the community school model. This model is based on a holistic approach to the well-being and development of children, their families and the wider community.

HCS is guided by the Hartford Partnership for Student Success which comprises Hartford Public Schools, the City of Hartford, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. These institutions are the major investors in HCS. The partnership also provides a representative seat for each school principal and lead agency.

The community schools and associated lead agencies are illustrated in the following table, which also highlights associated abbreviations for each school that for brevity are used throughout this evaluation report.

Community School	Grade Level	Lead Agency
Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi (ASA Dwight/Bellizzi)	PK-8	Compass
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA)	6-11	Compass
Burns Latino Studies Academy (Burns LSA)	PK-8	Compass
Alfred E. Burr Elementary School (Burr)	PK-8	The Village for Families and Children
John C. Clark Jr. Elementary and Middle School (Clark)	PK-8	The Village for Families and Children
West Middle Elementary School and Middle Grades Academy (West Middle)	PK-8	Boys and Girls Club of Hartford
Milner School (Milner)	PK-8	Catholic Charities, Inc.

The community schools are serving communities and students facing very particular challenges. For example, 6 out of 7 Hartford Community Schools are located within High Priority Neighborhoods as identified in the Hartford Public Schools Neighborhood Assessment in 2012. Scores in the assessment are based on levels of poverty, education, housing, crime, health and neighborhood stability.

1.2 Evaluation Methods

In line with previous years, the evaluation has encompassed a number of interrelated components. These include:

Theory of Change

In May 2015 ActKnowledge worked with stakeholders to update the HCS Theory of Change which was originally developed in 2012 and has provided a key framework for evaluation. The updated Theory of Change (which is summarized in detail in Section 2) outlines the broad range of preconditions considered necessary for the achievement of the goals of HCS. These include additional outcomes and pathways of preconditions identified in the May workshop on issues such as parent engagement, promoting positive student behavior, student attendance and the role of leadership.

Site Visits

The ActKnowledge evaluation team undertook two sets of visits to Hartford in 2015. A first set of interviews was conducted in March 20th 2015 with the managers of the four lead agencies (Compass, The Village for Families and Children, Boys and Girls Club of Hartford and Catholic Charities) and with the community school directors of all seven schools.

A more comprehensive round of visits was made to each community school in May 2015, using a set of interview schedules/questionnaires designed to elicit the views of stakeholders on how the community school was developing, what changes had occurred since the previous year, what was achieved and the factors facilitating or hindering progress. This involved:

- Interviews with all community school site directors and program staff.
- Interviews with three school principals (Burns LSA, Clark and Burr) and one assistant principal (Burns).
- Focus groups/interviews with parents in six schools (Clark, Burns LSA, Milner, Burr, West Middle and HMTCA).
- Focus groups with students participating in after-school programs in six schools (Clark, Burns LSA, Burr, Milner, West Middle and HMTCA).

Identification and Analysis of Quantitative Data

A key focus of the evaluation has been working with HCS to identify, source and analyze quantitative data relating to academic results, attendance, behavior and measures of school climate. In particular:

- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The academic results are based on 'raw' scores from Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) which were analyzed for each academic year from 2013 to 2015.

  To put MAP results in context, data was also collected and analyzed on the percentage of students whose scores improved or declined one or more levels within the academic year from Fall to Spring. This measure is important in that some of the schools have continued to focus on stabilization and had many high risk students. So, stabilization can be seen as success in schools where this was the goal. The data was analyzed for HCS schools and compared to results for peer schools and the schools for the district as a whole. [1]

  The MAP raw scores were further analyzed for English language learners (ELL), special education (SE) students and for students who participated in afterschool programs. For afterschool program participants, students were matched across three years from 2013 to

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[1] Peer schools are other schools in "high priority" geographic areas identified in the HPS Hartford Neighborhood Assessment (2013). All HCS schools are in "high priority" areas except for ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, which is in a "medium priority" area.

2015 to analyze the impact on students who have consistently participated in afterschool programs across a number of years.

- School Climate. To obtain a picture of changes in school climate, the results of the School Climate and Student Connectedness Survey conducted by Harford Public Schools (HPS) was analyzed and presented in the report.

Target Cohorts

One of the conclusions of the 2013 evaluation was that the impact of HCS programs was being somewhat lost in data that was disaggregated for only certain groups of students, for example afterschool participants. However, the community school model encompasses a wider set of programs and services than just afterschool programs. To assess the impact of these wider services it was decided to identify and actively track the progress of students in accessing these other components of the community school model in 2014.

This process of identifying "target cohorts" was continued in 2014-2015. The "target cohorts" have been selected by each school and represent students who have received different elements of the model and who were expected to progress as a *result of these particular intervention(s)* in a number of key areas. These cohorts include students that have been specifically targeted for supports because they are academically at risk or because they face other challenges such as attendance/behavior problems, are English Language Learners (ELL) or are special education (SE) students.

The focus on "target cohorts" is particularly important in the context of community schools where the resources do not exist for every student to receive all services; so the efficacy of the model can only be expected to be fully seen where it is most fully implemented.

ActKnowledge worked closely with the HCS coordinator and with each school in identifying cohorts.

Student Surveys

The survey questionnaire developed by ActKnowledge in 2012 was again used to elicit the views and perceptions of students (focusing on grades 3 and up) who participated in the afterschool programs on key outcomes (identified through the Theory of Change and though the education research literature) relating to student achievement. The youth survey is a validated and replicated instrument used in other community school initiatives that is based on:

1. The concept of "assets" needed by youth to succeed (developed by Search Institute);
2. The questions of interest in 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs to capture after-school activities and benefits; and

3. The Theory of Change for Hartford which identifies outcomes for youth – although these should be further developed and elaborated as the Theory of Change evolves.

A "pre" survey was administered to afterschool participants in the seven schools in November 2014 and a "post" survey to measure changes in perceptions over the school year was administered in May/June 2015. A student tracking form was used by the community school directors to ensure that students had completed both "pre" and "post" surveys and that the responses were matched for individual students.

Table 1: Responses by School to "Pre" and "Post" Student Surveys

	# Pre-Survey	# Post-Survey	# Pre-Post Survey Matched
ASA Dwight/Bellizzi	108	80	51
Burns LSA	74	59	41
Burr	63	69	43
Clark	50	41	25
HMTCA	89	80	56
Milner	42	41	22
West Middle	55	53	38
Total	**481**	**423**	**276**

The responses to the student surveys are illustrated in Table 1. The number of students who took both "pre" and "post" surveys were lower than responses to individual surveys. Those who could not be matched across "pre" and "post" surveys were excluded from the analysis. This discrepancy in responses may reflect difficulties in retaining some students in afterschool programs throughout the school year and is an issue that needs further reflection and analysis moving forward.

2. Hartford Community Schools (HCS): Model and Implementation 2014-2015

2.1 Community Schools Model and HCS Theory of Change

As noted in some detail in the 2013-2014 evaluation of HCS (ActKnowledge, 2014) a key premise of the community school model is that a whole set of 'preconditions' or intermediate outcomes will need to be met before student success outcomes (that embrace academic progress but also social, emotional and health development) can be achieved. These preconditions have been elaborated in the Hartford Community Schools (HCS) Theory of Change which was developed in 2012 by a broad range of stakeholders. These included representatives from the City of Harford, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, lead agency representatives, 'site' directors from each of the seven community schools, most of the school principals, other school staff and staff from the National Center for Community Schools.

In 2015 there was a renewed focus on developing further the HCS Theory of Change to take account of ongoing learning and also gaps and changes in the context in which HCS is operating. This culminated in a workshop facilitated by ActKnoweldge and involved community school directors, program staff and a number of principals.

The amended HCS Theory of Change continues with the same long term goal: that **"Students Succeed (academic, social, emotional and health)"** –in other words, student success is defined holistically to include both academic success and also social, emotional and health attainment. The Theory then maps out pathways of "preconditions" or related outcomes for students, parents, schools and partnerships/system level supports necessary for this long-term outcome to be achieved.

The following were the main additions to the Theory of Change (the full map of which is outlined on pages 11-15).

- The first change was to split the full Theory of Change map into horizontal "bands" which make the theory easier to read and which represent different stages of the development trajectory of the community school model. For example, band 1 illustrated in the full map encompasses many of the foundational preconditions that needed to be in place for the model to be implemented. These include the funding, partnerships and other systems level outcomes including data collection and analysis. The bands then proceed upwards, encompassing all the intermediate outcomes necessary to achieve the long term outcome of student success expressed in band 5.
- Having identified the bands, the Theory of Change workshop then inserted additional outcomes, with a particular focus on drawing out pathways necessary to achieve some key

priority areas including better attendance and reductions in chronic absenteeism, positive student behavior, parent engagement and leadership including some leadership preconditions at district level.

The newly developed Theory of Change and the new additions to the map are outlined on pages 11-15 across the main outcome areas, i.e., student outcomes (in blue), parent and family outcomes (in orange), school outcomes (in green) and outcomes relating to the system underpinning the HCS including the main partners (in red). Outcomes and preconditions for community involvement (in yellow on the Theory of Change map) have remained the same.

Hartford Community Schools Theory of Change

Updated 22 September 2015

Ultimate outcomes (top)

Sustainable and thriving community

**Community has transportation, services, recreation, health, faith, culture, jobs, housing, income, family friendly**

- People are civically engaged
- Respect in the community for diversity (based on relationships not stereotypes)
- Quality, clean, safe, affordable housing with transportation nearby
- Local economy is growing with good jobs
- Range of services exist to support families (including mental health services, marriage and family therapy, addiction services etc.)
- Community is aware of available services
- Resources are aligned across city and neighborhoods
- Adults interact with students in a positive, healthy and encouraging manner

- - - - - - Accountability ceiling - - - - - -

Band 5

Students succeed (academic, social, emotional, health)

- Parents/Families are fully engaged with the school
- **Parents, Families are fully engaged in student learning**
  - Parents/Families understand the importance of their role in educating their children
  - Parents/Families are fully engaged with teachers about student grades
  - Parents/Families ensure their students' homework is complete
  - Parents/Families convey value of education to their children
- Students are civically engaged
- Students have age-appropriate life and social skills
- Students achieve grade level academic success
- Long term sustainable public and private partnerships
- Long term and sustained involvement of community in community school
- Communication and promotion of community schools collectively and individually amongst stakeholders

Band 4

- Parents/Families have knowledge and skills to support student learning
- Parents/Families understand value of education
- School is a safe learning environment for everyone
- Students feel physically and emotionally safe
- Students are fully prepared to take state standardized tests
- A fluid relationship exists between Community School staff and Community
- Community school is advanced as the best practice model

- Parent/Family leadership is strong and reflected in strong PTO, SGC and other governance structures
- Parents/Families access resources to identify and evaluate student development
- Home learning environments are supported
- Students demonstrate increased positive behavior
- Students medical, dental and mental health needs are met
- **Students attend, work, and understand**
  - Students maintain good attendance
  - Students understand what is going on in the classroom
  - Students have good work habits
  - Students are aware and understand college process and other post-secondary options
- Residents have access to range of school services to support families and/or individuals
- Community members are civically engaged and actively involved in school related activities
- Students have opportunities to influence/create change in community
- Streamlined requirements and expectations from providers and schools admin/teachers to maintain community school status

Band 3

- Effective Parent and Family engagement/ownership is embraced by school
- Parents/Families are comfortable with school environment
- Parents/Family members feel understood and respected
- School offers parents/families positive opportunities to develop knowledge and skill to support learning
- School has a welcoming culture and environment
- School communicates expectations about behavior to all students and parents/families
- Students demonstrate school day expectations in after school program
- There is effective communication between teachers and parents/families on attendance
- Students are provided with appropriate activities and services
- Students participate in enrichment opportunities that meet their needs
- High student connectedness to schools
- **Community involved and connected to the school**
  - CBO's and Faith Based Organizations are connected to the school
  - Neighborhood businesses are involved in the school
  - Residents are connected to the school
- Community School is fully evaluated

Band 2

- **Schools respect and provide facilities for parents/families**
  - School provides opportunities for parents/families to take a role in the school including management and governing bodies
  - School shows appreciation for parent/family involvement
  - School provides space and activities for parents/family to gather
  - School is non-judgmental and respectful to parents and family
  - School communicates positively with parents/families

- **Policies, practice and training support good behavior**
  - Professional development addresses adult attitudes and training needs re student behavior
  - Staff receive consistent and effective professional development in dealing with behavior
  - Practices and/or programs are established to address high risk extreme behavior

