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HARTFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

EVALUATION REPORT (2013-2014)

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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 that go beyond the provision of just afterschool programs. In 2014, HCS and each school has focused in particular on aligning afterschool programs and daytime provision, on building a stronger academic element into afterschool programs and on developing activities specifically targeted at students falling behind academically and facing particular problems around attendance and behavior.

Schools have also focused on achieving key foundational outcomes for student progress including developing a positive school climate and safe school environment for all. And the schools have continued to develop innovative ways of involving parents and families and making them feel more welcome in the schools. This has been identified as an important precondition for student attainment.

ES. 2 HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

Outcomes this year (2013-2014) were far better than last year and the changes in implementation, management, alignment and targeting are the reasons. Disappointing academic results for afterschool students in the 2013 evaluation led directly to changes in afterschool programming, which showed a turnaround to positive results (measured using MAP scores in reading and math). The development of services targeted at specific cohorts of students (including those facing particular levels of academic disadvantage) has also succeeded in improving academic performance and other preconditions for student participation, including more positive behavior and better attendance.

All students in afterschool programs, ELL, special education and students targeted for interventions posted improvements in most schools, and greater improvements in many instances than the district or the city. There has also been significant increases in student perceptions of safety and a greater sense among parents of being welcomed in schools. In particular:

- Students in six out of seven HCS schools had increased 'raw' MAP scores in reading in 2014 compared to 2013 and five out of seven schools had increased 'raw' scores in math.
- There was an increase in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in MAP reading in all schools. Burr and HMTCA increased more than the average for peer schools and for schools in the district in terms of percent of students who improved one or

more levels in reading. The overall percentage of students who improved in reading at West Middle and Burr exceeded peer schools and the district.

- There was an increase in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math in five out of seven schools in 2014 compared to 2013. Burr and ASA Bellizzi both increased more than the average for peer schools and for schools in the district. As in the case of reading, the overall percentage of students who improved in math in Burr and West Middle exceeded peer schools and schools in the district.
- Students in afterschool programs, an important component of the community school model, improved their 'raw' scores in reading and math in 2014 compared to 2013 and improved more than students in each school as a whole.
- English Language Learners and Special Education students also improved 'raw' scores in reading and math since 2013 and improved more than other students.
- Schools also saw improvements in MAP scores for particular cohorts of students who have received other elements of the wider community school model. For example, ASA Bellizzi, Burr and West Middle saw substantial increases in MAP reading and math scores of students receiving daytime tutoring.

Two schools (JAH Milner and Clark) did not show significant academic improvement, but these were schools struggling with fundamental operational/management issues and they made great strides in school climate and perception, which are needed before academic achievement. In particular:

- JAH Milner and Clark made significant strides in perceptions of safety among grades 3-4 increasing by 19% and 35%, respectively.
- In six out of seven schools there was also significant improvements in student perceptions of school climate, with grade 3-4 students recording substantial improvements in perceptions of safety in 2014. This compared to a reduction in student perceptions of safety in schools in the district as a whole.

ES. 3 CONCLUSIONS

- We are delighted to be able to report that changes in management practice, program content, attention to school issues and targeting services has produced notable positive results for HCS.
- The progress illustrated through positive results on MAP is also supported by results from other sources including the results of youth surveys and focus groups of students and parents undertaken during the evaluation, as well as evaluator's observations.
- The schools however, still operate in a context of disadvantage, limited resources, disruptions and not all have total buy-in even at the school level. All of these factors affect

outcomes and have to be faced head on – either by finding ways to improve the situations, reducing expectations at a school with fundamental problems or focusing community school services to redress the problems as well as possible.

- We recommend continuing to focus on the foundational outcomes for the school, system, coordination and alignment; continued improvement in targeting and data tracking of students to services.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the results of the external evaluation of Hartford Community Schools (HCS) for the academic year 2013 to 2014. This is the second year of evaluation work undertaken by ActKnowledge, and it is based on the HCS Theory of Change ActKnowledge developed with HCS in Year One. A theory-driven approach to evaluation allows for greater clarity and detail around planned outcomes and how and why HCS expects to achieve its goals. It also provides a framework for identifying where areas of implementation need to be strengthened or focused.

The report begins with an overview of the community school model in Hartford, including the HCS Theory of Change and how that model has been implemented. It then goes on to outline the key outcomes in 2014 compared to 2013 for:

- Students, including academic results and also progress on key preconditions identified for social, emotional and academic attainment including attendance, positive behavior and a sense of safety and belonging in school.
- Parents, focused in particular on progress made in creating a welcoming environment for the involvement of parents in the school.

The report then outlines conclusions and a set of 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, 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 agency are illustrated in the following table, which also highlights associated abbreviations for each school which for brevity are used through this evaluation report.

Community School	Lead Agency
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi (ASA Bellizzi)	Compass
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA)	Compass
Burns Latino Studies Academy (Burns LSA)	Compass
Alfred E. Burr Elementary School (Burr)	The Village for Families and Children
John C. Clark Jr. Elementary and Middle School (Clark)	The Village for Families and Children
West Middle Elementary School and Middle Grades Academy (West Middle)	Boys and Girls Club of Hartford
Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner (JAH Milner)	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. Also, English language learners account for 25% of students in the Hartford Community Schools (compared to district average of 17%) and 89.2% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch compared to 85% for the district.

1.2 EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation has encompassed a number of interrelated components. These include:

THEORY OF CHANGE

The key framework for the evaluation continues to be the Theory of Change for Hartford Community Schools which was developed in 2012 by a range of key stakeholders. This outlines in detail a range of preconditions considered necessary for the achievement of the goals of HCS and is described in more detail in section 3.

SITE VISITS

The ActKnowledge evaluation team visited each community school 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.