- Parents/Families understand policies on attendance
- Parents/Families understand the importance of attendance and how it impacts on education

- **School supports broad needs of students**
  - Quality assessment of students with special needs and english language learners
  - Support in place for all children who are behind
  - Students have enrichment opportunities sports, clubs, etc.
  - Students have access to health services (physical, mental) in line with their needs
  - School leadership recognizes and fosters student leadership

- **The physical environment supports learning**
  - Clean facilities
  - Proper furniture
  - Sufficient access to technology

- **School is culturally competent with and accountable to parents and families**
  - School is culturally competent in its dealings with parents/family
  - There is accountability in the school for ensuring non-bias and respectful treatment of parents

- School is aware of and implements district attendance policies
- School day curriculum and activities are aligned with out of school time programs and activities
- Professional development opportunities between school personnel and youth development professional are aligned
- Community schools are equipped with appropriate resources

- **Community is aware of concept and services**
  - Community is aware of services at the school and across the district
  - Community is aware of Community School concept

Band 1

- Cultural competency trainings/implementation cross-training with community school staff
- Diversity is celebrated in the curriculum that is aligned and implemented to support cultural competency amongst adults and children
- Resources are available for staff to receive effective training on behavior issues

- **School Leadership supports the Community School Model**
  - The principal fully supports and engages with the community school model
  - School leadership understands and embraces holistic approach to student progress (MH, health, etc.)
  - There is an adequate staffing model that allows the principal to be fully engaged in the community school

- Shared ownership by all stakeholders of community school model

- **Effective data sharing**
  - Training for staff on data management systems and analysis
  - Uniform data collection amongst HCS
  - Access data subset of community schools

- **District support for family engagement**
  - Establish practices that work to engage families as full partners in community school model
  - Capacity building at the district level provides school leadership with effective family engagement capacity

- **Effective budgeting for community schools**
  - Budget available to support community school operations
  - Coordination of funding streams and approach to strategic development

- **District supports consistent leadership**
  - There is consistent leadership of schools
  - There is consistent support (buy-in) by Superintendents and district leadership for the community school model

- **Effective partnerships**
  - MOAs are drafted collaboratively and executed
  - Issues are brought to meetings/forums by agency leaders
  - Community School workplans respond to needs identified in School Action Plans

- **Effective data development and collection**
  - Methods are developed to evaluate school/student success beyond test scores
  - Ways (or methods?) to measure students own participation

Legend

- Community outcomes
- Student outcomes
- Parent/Family Outcomes
- School outcomes
- System outcomes
- Ultimate outcomes
- - - - - - - Accountability ceiling

Student Outcomes Pathway

Important preconditions for HCS's broad definition of student success include direct academic preconditions (i.e. that students achieve grade level academic success), social preconditions (that students have age-appropriate life and social skills) and community engagement (that students are civically engaged). These in turn have preconditions – for example, in order for students to achieve academically they need to have good attendance in school, have good work habits, understand what's going on in class and to have an understanding of 'post secondary' options, including future college opportunities.

New Outcomes: A key change in outcomes for students in the amended Theory of Change is the addition of an outcome relating to behavior change for all students. Student behavior has been identified as a key issue for many of the community schools. For example, in Milner a whole set of interventions, including supports for dealing with trauma, have been developed to address behavior issues. Burns LSA has also focused strongly on behavior and school climate in 2014-15 in response to the challenges presented by a very significant increase in new students within a single year.

Parent and Family Outcomes Pathway

Engaging parents/families in the school presents a range of challenges for any school. HCS has used its Theory of Change to clarify the precise goal of parent/family engagement and to trace out from experience to date pathways of outcomes necessary to achieve effective parental/familial engagement.

New Outcomes: Key additions to the amended Theory of Change include a stronger statement on what is meant by engagement, which includes engagement by parents with teachers on student grades. The amended Theory also includes outcomes for parents in supporting greater student attendance. These include the additional preconditions that "parents/families understand policies on attendance" and that "they understand how attendance impacts the education of their children."
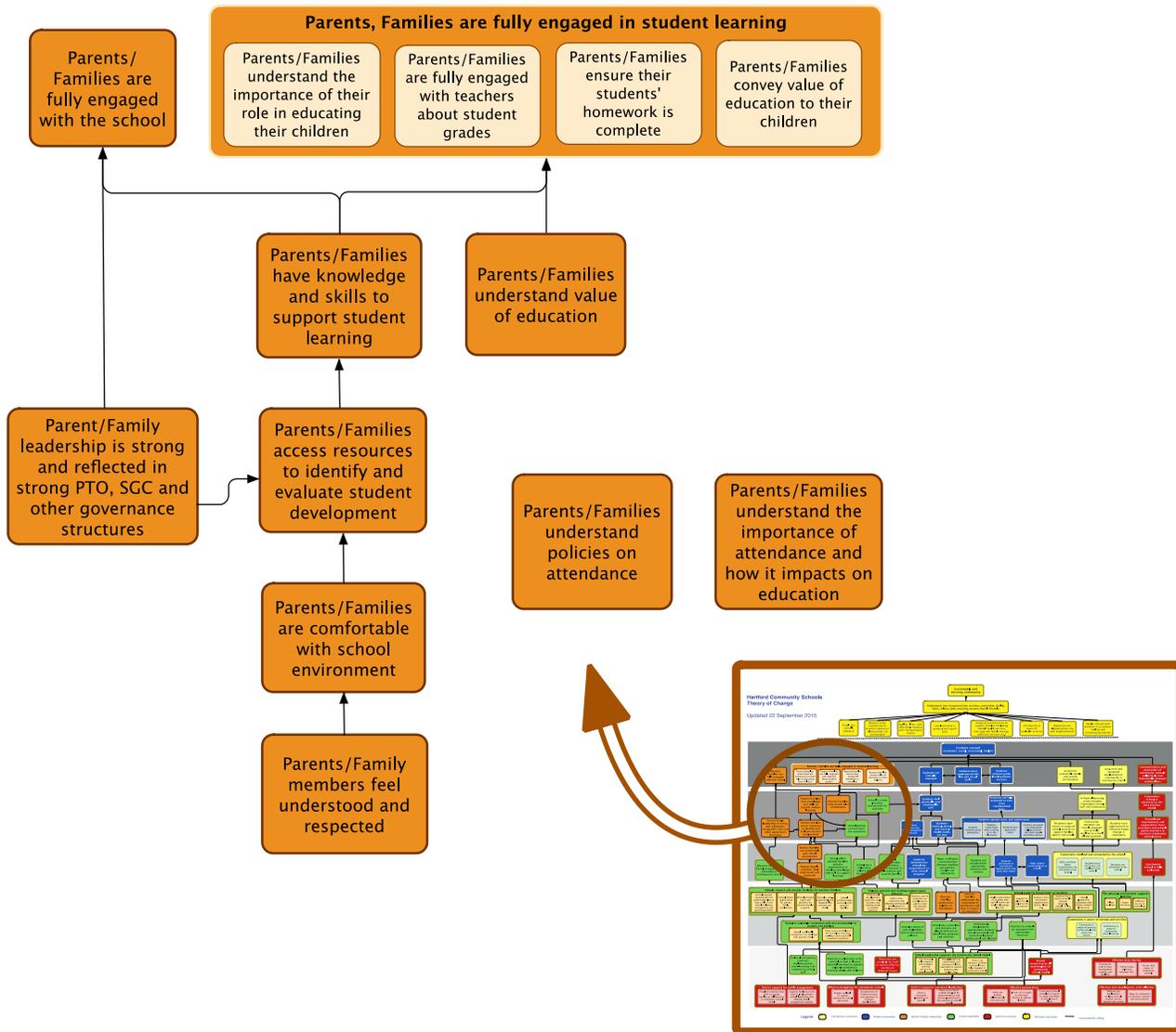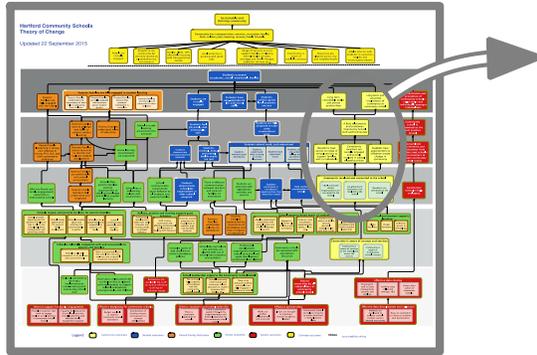
Community Outcomes Pathway

Developing strong partnerships with and involvement by the community in the school is a key component of the community school model. This involvement helps support the schools in achieving their objectives and also provides links between students and the community. Preconditions for effective school-community relationships include the development of connections between the school, community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations and businesses.
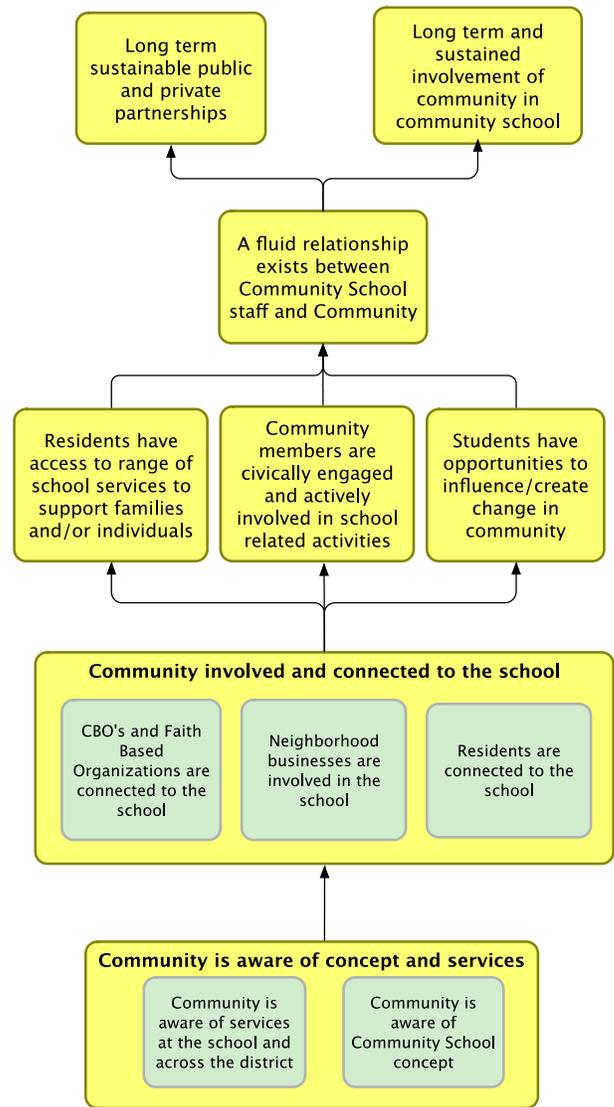
School Outcomes Pathway