- The site visit for this year was undertaken in April 2014 and involved structured meetings and interviews with a range of stakeholders including:

- Interviews with all community schools site directors;
- Interviews with two school principals (Burns LSA and Clark) were conducted on site; and interviews with other principals were conducted by phone.
- Focus groups with parents in three schools (Clark, JAH Milner and West Middle);
- Focus groups with students participating in after-school programs (Clark, Burns, Burr, JAH Milner and West Middle);

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 the 2013 and 2014 academic school years by comparing mean end of the school year results for 2013 (Spring 2013) with the mean end of the year school results for 2014 (Spring 2014) in reading and in math.¹

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. 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 in the district as a whole.²

The MAP raw scores were further analyzed for English language learners (ELL), special education (SE) students and afterschool students.

- School Climate. To obtain a picture of changes in school climate, the results of the School Climate and Student Connectedness Survey undertaken by Hartford Public Schools (HPS) has been 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 a small number of student categories, for example afterschool students. However, the community school model encompasses a wider set of programs and services than just afterschool programs. To assess the impact of these

¹ To observe changes in results with in the 2014 school year MAP figures were also analyzed comparing results from Fall 2013 to Spring 2014. The main focus in the report however, has been on observing score changes across the two school years.

² 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 Bellizzi, which is in a “medium priority” area.

wider services it was decided to identify and actively track the progress of students accessing these other components of the community school model.

These “target cohorts” have been selected by each school and represent students who have received different elements of the model and who are expected to progress as a *result of these particular intervention(s)*. 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 or behavior problems. This 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 on identifying cohorts. This included an initial meeting in November 2013 and ongoing follow-up with site directors and other staff.

The selection of target cohorts is a further refinement of implementing the HCS Theory of Change, where changes are expected to be seen only when conditions necessary for success are met. Thus, changes are expected in students with diverse needs when they receive the appropriate programs and services, and less change is expected if the underlying risk factors are not mitigated or removed.

STUDENT SURVEYS

The survey questionnaire developed by ActKnowledge in 2012-2013 was again used to elicit the views and perceptions of students on the afterschool programs on key outcomes (identified through the Theory of Change and through 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.

The overall response rate to the youth surveys was 45.3% of the total after-school enrollment (502 of 1108).

2. HARTFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (HCS): MODEL AND IMPLEMENTATION 2013-2014

2.1 COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MODEL AND HCS THEORY OF CHANGE

Community schools have been described as a “strategy for organizing the resources of the community around student success”³. Through extended hours, services and—crucially—the building of relationships and effective partnerships, the community school model conceives of education as a coordinated, child-centered effort in which schools, families and communities work together to support student’s educational success, build stronger families and improve communities.

This holistic approach has been shown to be particularly important to children living in poverty, who need a variety of family and community resources, including intellectual, social, physical, and emotional support, to have the opportunity to attain academic success. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education:

“Many children live in communities that lack not only high-performing schools, but also the support needed to be ready and able to learn when they start school. School-community partnerships can be key strategies for providing resources to these individual students. A variety of organizations can help provide the missing resources for children living in poverty and, therefore, begin to transform struggling schools and communities”.⁴

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 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 Hartford, 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.

The Theory of Change sets out a long term goal for HCS 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. It then maps out

³ Cited in the National Center for Community Schools provides a very comprehensive conceptual definition and outline of the community school model in its publication *Building Community School: A Guide for Action*, 2011.

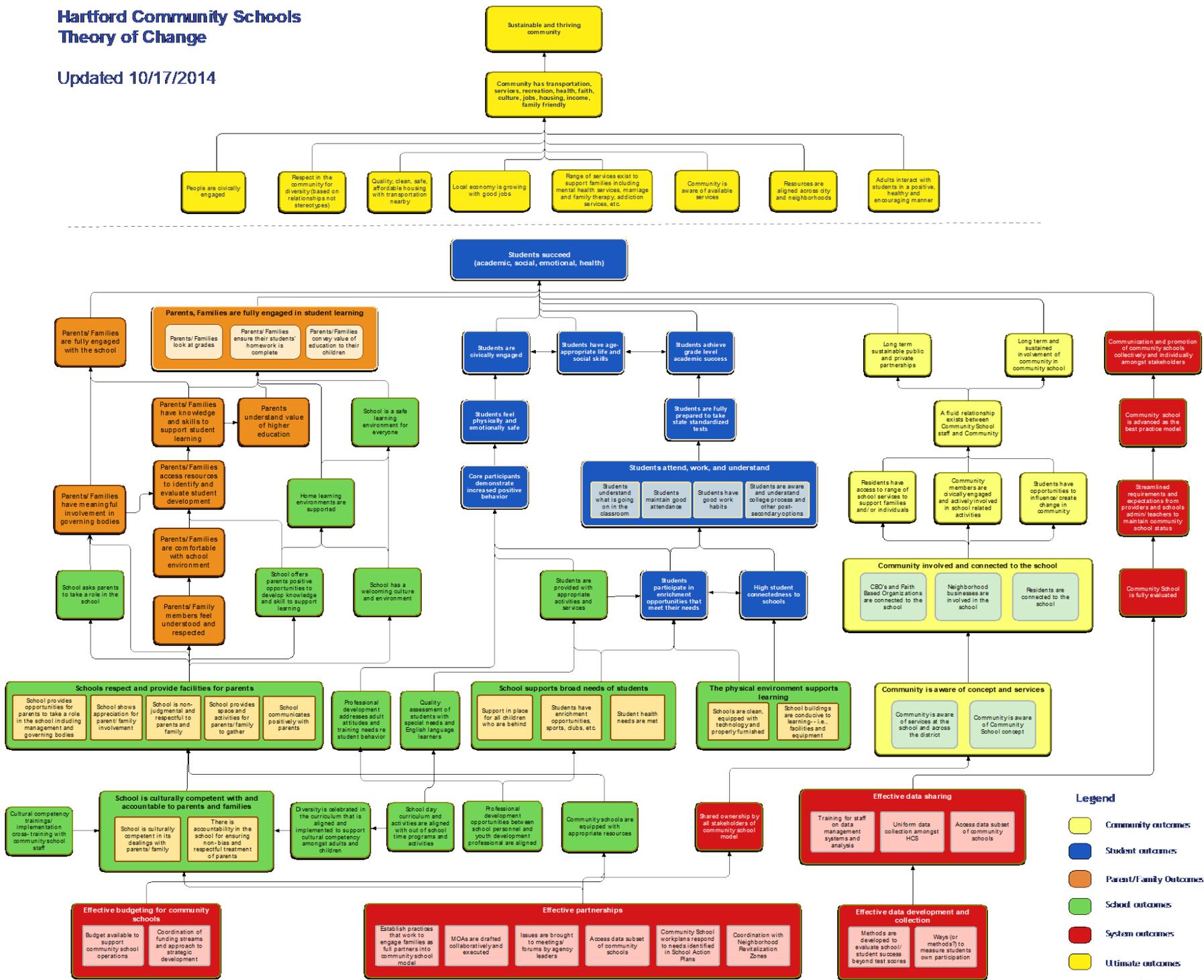
⁴ U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/05/06/2014-10361/applications-for-new-awards-full-service-community-schools-program#h-4>

pathways of 'preconditions' or related outcomes for students, parents, schools and partnership necessary for this long-term outcome to be achieved.

The full Theory of Change is outlined in the following diagram and each of the main pathways are then presented and analyzed in the sections that follow.

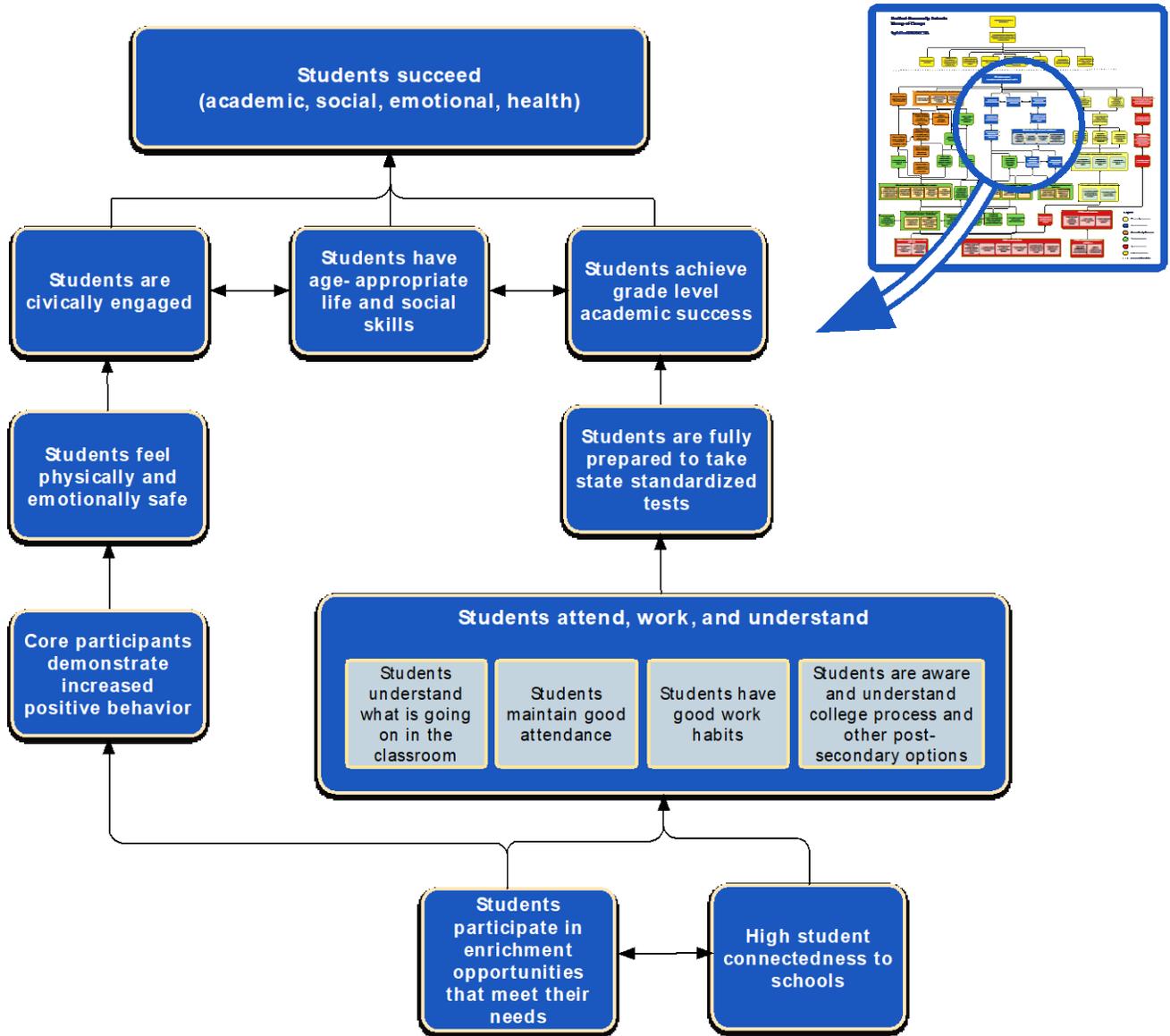
Hartford Community Schools Theory of Change