New Outcomes: The amended Theory of Change includes a whole set of outcomes the school needs to work towards in order to achieve change in relation to behavior and attendance. For example, in order to promote better behavior preconditions include "effective communication" by the school with parents/families about expectations of behavior which in turn can be supported by practices and programs being in place that address "high risk extreme behavior" and that staff receive "consistent and effective professional development in dealing with behavior issues."
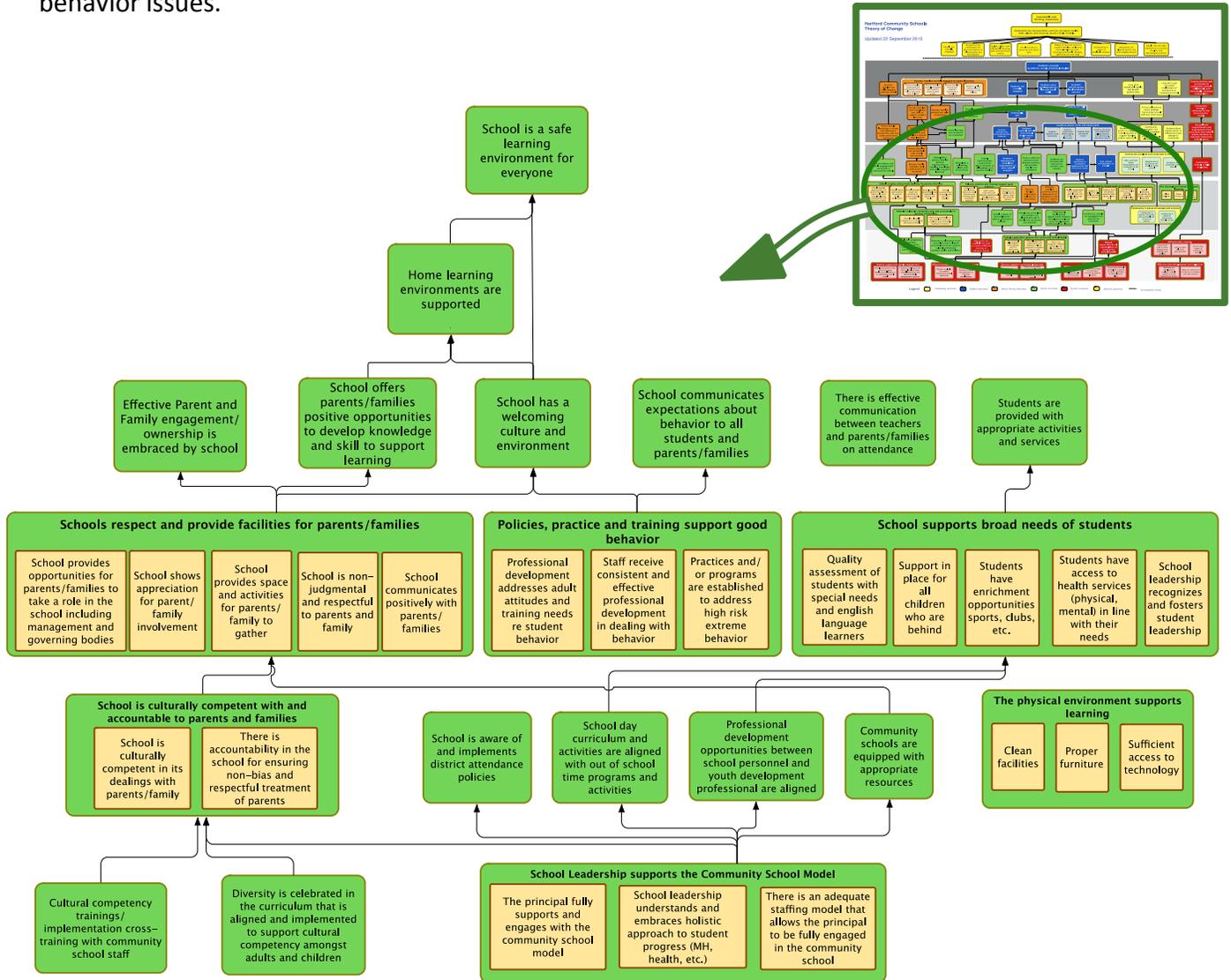
The amended Theory of Change also includes a strong statement on the importance of school leadership in supporting the community school model. This is included in band 1 as a key

foundational precondition for the model to be implemented effectively and embraces preconditions such as "the principal fully supports and engages with the community school model"; "school leadership understands and embraces holistic approach to student progress"; and "there is an adequate staffing model that allows the principal to be fully engaged in the community school." This reflects consistent findings from the evaluations of HCS to date of the importance of engagement by the school principal and school leadership in developing and implementing the community school model effectively.

"Systems Level" Outcomes Pathway

In order for schools to provide the level of services and activities described they need to be supported by the "system" as a whole. These have been described as the "foundational preconditions" for HCS, and are outlined in band 1 of the Theory of Change Map (in red, see page 11). They relate to the effectiveness of the key partnerships upon which HCS is based – including the major investors in HCS.

New Outcomes: The amended Theory of Change highlights the importance of school district leadership in supporting school leadership for the community school model. Preconditions identified here include "consistent support (buy-in) by superintendents and district leadership for the community school model."

Additional "systems level" preconditions include the role of the school district in supporting family engagement. Foundational "system level" preconditions for parent engagement include the establishment by the district of "practices that work to engage families as full partners in the community school model" and "capacity building at the district level provides school leadership with effective family engagement capacity." One principal interviewed in the course of the evaluation echoed the importance of the district in supporting parent engagement with their children's education but also suggested the need for district to challenge parents as well so that every stakeholder was aware of their roles and responsibilities.

2.2 Implementation of the HCS Model 2014-2015

In the 2014-15 academic school year Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has continued to focus on the development and implementation of a whole range of services, programs and other interventions necessary to achieve the main preconditions described in the Theory of Change. These include activities and programs to address additional preconditions articulated in the Theory of Change such as measures to promote more positive behavior and to support attendance and tackle chronic absenteeism. Implementation of activities relating to these various preconditions are summarized as follows:

School Preconditions for Student Outcomes

A key precondition for positive student outcomes in the HCS Theory of Change is that "students are provided with appropriate activities and services" which in turn has a range of preconditions such as:

- That school and "out of school time" activities, curriculum and staff capacity are aligned.
- Supports are in place to ensure that no child is left behind.
- The physical environment of the school supports learning.

Additional preconditions articulated in the amended Theory of Change include undertaking "quality assessment of students with special needs and of English language learners" and that the school leadership "recognizes and fosters student leadership". The amended Theory of Change also articulated more fully the previous precondition (intermediate outcome) that student health needs are met to include "access to health services both physical and mental in line with their needs."

The importance of these preconditions and the progress made by schools in putting in place programs and activities to deliver on them are further apparent in 2015. This is explored in more detail as follows.

Aligning "Out of School Time" Activities, Curriculum and Staff Capacity

Afterschool programs continue to be a major component of the HCS model and encompass services designed to support student academic performance and broader youth development outcomes. These have been grouped by different schools into a number of broad categories, including:

- Arts and Culture activities which range from dance and drama to programs that incorporate academic elements including literacy and math.
- Civic Engagement activities that provide opportunities to learn about diverse cultures and societal issues and opportunities for students to engage with their own communities.
- Academic supports including homework help, activities around literacy, writing, vocabulary, math and science and technology.
- Youth development and life skills which include activities around self-awareness, empowerment of young women and also basic skills relating to peer development and communication.
- Sport and Recreation as well as school trips and events.

Because of capacity limits not all students can access afterschool programs. Within these capacity constraints access is generally provided on a "first come first served basis." However, schools

have tried to accommodate additional students with particular needs, including students referred by teachers or social workers.

Afterschool programs have continued to focus on incorporating academic elements into enrichment activities and aligning afterschool and day time activities to support participants' academic progress. This increased academic focus has continued to have an impact as noted in this report where MAP scores of afterschool students have exceeded other students.

The strategic elements designed to align afterschool and day time activities have continued in 2014-2015 school year to include:

- A continued focus on greater integration and coordination of afterschool and daytime staff: A key support for this coordination has been the role of 'education coordinator' which community school directors have cited as a very significant resource in ensuring that afterschool programs are aligned with the school curriculum and daytime activities.

- Broader integration between schools and lead agency leadership: School personnel have noted the importance of higher level integration to support alignment between and integration of the work of the school and lead agency. One principal noted in this respect the importance of her involvement in the interview panel to select a new lead agency site director. On the other hand, in one school the community school director mentioned the need for a much greater level of support from the principal and school leadership and noted the disruption to the progress of the community school model caused by frequent changes of school leadership.

As in 2014, there were also challenges in promoting effective alignment. According to a number of lead agency staff, there continue to be challenges in incorporating an academic element into afterschool programs when students have been in school for a full day, are tired and more interested in fun and recreational activities.

Supports are in Place to Ensure that No Child is Left Behind

The community school model encompasses more than just afterschool programs. In 2014-2015 the community schools have continued to develop a range of broader supports for students including programs or activities focused on young people falling behind academically and or facing particular problems around behavior, attendance and social and emotional issues. For example:

- Targeted academic support has included one-to-one tutoring for students falling behind, and the provision of classroom instruction support. Many of these supports have been provided as a result of partnerships developed by the community school director and program staff with outside organizations and CBOs including United Way, Travelers, etc.

- Targeted activities to address behavior issues which include referral where necessary to mental health services. In Milner for example, the community school director and other school staff identified children's experience of trauma as a significant issue for the school especially in relation to promoting good behavior. A range of interventions have been developed, supported by Catholic Charities, to deal with trauma including the development of a licensed child guidance clinic.
- Work to address chronic absenteeism. This has included the establishment of "attendance teams" which undertake a range of activities including home visits and provision of incentives for students who attend.

In 2015, as noted, schools have continued to measure the results for students who have received these different targeted components of the community school model. The results of various activities and interventions on these 'target cohorts' are outlined in section 3.

The Physical Environment of the School Supports Learning

The amended Theory of Change notes the importance of the physical environment in supporting learning and stresses the importance of clean facilities, proper furniture and sufficient access to technology. It is not possible in the context of this evaluation to identify progress across each of these preconditions in a comprehensive way. However, one major development in 2014-2015 was the closure of Clark for major refurbishment and its relocation to three separate schools.

The partnerships developed by Clark as a community school have been cited by school staff as important resources in dealing with relocation. Cooperation with the Salvation Army in particular was noted as a key resources in supporting both students and parents. The community school director has also worked with partners to provide buses in the old Clark building to minimize disruption for students.

The role of the community school in dealing with physical disruption in Clark mirrors the experience of West Middle School in 2013 which was closed pending the renovation of its physical space. In that case, the lead agency worked to support parents displaced by the move including organizing transport and utilizing neighborhood buildings to provide space for various parent and family support activities locally.

Other schools have noted the challenges of the physical environment in which they are operating. For example, in Burns the physical space continues to be a challenge as the school was not physically designed for a community school to run so many different components.

The Health Needs of Students are Met

The provision of a health component has been an important feature of the full community school model nationally. In some cases, the community schools model has included the location of full clinical services including a general practitioner, dentistry and services relating to mental health on site (one rationale for this is that children can attend health services without the need to miss school). In other cases, the focus has been on developing effective outside referrals and addressing key barriers to health care faced by young people in disadvantaged areas including lack of health insurance.

Most HCS schools do not provide full health services on site. Some schools have sought to facilitate access to mobile clinics, while others, for example Burns LSA, have provided more extensive onsite facilities, including dental services and mental health services targeted at students and families. Milner, as noted, has put in place a licensed child guidance clinic to work with children on mental health issues including trauma that impact on behavior and on educational attainment more generally.

Lack of data currently makes it difficult to ascertain the overall impact of these services on students or to access the precise links between health outcomes and key education preconditional outcomes such as attendance and participation in the schools. However, it should be possible to track the impact on students who do use particular on site services that are now provided as part of the community school (for example, in the case of the onsite mental health services in Milner which is expected to have an impact on student behavior).

Conditions Needed to Support Outcomes for Parents

Family and community engagement is an important feature of the HCS model, the conditions for which (as noted above) have continued to be developed in the Theory of Change. Achieving these conditions has been supported by a range of activities. These include:

- Services developed to meet particular needs such as GED courses, courses relating to budgeting and financial literacy, workshops on parenting and English as a second language (ESL) courses.
- Accessing services relating to basic needs, for example, access to food by families facing food poverty.
- Development by some schools of family resource centers and also provision of physical spaces in the school that parents can utilize.
- Outreach activities including outreach to enhance or develop PTOs and outreach to parents whose children face particular challenges in relation to behavior, attendance or other issues.
- Establishment in some schools of the post or role of family/parent coordinator to coordinate all activities relating to parent involvement.

- Identification and referral of parents to services within the community.

Community School staff and parents interviewed during the course of the evaluation have continued to draw attention to the significant challenges involved in engaging with parents. An area of consistent concern related to engaging parents around particular programs designed to support the progression of parents themselves. For example, although there appeared to be a strong demand for GED courses among parents in many schools, often when these were provided the participation or follow through was very low.

Some stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation believed that GED courses were more likely to be successful where the goal of participation by parents was to assist their child rather than to promote the education or employment progression of parents per se. The ability to help children as a result of parents participating in GED courses, it was noted, might be a more realistic expectation of what the course has to offer.

Community Connections/Partnerships

Connections with the broader community is a major element of the community school model and has been crucial for leveraging resources for the community school. As noted in the case of Clark, partnerships with CBOs such as the Salvation Army have been a very important resource in seeking to minimize disruption caused by the closure of the school building and in providing spaces in which community school activities continue to take place.

Business partners, for example, Travelers and TD Bank have provided important tutoring resources and faith based organizations have been important sources of support in meeting basic needs including food and clothing for students in need.

"System Level" Outcomes

The HCS is supported by the leadership team and network infrastructure that includes the roles of the Director of Hartford Partnership for Student Success and the Hartford Community Schools Coordinator. This infrastructure has supported the progression of critical systems level preconditions in the Theory of Change including the development of more effective data collection and sharing. Activities at this level however, have not been the subject of this evaluation which is focused more specifically on the community schools and outcomes emerging at school level.