Updated 10/17/2014



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

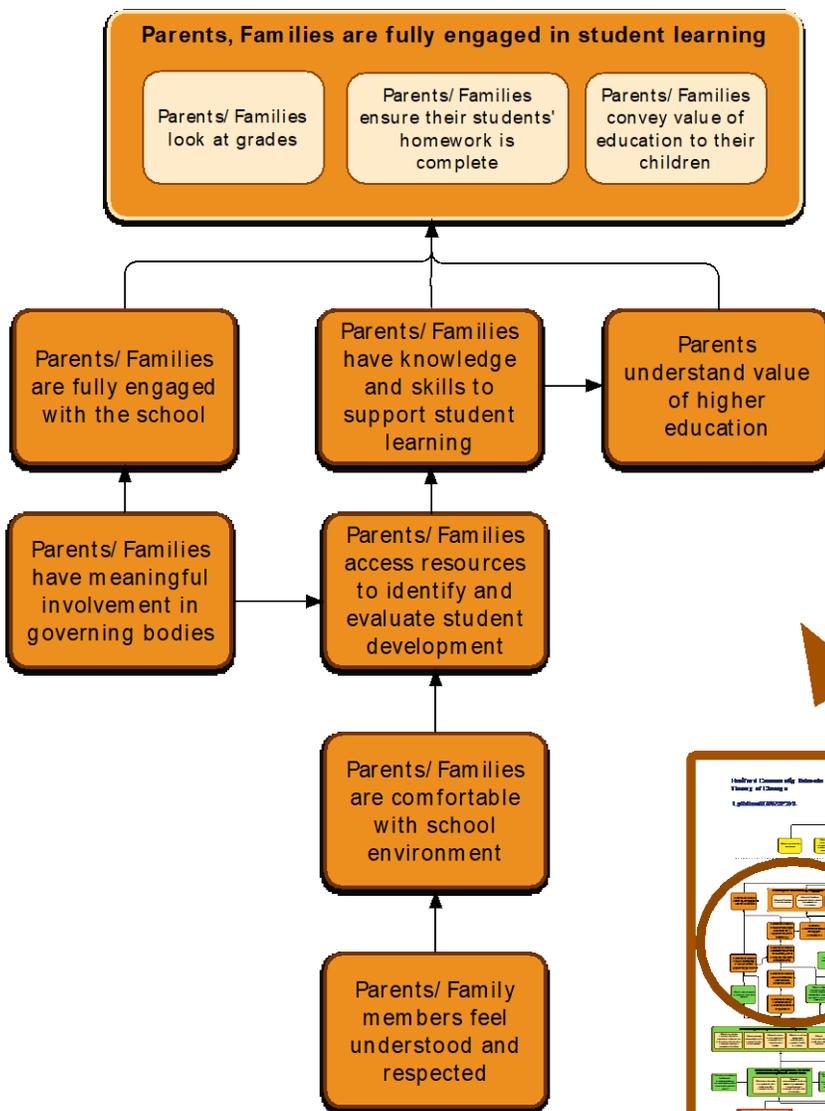


habits, understand what’s going on in class and to have an understanding of ‘post secondary’ options, including future college opportunities. Preconditions for these are that students have a ‘high connectedness to school’ and that students participate in various enrichment and other

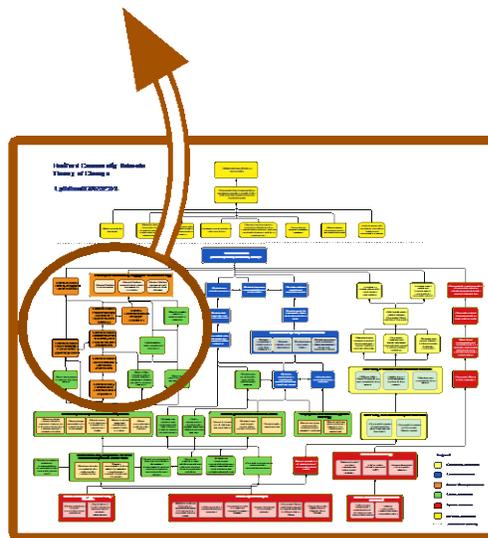
school activities that meet their needs. Other preconditions that relate to the development of academic, life and social skills are that students feel physically and emotionally safe – for example, student attendance or participation will be curtailed if they feel that they are not safe.

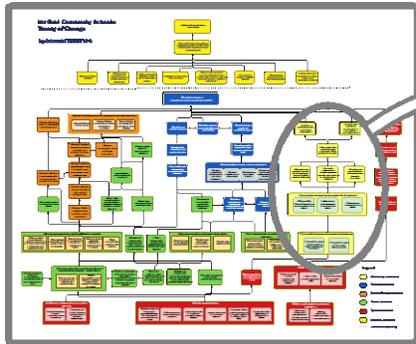
PARENT AND FAMILY OUTCOMES PATHWAY

The HCS has identified parent and family outcomes as important preconditions for the achievement of the long-term outcome of student attainment. Two key outcomes in this respect are that parents/families are fully engaged with the school and that they are fully engaged in student learning. This engagement relates to support (for example, that parents help ensure student home work is complete) and values (that parents convey the value of education to their children).



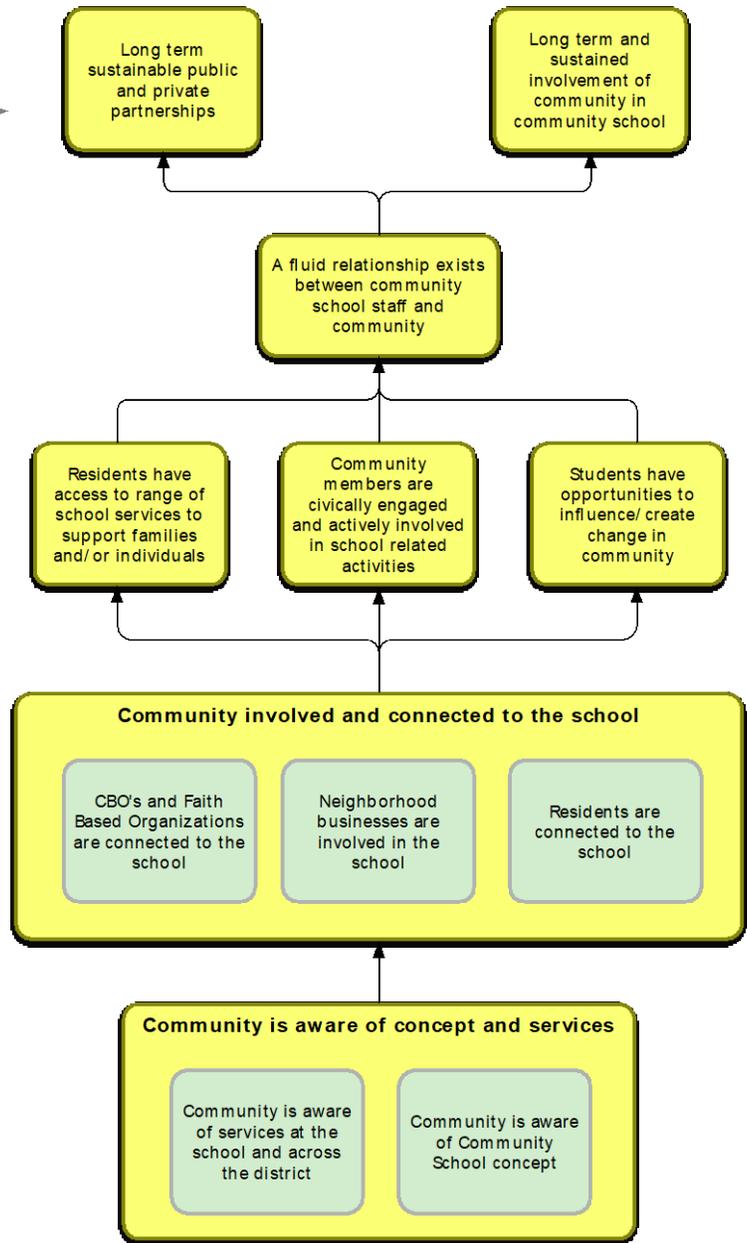
Preconditions for helping parents to support the learning of their children are that parents have access to resources to identify student development which in turn depend on parents feeling comfortable with the school environment and respected and understood by teachers and other school personnel. ‘Comfort’ and ‘respect’ can be particularly important for parents who may have had limited schooling themselves.





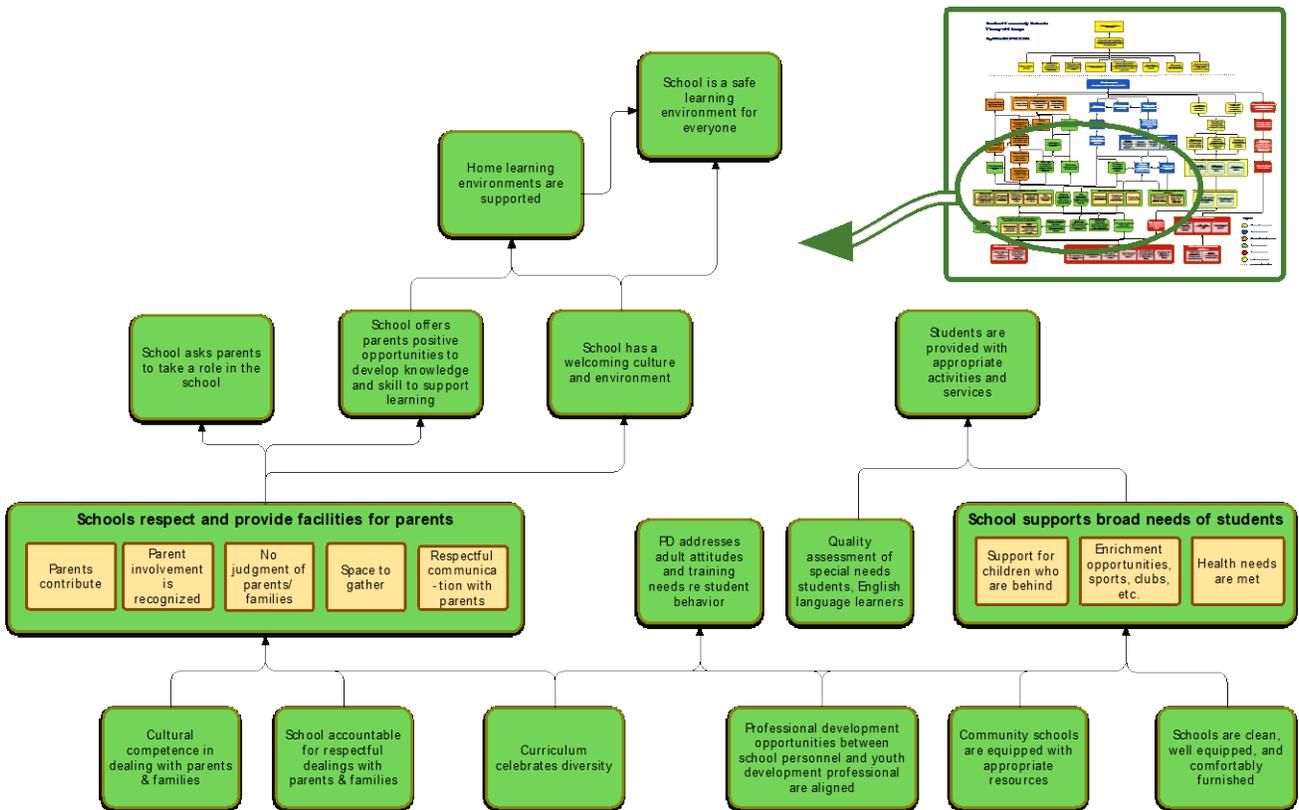
COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

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

The Theory of Change identifies a set of school outcomes necessary to realize the outcomes for students and parents described above. For example, a key precondition for ensuring that all students have opportunities that meet their needs is that the school supports children that fall behind, provides ‘enrichment opportunities’ and ensures that the health needs of students are met. Other key preconditions relate to the physical infrastructure of the school and that the school is a safe learning environment for all – including students, teachers and parents.