As noted in the section on Theory of Change, additional preconditions have been identified at a systems level in promoting the community school model which will need to be addressed at an overall systems level. This includes for an example, suggested preconditions on district support for the community school model and specifically on support for parent/family engagement.

3. Results: Student and Parent/Family Outcomes 2015

3.1 Academic Results

Hartford Community Schools Overall Academic Results 2013-2015

'Raw' MAP scores for reading (taking all schools together) decreased from 197.61 to 194.72 between spring 2014 and spring 2015. There was a smaller decrease in math, with total raw scores falling from 201.45 to 200.44. ASA Dwight/Bellizzi and Burr both recorded increases in math but not in reading, while HMTCA recorded an increase in reading.[2]

Total 'raw' MAP scores for students who attended afterschool however (a key component of the community school model) increased in both reading and math between spring 2014 and spring 2015. This increase was even greater when the duration of student participation in afterschool programs is taken into account. This is outlined in Table 2, which shows a statistically significant increase in MAP scores in reading and in math of students who participated in the afterschool program for three consecutive years.

Table 2: Academic Results of matched HCS afterschool participant's from 2013 to 2015 academic years

HCS Afterschool Participants	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	191.29	⬆ 196.42	⬆ 205.00*	194.49	⬆ 200.30	⬆ 208.12*
Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	195.39	⬆ 197.66	⬇ 194.36	200.89	⬆ 201.48	⬇ 200.15

*Statistically significant at .000 in Reading and .001 in Math.

The results across schools are outlined in Table 3. This shows that in five out of the seven schools, students who participated in afterschool programs for three consecutive years increased their raw scores in both reading and math. Even where there wasn't an increase in scores, the raw scores of students who participated in afterschool programs were still higher than students who had not participated in afterschool for three consecutive years.

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[2]The decrease in scores for math was highest in Burns LSA, which also recorded a slightly lower decrease in reading scores. It should be noted however, that Burns experienced a very substantial change in its student population in 2014 with approximately 200 new students, a large number of whom are ELL and Special Education students. Burns has noted that 46% of its students are now English Language Learners (ELL), a higher proportion of ELL students than any other community school.

Table 3: Academic Results of matched HCS afterschool participant's in each school from 2013 to 2015 academic years

By School Afterschool Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	195.84	⬆ 203.15	⬆ 208.15	195.88	⬆ 205.11	⬆ 215.52
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	190.72	⬆ 193.04	⬇ 185.79	192.01	⬆ 193.53	⬆ 194.34
Burns Latino Studies Academy	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	186.73	⬆ 193.17	⬆ 207.83	192.64	⬆ 202.42	⬇ 201.92
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	188.58	⬆ 189.43	⬇ 183.90	194.31	⬇ 193.46	⬇ 185.67
Burr School	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	192.77	⬆ 199.25	⬆ 205.81	194.38	⬆ 202.63	⬆ 212.63
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	189.95	⬆ 193.80	⬇ 189.93	195.92	⬆ 198.18	⬆ 198.31
Clark School	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	190.75	⬆ 195.55	⬇ 192.36	193.75	⬆ 199.45	⬆ 201.55
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	191.71	⬇ 188.81	⬇ 184.30	194.19	⬇ 190.96	⬇ 186.47
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	199.00	⬆ 205.83	⬆ 218.00	205.00	⬆ 214.09	⬆ 222.00
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	217.18	⬆ 217.31	⬆ 218.61	226.22	⬇ 224.39	⬇ 224.13
Milner School	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	187.70	⬆ 189.26	⬆ 200.87	192.47	⬇ 192.16	⬆ 200.58
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	184.56	⬆ 186.21	⬇ 182.18	190.13	⬇ 188.60	⬇ 183.14
West Middle School	HCS Afterschool 3 years participants	210.00	⬆ 213.00	⬆ 217.00	224.00	⬇ 215.00	⬆ 218.00
	Non-3 year HCS Afterschool participants	193.28	⬆ 197.65	⬇ 193.77	198.65	⬆ 200.77	⬆ 202.45

Although "raw" MAP scores went down for many of the schools between spring 2014 and spring 2015, growth figures in scores when measured between fall 2014 and spring 2015 were actually very high for all schools compared to previous years. This is outlined in figure 1, which shows that:

- The percentage of students who improved one or more levels in MAP reading was greater in West Middle and ASA Dwight/Bellizzi than the district and peer schools in 2015.
- West Middle, Milner and ASA Dwight/Bellizzi increased more than the average for peer schools and the district, increasing by 36%, 29% and 28% respectively compared to an increase of 26% and 25% by peer schools and the district respectively between 2014 and 2015.

Figure 1: Percentage of students who improved one or more levels on Reading MAP from 2013 to 2015 academic year
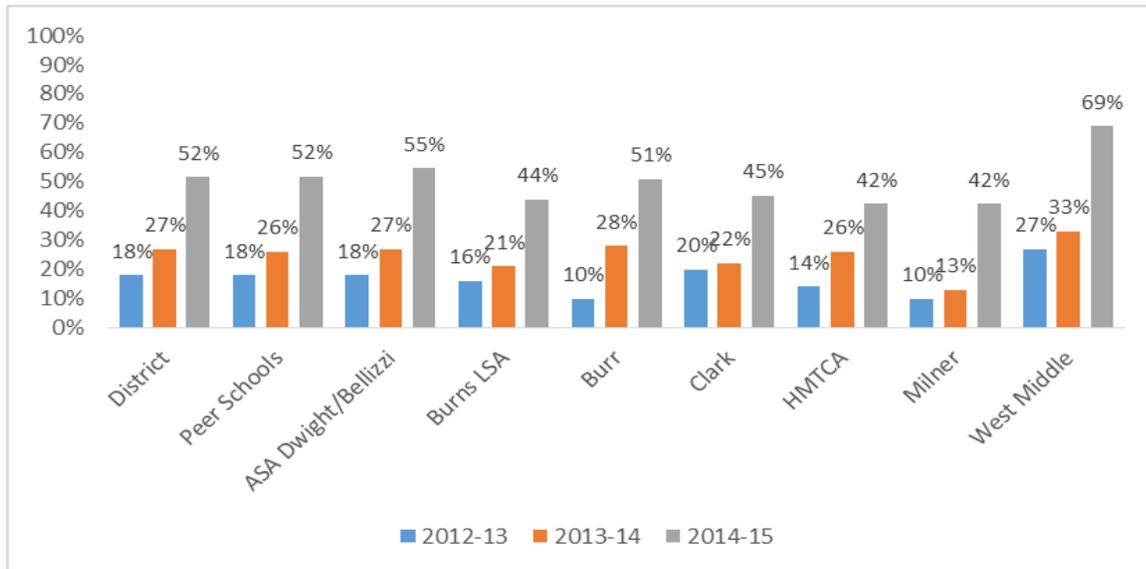
The percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math also increased in all seven HCS schools in 2015 when measured between fall 2014 and spring 2015. This is outlined in Figure 2 which also shows that:

- The percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math was greater in West Middle and ASA Dwight/Bellizzi than for the district and peer schools in 2015.
- West Middle, ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, HMTCA, and Clark increased more than the average for peer schools and the district increasing by 36%, 34%, 32%, and 28% respectively compared to 25% and 27% increases for peer schools and the district.

Figure 2: Percentage of students who improved one or more levels on Math MAP from 2013 to 2015 academic year
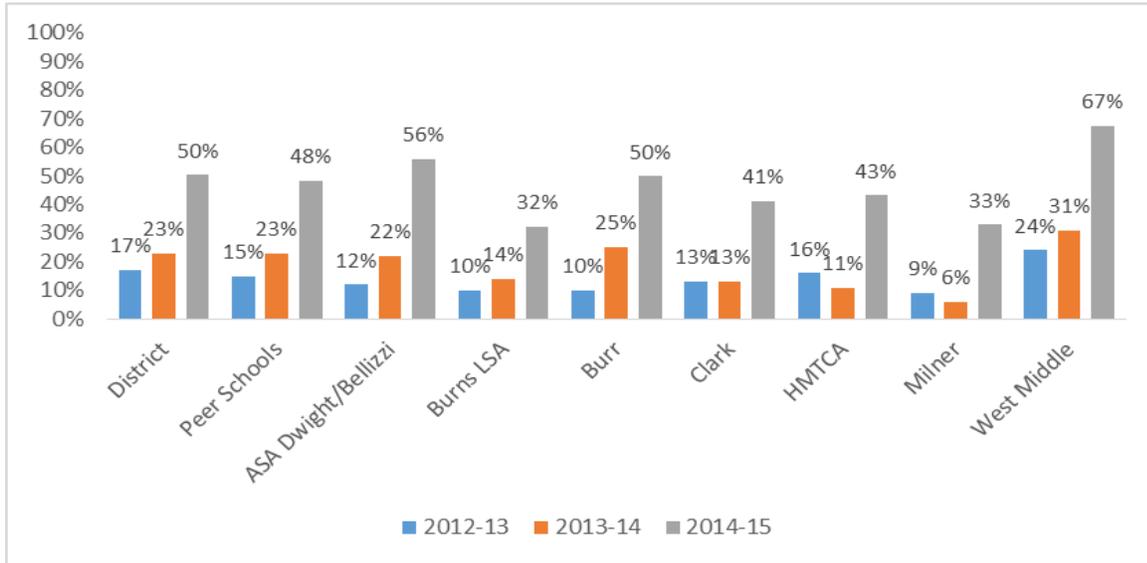
The apparent discrepancy between decreases in "raw" scores for all schools between spring 2014 and spring 2015 and very substantial growth figures (i.e. students who improved one or more levels) between fall 2014 and spring 2015 may indicate some level of "summer learning loss" in 2014. According to the HPS district data source this "summer learning loss" may not just be an issue for HCS schools in particular but for the district as a whole. There was, it was noted, a lower baseline in score levels in fall 2014 than there had been in spring 2014 for HCS schools and for the aggregate of all schools in the district.

Figures on the percentage of students who declined one or more levels also indicates improvement for the HCS schools following this lower base line in scores in fall 2014. For example, as outlined in Figure 3:

- In six out of seven HCS schools (ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, Burr, Clark, HMTCA, Milner and West Middle) fewer students declined in one or more levels in reading in 2015 than they did in 2014.
- Fewer students in West Middle and ASA Dwight/Bellizzi declined in reading scores than district and peer schools.
- The largest improvements in student decline were in ASA Dwight/Bellizzi (falling from -20% to -8%), Milner (falling from -25% to -16%), and West Middle (falling from -15% to -7%).
- Burns LSA had the poorest performance in student decline in reading with the numbers declining one or more levels going up from 16% to 17%.

Figure 3: Percentage of students who declined one or more levels on Reading MAP from 2013 to 2015 academic year
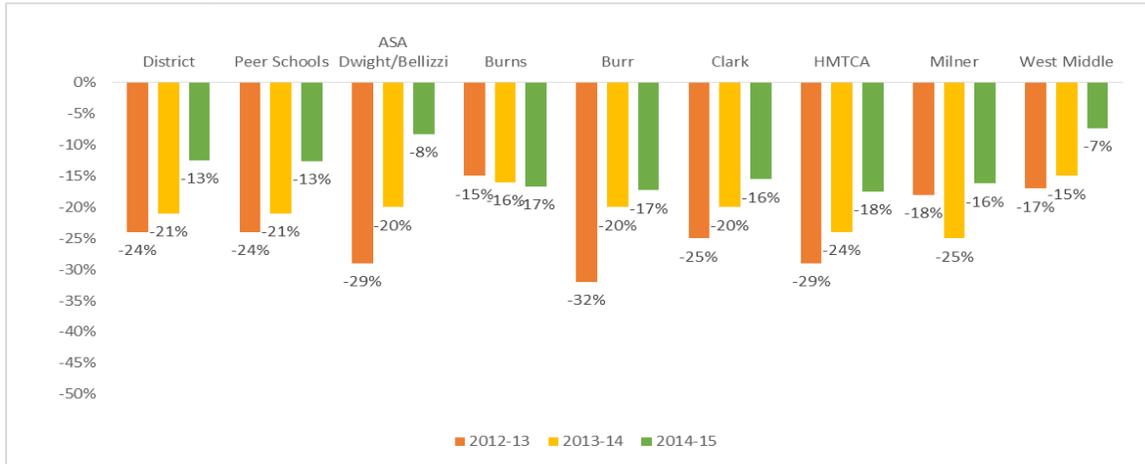
Similar improvements are apparent in figures relating to the numbers declining in math which are illustrated in Figure 4. This shows that:

- In four out of seven HCS schools (ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, HMTCA, Milner and West Middle) fewer students declined in one or more levels in math in 2015 than they did in 2014.
- Fewer students in West Middle and ASA Dwight/Bellizzi declined in math scores than district and peer schools.
- The biggest improvement in the number of students who declined in math were in HMTCA (falling from -29% to -20%) and West Middle (falling from -11% to -5%) compared to 2014.
- Burns LSA and Burr had the poorest performance in student decline in math with the numbers declining one or more levels going up from 11% to 19%, and from 12% to 14%, respectively.

Figure 4: Percentage of students who declined one or more levels on Math MAP from 2013 to 2015 academic year
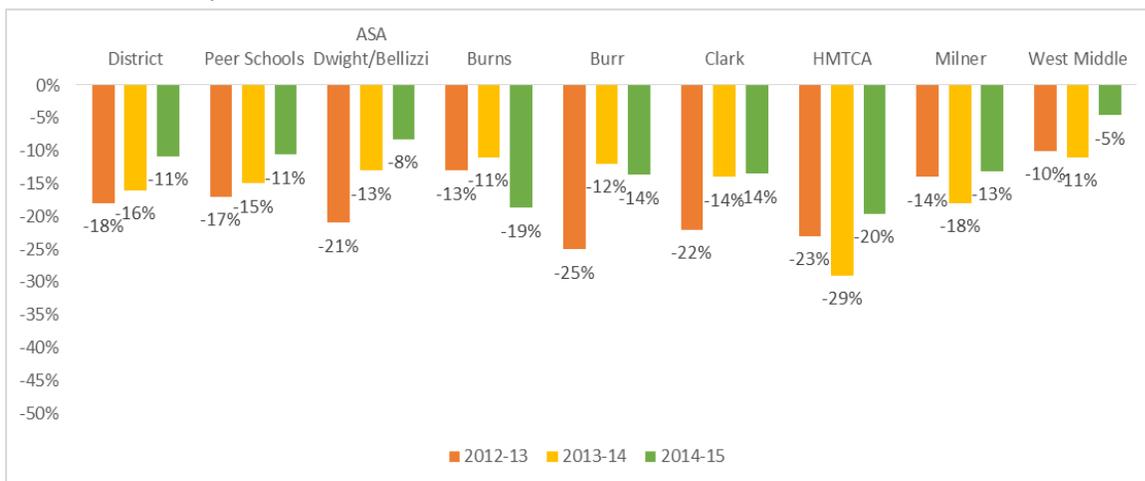
Academic Results for English Language Learners (ELL)

MAP scores in reading for English Language Learners (ELL) increased in two out of the seven schools (HMTCA and Milner) but decreased in the others. Scores in math increased in five out of the seven schools (ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, Burr, HMTCA, Milner, and West Middle). These are outlined in table 4.

Table 4: Academic results of ELL students for each school from 2013 to 2015 academic years

By School ELL Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi	ELL Students	180.08	↑ 184.26	↓ 178.10	181.80	↑ 186.39	↑ 187.94
	Non-ELL Students	194.22	↑ 198.50	↓ 191.52	194.42	↑ 198.15	↑ 199.12
Burns Latino Studies Academy	ELL Students	178.35	↑ 179.86	↓ 176.30	186.44	↓ 185.93	↓ 179.79
	Non-ELL Students	195.97	↑ 198.63	↓ 191.66	198.24	↑ 201.15	↓ 191.90
Burr School	ELL Students	182.27	↑ 185.37	↓ 182.49	193.10	↓ 192.47	↑ 193.24
	Non-ELL Students	190.45	↑ 197.90	↓ 193.35	194.62	↑ 200.95	↑ 201.11
Clark School	ELL Students	177.66	↑ 180.48	↓ 174.42	180.94	↑ 185.19	↓ 178.69
	Non-ELL Students	193.44	↓ 191.00	↓ 187.76	194.80	↓ 192.81	↓ 189.69
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	ELL Students	197.69	↑ 201.90	↑ 204.25	207.04	↓ 205.06	↑ 209.19
	Non-ELL Students	217.95	↓ 217.92	↑ 219.88	226.81	↓ 225.30	↑ 225.38
Milner School	ELL Students	169.74	↑ 178.01	↑ 179.52	175.98	↑ 180.56	↑ 182.92
	Non-ELL Students	186.63	↑ 189.61	↓ 185.63	192.79	↓ 191.96	↓ 185.94
West Middle School	ELL Students	182.83	↑ 191.22	↓ 184.44	191.08	↑ 196.89	↑ 196.94
	Non-ELL Students	197.65	↑ 200.72	↓ 198.60	200.88	↑ 202.63	↑ 205.30

When individual ELL students were identified by the teachers and community school directors for particular supports, more substantial improvements were recorded in most cases. This is outlined in table 5 which shows the results of supports provided by Burns, Burr and Clark on ELL students whose individual scores are compared to the previous year (2014). Increases were particularly high for the small number of ELL students who were targeted for additional supports in Clark, which included the use of "myON" an online training tool.

Table 5: ELL Target cohort comparison 2014 to 2015 academic year

HCS ELL Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score
Burns LSA - ELL Target Cohorts	Participants (N=24)	184.31	189.05	↑ 4.74	191.31	189.75	↓ -1.56
Burr - ELL Target Cohorts	Participants (N=14)	189.58	198.85	↑ 9.27	192.27	209.14	↑ 16.87
Clark - ELL Target Cohorts	Participants (N=5)	164.00	199.60	↑ 35.60	170.00	202.60	↑ 32.60

Academic Results for Special Education (SE) Students

MAP scores in reading for special education students increased in HMTCA and Milner but declined in the other community schools. Scores for special education students in math increased in HMTCA and in Clark and decreased in the other schools.

Table 6: Academic results of Special Education for each school Comparison 2013 to 2015 academic year

By School Sp. Ed Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi	Sp.Ed Students	180.26	↑187.09	↓178.74	180.21	↑189.33	↓186.99
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	191.69	↑194.57	↓188.12	192.44	↑194.93	↑196.86
Burns Latino Studies Academy	Sp.Ed Students	173.60	↑178.63	↓171.18	181.27	↑186.81	↓176.81
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	189.90	↑191.13	↓186.56	194.45	↑194.76	↓187.60
Burr School	Sp.Ed Students	172.16	↑183.81	↓175.42	183.60	↑186.96	↑190.81
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	191.39	↑195.75	↓192.98	196.19	↑200.33	↓200.12
Clark School	Sp.Ed Students	175.35	↑176.65	↓173.27	181.03	↓179.17	↑179.48
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	193.78	↓191.20	↓186.69	194.71	↓193.41	↓188.47
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	Sp.Ed Students	201.00	↑203.59	↑204.32	206.87	↓206.42	↑208.78
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	218.98	↓218.54	↑220.35	228.24	↓226.17	↓225.93
Milner School	Sp.Ed Students	174.63	↑177.56	↑180.42	185.31	↓184.47	↓181.83
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	183.68	↑188.24	↓185.23	189.06	↑189.98	↓185.94
West Middle School	Sp.Ed Students	183.55	↑187.43	↓181.48	189.38	↑190.41	↓188.54
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	194.81	↑199.45	↓196.28	199.42	↑202.62	↑205.40

Substantial improvements in reading and math were recorded in Milner where a specific cohort of special education students was targeted by the teacher and community school director for particular supports. This included the provision of tutors who could go in the class to provide individual attention to special education students.

Table 7: Sp. Ed. Target cohort comparison 2014 to 2015 academic year

HCS Sp.Ed. Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score
Milner - Sp.Ed. Target Cohorts	Participants (N=6)	154.33	161.67	⬆ 7.34	148.25	166.17	⬆17.92

Results For Other Target Cohorts of "At-Risk" Students

The results for cohorts of other academically at risk students (not ELL or special education) targeted for particular academic supports are outlined in table 9. In the case of ASA Dwight/Bellizzi the MAP scores for students who received one-on-one tutoring through the Travelers tutoring program improved in both reading and in math. These were 3rd to 5th grade students who received this tutoring once a weekly. On the other hand, scores for lower grade students (1st and 2nd grade) who received once weekly tutoring declined in reading.

There was also improvement in other schools, including those students that participated in the United Way Reading program in Burns LSA, Burr and Clark.

Table 8: Target cohort comparison 2014 to 2015 academic year

HCS Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Change Score
ASA Dwight/Bellizzi – United Way Volunteer Readers	Participants (N=13)	177.55	161.46	⬇ -16.09	172.25	175.88	⬆ 3.63
ASA Dwight/Bellizzi – Travelers Tutoring Program	Participants (N=45)	190.18	198.47	⬆ 8.29	190.62	201.93	⬆11.31
Burns LSA - CK3LI Target Cohorts	Participants (N=40)	174.14	172.20	⬇ -1.94	172.07	173.03	⬆ 0.96
Burns LSA - United Way Volunteer Readers	Participants (N=7)	150.00	165.00	⬆15.00	166.00	163.71	⬇ -2.29
Burr – United Way Volunteer Readers	Participants (N=27)	173.73	176.52	⬆ 2.79	176.60	184.36	⬆ 7.76
Clark - Small Group Instruction	Participants (N=21)	186.76	195.19	⬆ 8.43	184.00	190.48	⬆ 6.48
Clark - United Way Volunteer Readers	Participants (N=16)	192.36	199.25	⬆ 6.89	190.29	199.88	⬆ 9.59
HMTCA - Academic Intervention	Participants (N=45)	204.67	211.76	⬆ 7.09	212.00	215.98	⬆ 3.98
West Middle – Academic Tutoring	Participants (N=10)	211.33	215.50	⬆ 4.17	215.17	218.80	⬆ 3.63
West Middle – ConnectiKids Tutoring Program	Participants (N=113)	195.24	197.31	⬆ 2.07	197.04	205.36	⬆ 8.32

3.2 Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism

A key precondition in the HCS Theory of Change for students to succeed academically is "Students maintain good attendance." As noted in the section on Theory of Change, the importance of attendance was emphasized in discussions on further developing the Theory of Change. Important preconditions for attendance were included in the revised Theory of Change and cover in particular the important role of parents/families and effective communication between the school and parents/families in ensuring proper attendance.

A school with high attendance rates can have high "chronic" or "severely chronic" absentee rates – for example, the attendance rate might be 95 percent but when the absences are added together, they can accumulate and the student(s) can miss a month or more of school over the course of the school year.[3] In Hartford Connecticut a student is chronically absent if he/she misses 10 percent or more of school for any reason including excused and unexcused absences.

This focus on promoting attendance and addressing chronic absenteeism is in line with the priority attached to this issue by the Hartford Public School (HPS) district. For example, the HPS strategic plan 2015-2020 includes a target for reducing chronic absenteeism by 60% over the next five years.

Figure 5 shows that with the exception of HMTCA, chronic absenteeism is a significant problem in each of the HCS schools compared to the District and peer schools. Chronic absenteeism decreased in West Middle, Milner and Burr in 2015 compared to 2014. However, it increased in ASA Dwight/Bellizzi, Burns LSA and Clark.

The decreases would appear to reflect a strong and targeted focus on attendance. For example, in case of Milner there was a strong focus on attendance in the 2014-15 academic year. Actions employed included weekly meetings between the principal, community school director, nurse, social worker and "behavior tech" staff to review and respond to attendance issues.

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[3] For fuller analysis of chronic absenteeism see for example the resources section of the National Center for Community Schools and the National Center for Children in Poverty Report *Present, Engaged, and Accounted For* (Chang at el, 2008).