The Theory of Change also identifies a whole set of school outcomes necessary to support the outcomes for parents and families. These include the creation of a welcoming environment for parents, the preconditions for which include the provision of space and activities for parents/families to join in the school and also opportunities for deeper engagement – for example, providing supports and opportunities for parents to get involved in the governance and management of the schools. Other preconditions relate to the physical infrastructure of the school and that the school be a safe learning environment for all – including students, teachers and parents.

A subset of school outcomes relate to the idea of cultural competence: To ensure that the schools are welcoming to all parents (especially as HCS serves multi-cultural, multilingual and new immigrant communities) the schools must be ‘culturally competent’ in dealing with parents and families and celebrate diversity in the curriculum.

‘SYSTEMS LEVEL’ OUTCOMES PATHWAY

In order for schools to provide the levels 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, outlined at the bottom of the Theory of Change Map and relate to the effectiveness of the key partnerships upon which HCS is based – including the major investors in HCS. Also important, and a key component identified by the National Center for Community Schools in supporting community schools, is the capacity of HCS to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of the community school model.

2.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HCS MODEL 2013-2014

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has continued to focus on putting in place 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 specifically focused on preconditions for student progress and a broad set of activities designed to engage with and involve parents. Progress across these various preconditions are summarized as follows:

SCHOOL PRECONDITIONS FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES

A key precondition for positive student outcomes outlined in the 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; and
- The health needs of students are met.

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 2014. This is explored in more detail as follows.

Aligning ‘Out of School Time’ Activities, Curriculum and Staff Capacity

Afterschool programs are a key component of HCS and include 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 includes 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”.

Students in afterschool programs did not do as well as other students in 2012-2013 and a significant focus of HCS schools in 2013-2014 has been on aligning afterschool and day time activities and building a stronger academic focus into afterschool programs. School personnel interviewed noted the progress made on alignment in 2014 and many had expectations that academic performance among afterschool students would improve as a result. These expectations have been realized in 2014 with academic performance by afterschool students exceeding other students in HCS schools, a considerable turnaround from 2013 (see Section 3 on Student Outcomes).

The strategic elements designed to align afterschool and day time activities over the course of 2013-2014 school year have included:

- Greater integration and coordination of afterschool and daytime staff. For example, in West Middle afterschool staff have come in an hour earlier so they can attend daytime class, which allows them to find out what homework the students have and to get a sense of the progress and capacity of individual students.

In some schools (for example, Burns and Clark) education coordinators have been appointed who have worked to ensure that afterschool programs are aligned with the curriculum and daytime activities.

- The development of innovative ways of building an academic element into the afterschool programs. For example, in Burns the development of a ‘robotics’ team in the afterschool program engages students on elements of STEM that they are learning during the day. Many other schools have ‘Flocabulary’: a way of building literacy into fun activities.

- Promoting greater communication between daytime and afterschool staff. For example, through more effective meetings and establishing a common calendar so that staff know what is going on for students and can coordinate and avoid duplication of 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.

Effective alignment does present challenges. School personnel interviewed noted the difficulties 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. For example, some schools noted an initial low take-up of 'Flocabulary' because students were not interested in continuing what they thought was an academic activity beyond the school day. As one site director stated: *"we know the importance of the academic component but the kids are in school from 8 to 4PM and now they are asked to sit and learn more of math, science and reading. We want to make these activities fun for them and balance the academic and enrichment component"*.

An important factor facilitating alignment is strong 'buy-in' and support for the community school model by school leadership and all school staff. Where the community school model is well integrated and supported, there are fewer barriers between daytime and afterschool staff which facilitates effective alignment. This integration was very evident in Burns and ASA Bellizzi in particular.

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

The community school model as noted, encompasses more than just afterschool programs. In HCS, the schools have worked 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 classroom instruction support (for example, a person provided to support the teacher in class in meeting the needs of students facing particular challenges).
- Targeted activities to address behavior issues which include referral where necessary to mental health services.
- 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.

This year, schools have piloted a process to measure the results for students who have received these different targeted components of the community school model. These elements of the model range from those activities targeted at whole grades of students (for example, in ASA Bellizzi daytime tutoring was provided to all students in K-4 grades on the basis that interventions at this age are essential for future academic attainment) to activities targeted at very small cohorts of students with academic or behavioral problems (for example, Burns focused on chronically absent students).

These targeted activities, as outlined in Section 3, have resulted in positive changes in academic results and on absenteeism and behavior, and in our ability to capture these changes in the evaluation.

The Physical Environment of the School Supports Learning

A number of important changes have taken place since 2013 in terms of physical infrastructure, which was identified in the Theory of Change as an important precondition in supporting the community school model. In particular:

- West Middle School is being renovated and will become the first of the HCS schools to have a physical space that is specifically designed to support the community school model. Meanwhile, elementary and middle grades in West Middle have been separated and temporarily relocated to buildings they share with other schools. This, as noted, has been disruptive and has had a negative impact on middle grade student and parent perceptions of the school as a welcoming and safe environment.
- The community school approach did work to minimize disruption caused by relocation at West Middle. For example, the lead agency has been working 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, it was noted in Burns that physical space is becoming an issue and that the school was not physically designed for a community school to run so many different components.
- On the other hand, ASA Bellizzi and Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy are both housed in bright, modern buildings which facilitate the delivery of different elements of the community school program.

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, have provided more extensive onsite facilities, including dental services and mental health services targeted at students and families.

Lack of data currently makes it difficult to ascertain the overall impact of these services on students or to ascertain the precise links between health outcomes and key education preconditional outcomes such as attendance and participation in the schools. However, school personnel interviewed in the course of the evaluation (including principals) have consistently noted the significance of social and emotional issues that arise for children living in highly disadvantaged communities and the need to address these issues if children are to learn. As one assistant principal noted:

“Catholic Charities has helped me take a more clinical approach to students whose behavior is really keeping them from performing well. Catholic Charities has had the personnel and the expertise to really bring in some solid services in to the school building that had been plagued with a lot of social and emotional problems. These are real services that we have been able to utilize, that teachers can access and parents can access to really address some of the mental health needs of the kids”.