Figure 5: Percentage of students who are chronically absent from 2013 to 2015 academic years
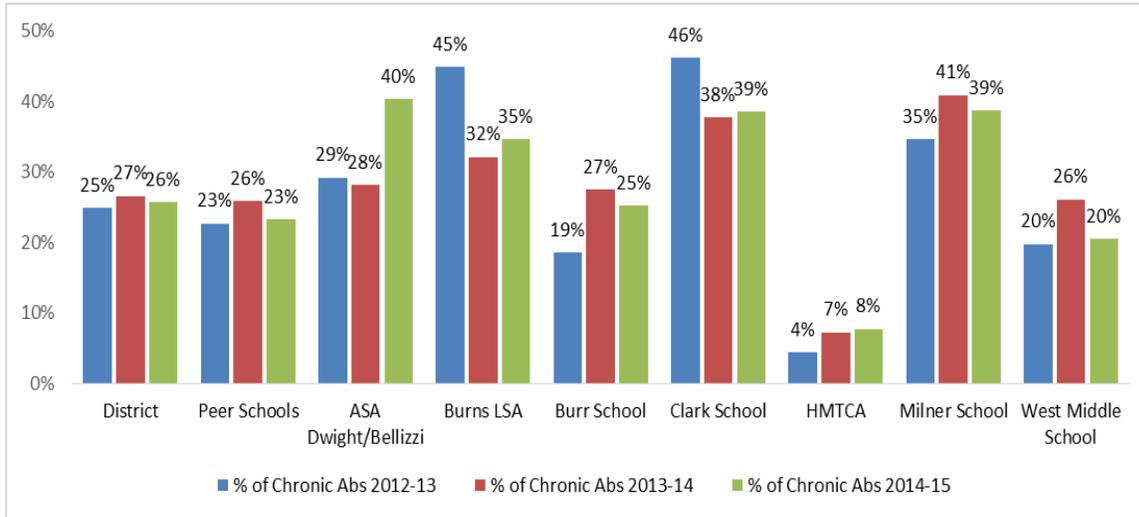
The community schools have been taking other steps to address chronic absenteeism. This has included tracking and responding to absences by students particularly affected by chronic absenteeism. Responses have included phone calls to parents upon each absence, meetings with student and their parents and in some cases (for example, ASA Dwight/Bellizzi) incentivizing attendance through awards and other positive recognition for attendance.

As outlined in table 9, the attendance results for cohorts of students receiving these supports have not yet improved and in many cases have declined.

Table 9: Absenteeism cohort comparison 2014 to 2015 academic year

HCS Absenteeism Cohorts		Days Absent		
		2014	**2015**	**Change Score**
ASA Dwight/Bellizzi Golden Dragons Club Cohorts	Participants (N=189)	11	13	⬆ 2
Burns LSA Chronic Absenteeism/YAA Cohort	Participants (N=5)	14	19	⬆ 5
Burns LSA Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=3)	15	25	⬆ 10
Clark Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=49)	19	20	⬆ 1
HMTCA Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=8)	16	30	⬆ 14
Milner Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=15)	20	19	⬇ -1
West Middle Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=13)	19	27	⬆ 8

3.3 Students' Physical and Emotional Safety

Figures from Hartford Public Schools Climate and Connectedness Surveys show decreases in perceptions of school safety among grades 3-4 in five of the seven Hartford Community Schools (no figures were available for HMTCA).

The decline in perceptions of safety were particularly high in Burns LSA and Clark. In Clark the school building was closed in 2014 and students were relocated to three separate schools. Staff interviewed during the course of evaluation noted the challenges of accommodating this relocation and the possible impact it would have on student's perceptions of safety. As mentioned earlier, Burns LSA also saw a very significant changes in its student body (200 new students) and staff interviewed noted the impact this was having on school climate. The figures therefore, are unlikely to be a surprise to either school.

Figure 6: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on school safety 2013 to 2015.
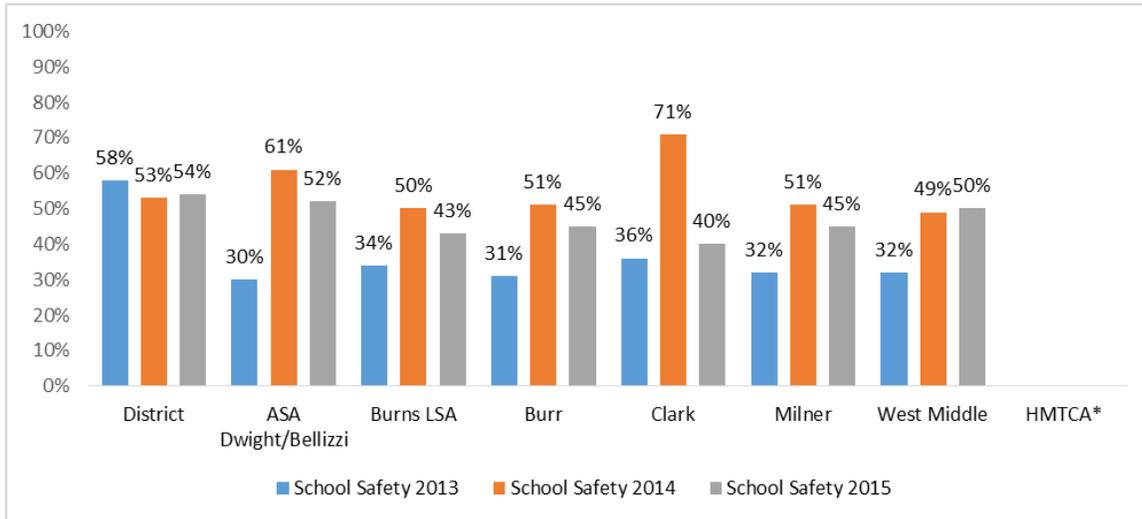
It is not possible (as mentioned earlier in the methodology section) to compare perceptions of safety by grades 5-12 students in 2015 to 2014 academic years due to changes in how these figures are calculated in the HPS survey. However, as shown in Figure 7 below, grade 5-12 student perception of school safety was, with the exception of HMTCA, below the District average of 57%. The impact of the closure of Clark school building and relocation of its students could also be affecting grades 5-12 as Clark had the lowest perception of school safety amongst this group.

Figure 7: Percentage of grade 5-12 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on school safety in 2015.
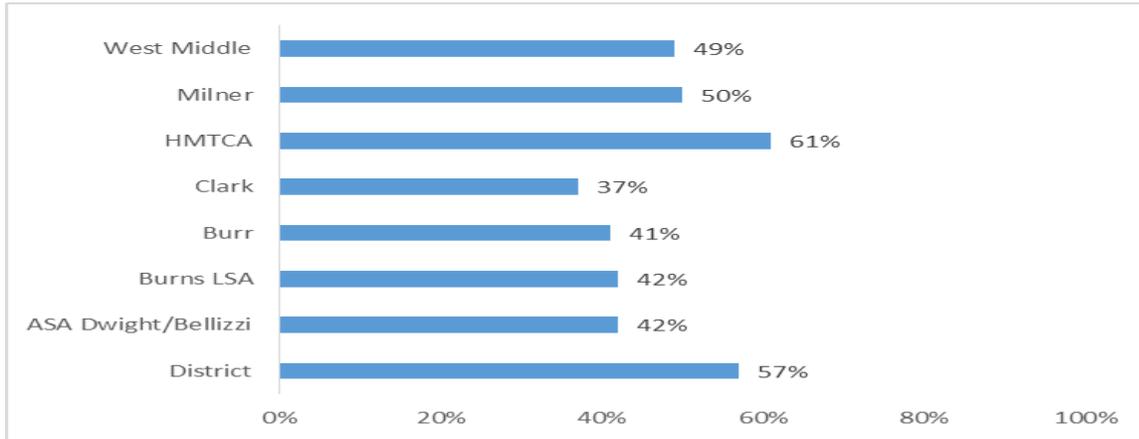

All Hartford Community Schools saw a decline in favorable perceptions of peer climate among grades 3 and 4 students. This decline, as outlined in figure 8 reflects a decline in perceptions of peer climate amongst schools in the district as a whole. However, once again the decline was particularly severe for Clark which had relocated to three separate schools.

Figure 8: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on peer climate 2013 to 2015.
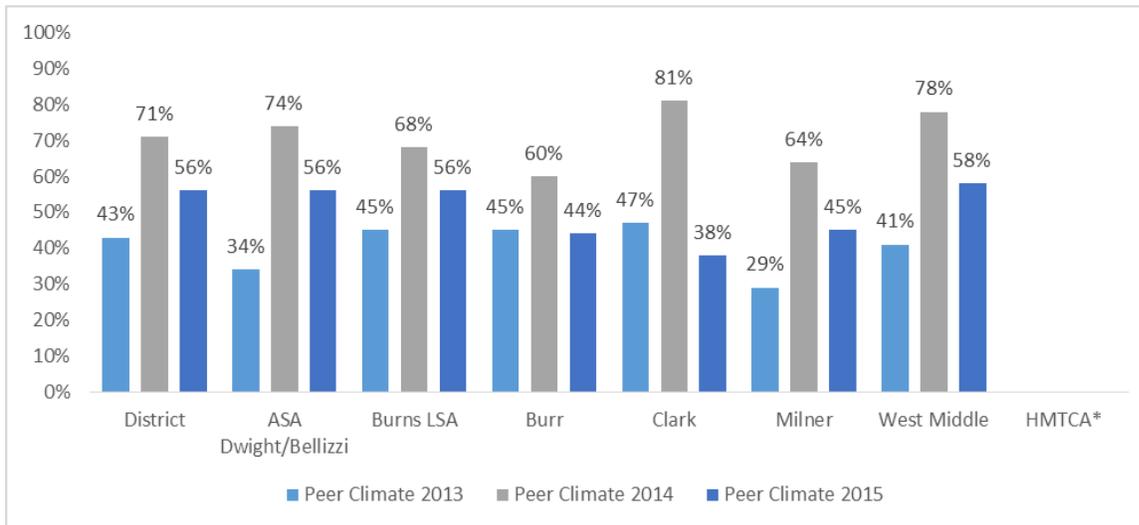
While it was not possible to compare perceptions of students in grades 5-12 between 2014 and 2015, figure 9 below shows that favorable perceptions of peer climate were lower among the community schools than for the District as a whole.

Figure 9: Percentage of grade 5-12 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on peer climate in 2015.
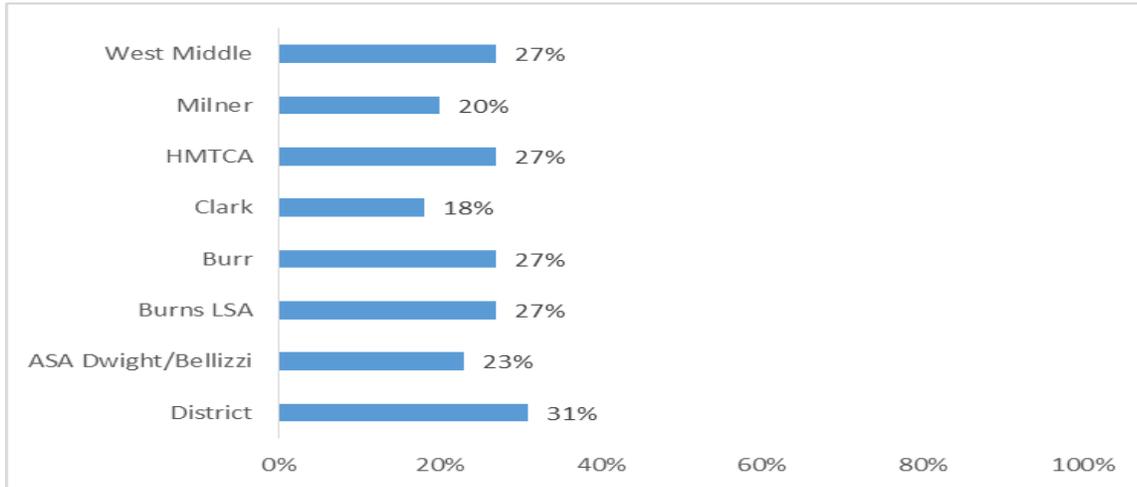
3.4 Student Behavior

An important precondition in the HCS Theory of Change for student's sense of safety and well-being in school and for effective participation in the classroom is that students demonstrate positive behavior.

Six schools developed and implemented particular activities and programs focused on cohorts of students with behavior problems. Figure 10 shows that Burns LSA and Clark had some success in reducing the number of suspensions among these target cohorts through "character education" program (undertaken in Burns LSA) and gender specific programs (employed by Clark). Burr and HMTCA were much less successful in terms of reducing suspensions through the programs they delivered.

Table 10: Behavior cohort suspensions comparison 2014 to 2015 academic year

| HCS Behavior Cohorts		Suspensions		
		2014	**2015**	**Change Score**
Burns LSA Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=16)	96	44	⬇ **-52**
Burr Teen Outreach Cohort	Participants (N=47)	15	59	⬆ **44**
Clark Gender Based Groups Cohort	Participants (N=7)	5	4	⬇ **-1**
Clark Teen Outreach Cohort	Participants (N=21)	45	19	⬇ **-26**
HMTCA Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=37)	74	161	⬆ **87**
Milner Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=10)	22	15	⬇ **-7**

3.5 Students' Perceptions of Afterschool Enrichment Opportunities

One of the preconditions outlined in the Theory of Change as necessary for students to improve work habits, attendance and understanding of their school work (which are necessary conditions for achieving good academic grades) is that they participate in enrichment opportunities that meet their needs. The provision of such enrichment activities through afterschool programs is a key component of the community school model.

As noted earlier, student surveys were distributed to students who participated in afterschool programs at the start of the school year (pre surveys) and towards the end of the year (post surveys). These were designed to elicit their views and perceptions over the year on what they have learned through the various afterschool activities. A select number of results from the surveys are presented as follows, focusing in particular on what students reported that they were learning through the activities.

As outlined in figure 10, a majority (66%) of students in all schools taken together reported that they were learning reading, writing and math skills at the outset of the afterschool programs, which increased to (71%) towards end of the year. This result would appear to reflect the continuing work of the community schools to build an academic focus, particularly relating to literacy and numeracy, into afterschool programs. This, as noted earlier, would appear to be having an impact as the MAP scores of afterschool program participants have improved relative to other students.

Figure 10: Percentage of student who reported they were learning reading, writing and math skills in afterschool program
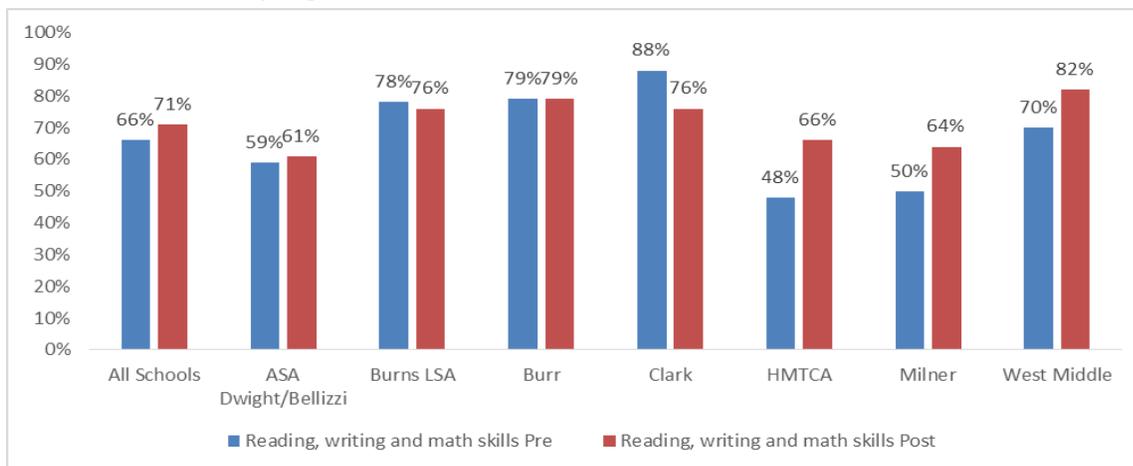
The focus on the academic support is also reflected in the number of afterschool participants who reported that the afterschool program helped them to finish their homework. This is illustrated in figure 11 which also shows there was a little variance in replies across schools during

the course of the year although the vast majority of students continued to note the contribution of afterschool to homework completion.

Figure 11: Percentage of students reporting that afterschool helps them finish their homework
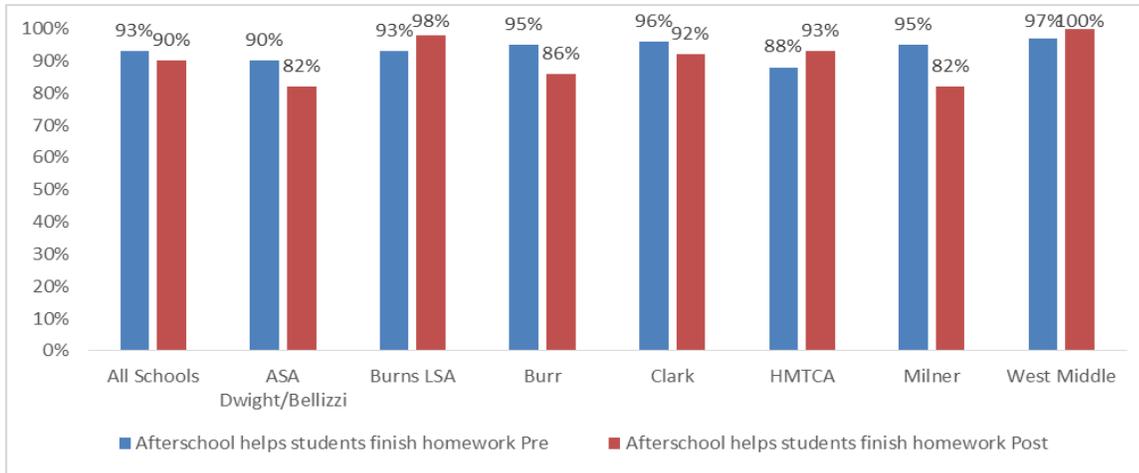
A majority of students also reported learning skills relating to having good attendance and being on time but the numbers who noted learning such skills declined somewhat across most schools during the year.

Figure 12: Percentage of student who reported they were learning skills relating to having good attendance and being on time in afterschool program
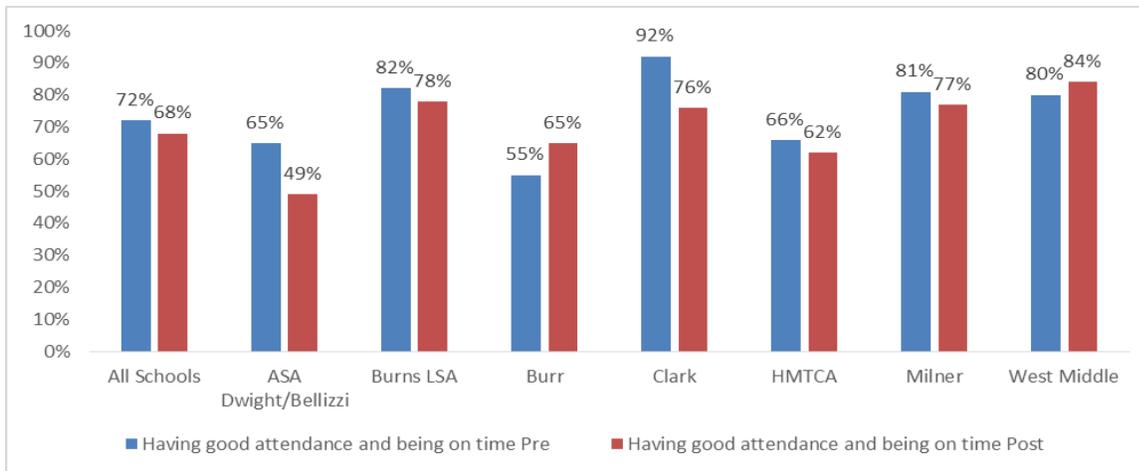

Given the importance of student safety as a precondition for participation and progression in school it is notable that the vast majority of afterschool students felt very safe in the afterschool programs although there was some decline in such perceptions over the year. This is illustrated in figure 13.

Figure 13: Percentage of student who reported feeling safe in the afterschool program
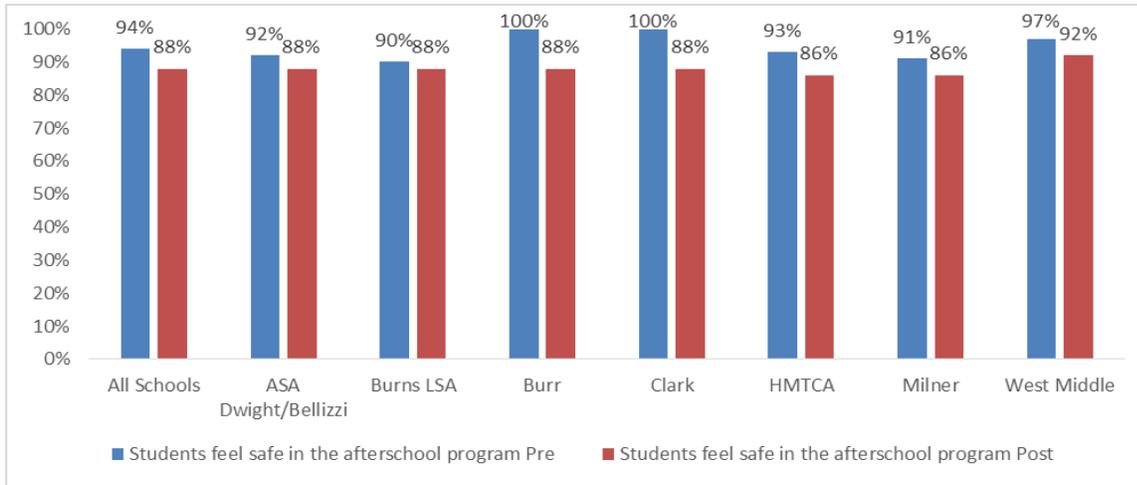
Finally, a significant majority of students reported at the outset of the afterschool program in the academic year 2014-15 that they were learning skills that would help them do better in school. These expectations did not change substantially over the year, increasing in some schools although decreasing in others.

Figure 14: Percentage of students who stated that they learn skills in afterschool programs that will help them do better in school
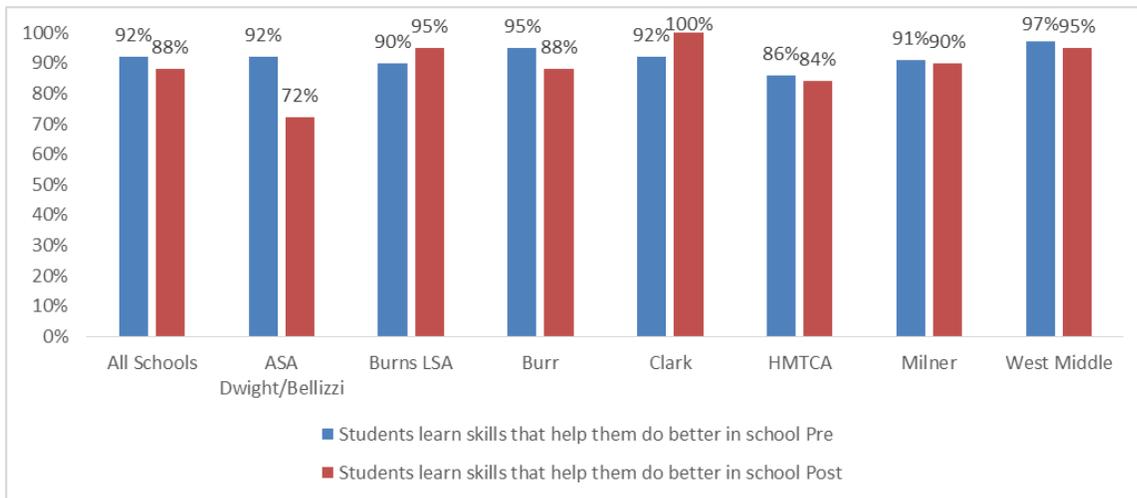

3.6 Parent/Family Outcomes

The Theory of Change for HCS has identified parental/familial engagement with their child's school, not as an end in itself, but as a critical precondition for building the capacity of parents/families to support student learning. In turn, parent/family support for student learning, including the capacity to support their child's homework and to engage with teachers on student grades have been identified as key preconditions for overall student success.

An important foundational precondition for parents/families engaging with the school is that they feel welcome. Figure 14 shows the results from the HPS School Climate and Connectedness Survey in relation to parent's perception of how welcomed they feel in their child's school. The figures are high across all community schools for 2015 and parent/family perception of feeling welcomed increased in Burns, Clark, Milner, and West Middle.