Developing health indicators and identifying a means of collecting associated data (for example, obtaining and matching student IDs that receive health services to academic outcomes) will be important for exploring these issues moving forward.

CONDITIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT OUTCOMES FOR PARENTS

Family and community engagement are a key feature of the community school model and have 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.

As in the 2013 evaluation, personnel interviewed across all schools spoke of the importance of the community schools model in continuing to support the development of innovative methods to involve parents and to meet their broader needs. For example:

- The lead agency in West Middle was able to use its community connections and facilities to mitigate the disruption and inconvenience to parents caused by the temporary relocation of West Middle. The lead agency was able to use a community center as a ‘satellite’ of the school that could support accessible PTO meetings, report card conferences and family events. This, it was noted, helped maintain the coherence of the school community during the course of relocation.
- Partnerships with various providers have also developed innovative new courses to address basic needs including for example, courses on financial literacy (Family Financial Stability Initiative in Burr and Clark) and initiatives to provide for basic needs. For example, one school principal noted:

“I would say that I have seen a couple of things this year that have been really impactful. If we look at that realm of basic needs, having a community schools partner who can help families and students with things like food, clothing, etc. and being a touch point for the school and the community is crucial”.

- While many schools provide physical space for parents to meet, the provision of such space in the absence of other supports can be ineffective (for example, in one school the meeting place had in a sense become a “hang-out” for some parents). Schools have sought a more structured approach to how parents access the facilities of the schools. In the case of Burns and JAH Milner for example, the principal and staff have noted the challenges in creating more structure and formality in terms of how parents use the facilities of the school (which is essential for organization and security) while at the same time assuring parents that they are welcome.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS/PARTNERSHIPS

Connections with the broader community is a key element of the community school model and has been important in leveraging resources for the community school. The schools have made very significant progress in developing partnerships in the community with CBOs, businesses

and faith-based organizations. These have related to important student and parent outcomes including financial literacy for parents and families (e.g. support from TD Bank), student tutoring courses for students (e.g. support from Travelers), software support (Microsoft), basic food needs of families (e.g. from faith-based organizations) and the development of a whole set of other partnerships relating to mental health and other needs.

SYSTEM LEVEL OUTCOMES

A very important area of progress in building the systems to support the community school model has been the development and integration of workplans for each school that relate activities more closely to expected outcomes outlined in the Theory of Change. These workplans in turn have provided the basis for the development of monthly outcomes reports that help capture and categorize the work of the schools.

This has facilitated more effective monitoring of progress and also greater communication between schools on the type of programs and activities that have been developed and what outcomes these activities are specifically designed to achieve. The process has been organized and facilitated by the HCS community schools coordinator.

Feedback from site directors on the development of workplans and monthly outcomes reports has been broadly positive. The plans and reports in particular are considered as providing an opportunity for schools to really document their work in a more systematic and meaningful way.

One principal in particular noted the importance of the workplan and the need for them to be based on what she described as a 'concept map'. The importance of developing more instruments to measure culture and climate, which most of the schools have described as the central and critical precondition for future success, was also cited as a systemic need.

3. RESULTS: STUDENT AND PARENT/FAMILY OUTCOMES 2013-2014

MAP scores have improved for most HCS schools since 2013 and for particular categories of students in the schools who have been targeted for interventions which comprise components of the community school model. In particular:

- Students in six out of seven HCS schools had increased 'raw' MAP scores in reading in 2014 compared to 2013 and five out of seven schools had increased 'raw' scores in math.
- There was an increase in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in MAP reading in all schools. Burr and HMTCA increased more than the average for peer schools and for schools in the district in terms of percent of students who improved one or more levels in reading. The overall percentage of students who improved in reading at West Middle and Burr exceeded peer schools and the district.
- There was an increase in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math in five out of seven schools in 2014 compared to 2013. Burr and ASA Bellizzi both increased more than the average for peer schools and for schools in the district. As in the case of reading, the overall percentage of students who improved in math in Burr and West Middle exceeded peer schools and schools in the district.
- Students in afterschool programs, an important component of the community school model, improved their 'raw' scores in reading and math in 2014 compared to 2013 and improved more than students in each school as a whole. This is a turnaround from 2013 when afterschool students improved less on average than their counterparts not in afterschool programs. English Language Learners and Special Education students also improved 'raw' scores in reading and math since 2013 and improved more than other students.
- Schools also saw improvements in MAP scores for particular cohorts of students who have received other elements of the wider community school model. For example, ASA Bellizzi, Burr and West Middle saw substantial increases in MAP reading and math scores of students receiving daytime tutoring.

Some schools (specifically, Clark and JAH Milner) saw less improvement in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in MAP reading and math scores (JAH Milner was lower in 2014 on math). However, these schools have faced disruptions and have been concentrating on basic stabilization of the schools in terms of climate and safety (a key precondition for student progress). They have made progress in those areas, which are necessary for future improvement in academic results. For example, the Hartford School Climate and Connectedness Survey 2014 shows:

- There were significant improvements in student perceptions of school climate, with grade 3-4 students in six out of seven HCS schools recording substantial improvements in perceptions of safety in 2014. This compared to a reduction in student perceptions of safety in schools in the district as a whole.
- Schools such as JAH Milner and Clark, which did relatively less well in MAP scores than others, made significant strides in perceptions of safety among grades 3-4 increasing by 19% and 35%, respectively.
- There were substantial increases in perceptions of ‘peer climate’ among all age groups – this relates to how students get along with one another. JAH Milner and Clark again showed substantial improvement – for example, grade 3-4 student perceptions of school climate increasing by 35% and 34% respectively.
- There were also improvements in student behavior and in student perceptions of skills developed through afterschool programs and the impact this has had on their work in participation in the school.