Figure 14: Parent/family perceptions of 'feeling welcomed' in their child's school 2014 to 2015
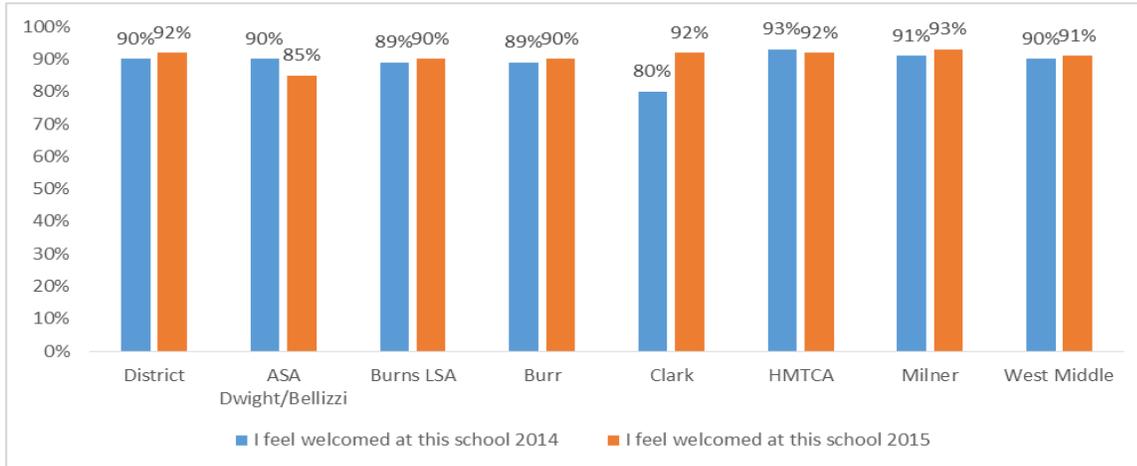
The increase in figures for Clark is particularly notable given that the school building was closed and students were relocated to three separate locations. A number of stakeholders interviewed in Clark noted the important role played by the principal, community school director and lead agency working together to address parental concerns about this relocation and what it meant for them and their children.

The results are also broadly positive when parents were asked whether their child's school is 'supportive and inviting' place for them. Clark again saw a higher percentage increase on this indicator than other schools despite the relocation. Also the figures for Burns LSA remain strong despite the very substantial change in student numbers it experienced including very significant numbers of English Language Learners. The principal and community school staff in Burns LSA noted that promoting a positive school climate for students and their parents in this rapidly changing demographic context was a priority for them during the 2014-15 school year.

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Figure 15: Parents perceptions on whether their child's school is a 'supportive and inviting place for parents/guardians' 2014 to 2015
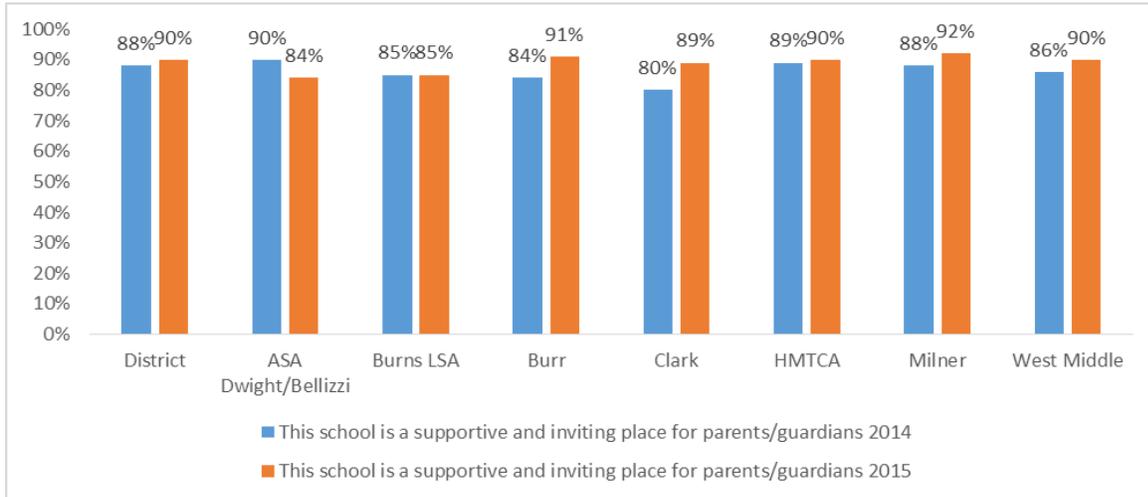
Respect for diversity and the cultural competence of schools in dealing with diverse families has been identified as a key precondition for parental engagement in the HCS Theory of Change. This is especially important given the diversity of the schools and the communities which the serve. One indicator of the success of schools in accommodating diversity is outlines in figure 16 which is the HPS survey question on whether parents believed "adults at the school respect cultural diversity." This was positive across all HCS schools and increased in four out of the seven community schools.

Figure 16: Parents perception on whether adults at their child's school 'respect cultural diversity' 2014 to 2015
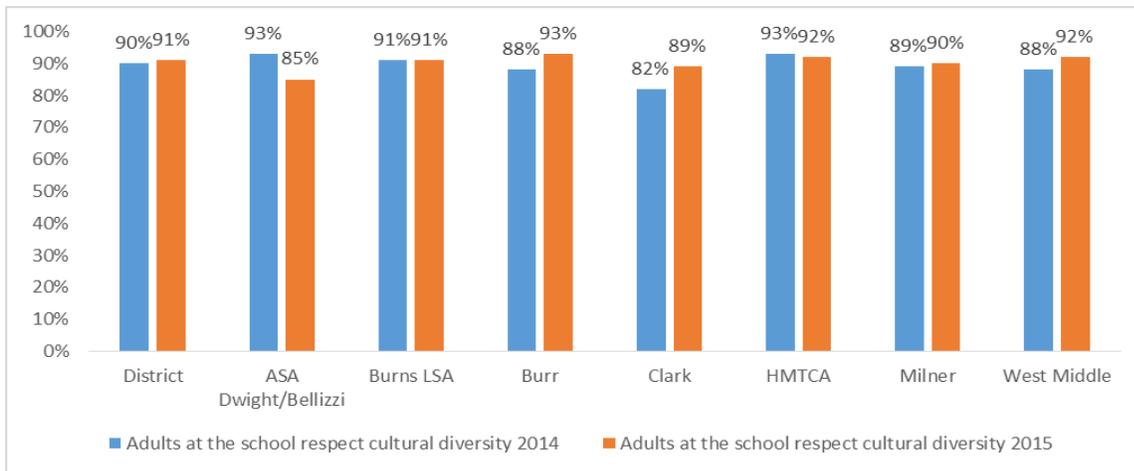
Despite these positive figures, staff and parents interviewed during the course of the evaluation noted the significant challenges involved in engaging with parents. An area of consistent concern related to engaging parents around particular programs of value to them. For example, although

there appeared to be a strong demand for GED courses among parents, when these were provided participation or follow through was often very low.

A number of stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation (as reflected in discussion on Theory of Change in section 2) believed that GED courses were more likely to be successful where the goal of participation by parents was to assist their child rather than to promote the education or employment progression of parents per se. The ability to help children as a result of parents participating in GED course, it was noted, might be a more realistic expectation of what the course has to offer.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has made important progress in 2015 despite some significant challenges. In particular:

- **Success of afterschool programs**. Participants in afterschool programs (a key component of the community school model) have once again done better on MAP scores in both reading and math than other students. In fact, MAP scores for afterschool participants have increased in 2015 despite a reduction in MAP scores for schools overall.

- MAP score improvements are even greater for afterschool students who have participated in afterschool programs over time. The MAP results show there was a statistically significant increase in MAP scores in reading and in math of students who participated in afterschool programs for three consecutive years compared to students who had not participated in afterschool for this duration.

- Improvements in MAP scores for afterschool students would appear to validate the considerable work undertaken by the community school directors, school leadership and staff to include a greater academic focus in afterschool programs and to align afterschool with day time provision.

- The academic impact of afterschool programs is also supported by responses to the afterschool student survey. The number of students reporting that they had learned reading, writing and math skills in afterschool program increased over the year, as 71% of students reported learning such skills in the afterschool program at the end of the 2014-15 school year.

- **Student growth in MAP.** Although MAP scores in both reading and math decreased in most schools (with the exception of afterschool participants), the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in both reading and math (which are measured from fall 2014 to spring 2015) increased in all schools.

- This apparent discrepancy between decreases in raw MAP scores between spring 2014 and spring 2015 (the end of each academic year) and very substantial growth figure (i.e. students who improved one or more levels which are measured from fall to spring) may indicate some level of "summer learning loss" in 2014. However, it would seem that this is not just an issue for HCS but for the Hartford Public Schools district as a whole. There was a lower baseline in score levels in fall 2014 than there had been in spring 2014 for HCS schools, but also for the aggregate of all schools in the district.

- **English Language Learners and Special education students.** Less progress was made in MAP scores for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education (SE) students. Scores for ELL students in reading increased in two out of seven schools and decreased in others. ELL scores in math however, increased in five out of seven schools. MAP scores in reading for SE students on the other hand increased in two schools and declined in the others. Equally in math scores, SE students increased in two schools and declined in the others.

- More progress was made for ELL students where they were targeted by the community schools for more intensive interventions. This was particularly the case in Clark and Burr, both of which focused on delivering intensive supports for small numbers of ELL students, yielding very substantial improvements in MAP scores in reading and math for the students concerned. Similarly in the case of Special Education students. For example, Milner School concentrated particular resources on a target cohort of Special Education students, resulting in substantial improvements in MAP reading and math scores for the students concerned.

- **Attendance and chronic absenteeism.** Less progress was made in addressing attendance problems and chronic absenteeism in particular. Even where cohorts of particularly "at-risk" students were targeted in relation to chronic absenteeism the results were less positive than expected.

- **HCS Theory of Change.** Considerable progress was made in developing further the HCS Theory of Change which provides an important basis for evaluation and for planning. This has led to the inclusion of additional outcomes, with a particular focus on drawing out pathways necessary to achieve some key priority areas including better attendance, reductions in chronic absenteeism, positive student behavior and parent/family engagement. One of the most significant additions was the identification of the importance of leadership at the level of both the school and at district level to develop and implement the most effective community school model.

A range of challenges have also been identified. In particular:

- HCS had to deal with some significant disruptions during the year caused in one case by the closure of a school building (Clark) and the relocation of students and in the other case (Burns LSA) very significant demographic changes in the community which led to the enrollment of a very large number of new students. In both cases however, being a community school and the partnerships and relationships that this facilitated were considered extremely important in mitigating the negative effects of these changes.

- Engaging parents/families with schools continues to be a challenge. Even where the schools have sought to meet the stated needs of parents/families (elicited in surveys for example) through the provision of courses in GED or ESL, participation and follow through has tended

to be low. A possible way forward in dealing with this issue was discussed in the Theory of Change session where it was suggested that the ultimate goal of parental/familial engagement should be around building the capacity of parents/families to support the education of their children. On this point it was noted that a greater capacity to help children as a result of parents/families participating in a GED course might be a more realistic expectation of what the course has to offer.

- Some schools mentioned particular barriers in providing for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education (SE) students during the course of the year. In one case it was noted that the barriers were around availability of specialized staff in meeting the needs of specific cohorts of ELL and SE students.

- Where school leadership, the principal in particular, does not understand or is not supportive of the community school model and the role of the lead agency, it is difficult to implement the community school model effectively. The most significant barriers that lack of support presents relate to those elements of the community school model that are particularly important, including the alignment between afterschool and day time provision and effective cooperation and coordination between the lead agency and the school. Such alignment has been essential for including a more effective academic focus in the afterschool programs, which in turn had a strong impact on MAP scores.

4.2 Recommendations

- Given the importance of school leadership and the role in turn of the school district in supporting such leadership, it is recommended the Hartford Partnership for Student Success consider the preconditions for such leadership and other systemic or "systems level" preconditions outlined in the amended HCS Theory of Change and how these could be supported. These include preconditions such as: the "principal fully supports and engages with the community school model"; that "school leadership understands and embraces a holistic approach to student progress"; and that "there is an adequate staffing model that allows the principal to be fully engaged in the community school."

- Building on this year's focus on these systemic preconditions, we recommend that next year's evaluation include further opportunities to engage with the leadership team on the systemic outcomes that support the achievement of HCS goals.

- As noted in the 2014 evaluation, awareness of the community school model is not universal and some school staff and leadership still view the community school concept as being primarily related to the provision of afterschool services. The HCS Theory of Change could be further refined to provide a means of communicating to all relevant stakeholders what the community school model actually encompasses and what is necessary to achieve its goals.

- Given the significance attached to mental health and well-being and how this connects to key preconditions to student participation and attainment, such as attendance and behavior, the potential for tracking those who avail of a service should be explored. It may be most feasible to do this in school where on site facilities are being developed, for example Milner School.

- More broadly, as long as resources are scarce and not every student, family and system goal can be met, the schools should continue to fine-tune the identification of cohorts of students who receive services targeted to their need: so chronically absent students receive certain interventions; remedial students receive academic assistance appropriate to their needs while other students may get more "enrichment" activities.