These results are outlined in more detail in the following sections.

3.1 ACADEMIC RESULTS

HARTFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOLS OVERALL ACADEMIC RESULTS 2013-2014

Students in six out of seven HCS schools had increased ‘raw’ MAP scores in reading in 2014 compared to 2013 and five out of seven schools had increased ‘raw’ scores in math. This is outlined in Table 1.

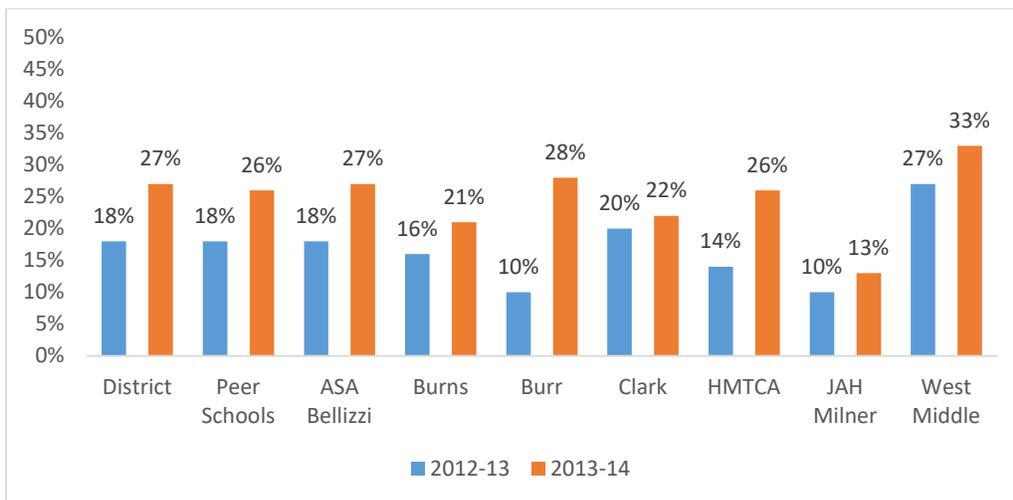
Table 1: By School comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Hartford Community Schools	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy	190.28	193.77	↑ 3.48	190.93	194.33	↑ 3.41
Burns Latino Studies Academy	187.89	189.54	↑ 1.65	192.85	193.73	↑ 0.88
Burr School	188.30	193.93	↑ 5.62	194.21	198.30	↑ 4.08
Clark School	190.95	189.18	↓ -1.78	192.54	191.42	↓ -1.13
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	216.94	217.13	↑ 0.19	225.73	224.26	↓ -1.47
Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner Elementary School	182.41	186.68	↑ 4.27	188.42	189.14	↑ 0.72
West Middle School	192.98	197.65	↑ 4.67	197.78	200.77	↑ 2.98

All HCS schools showed increases since last year in the number of students who improved one or more levels in MAP on reading. Figure 1 illustrates this data in reading, including comparisons between HCS and peer schools and schools in the district as a whole. This shows that:

- The percentage of students who improved one or more levels in MAP reading was greater in West Middle and Burr than the district and peer schools in 2014.
- Students in ASA Bellizzi improved more than the peer schools in reading but scored the same as schools in the district as a whole.
- Burr and HMTCA increased more than the average for peer schools and the district, increasing by 18% and 12% respectively compared to an increase of 8% and 9% by peer schools and the district respectively between 2013 and 2014.

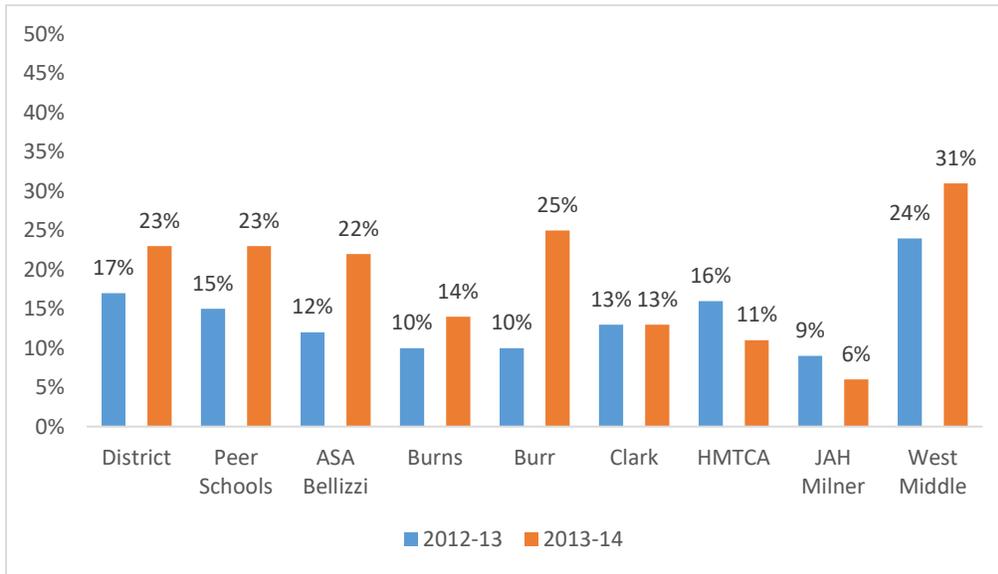
Figure 1: Percentage of students who improved one or more levels on Reading MAP from 2013 to 2014 academic year



The percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math increased in five out of seven HCS schools in 2014. Also, as outlined in Figure 2:

- As with reading, the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math was greater in West Middle and Burr than for the district and peer schools in 2014.
- Burr and ASA Bellizzi also increased more than the average for peer schools and the district increasing by 15% and 10% respectively compared to 8% and 6% increases for peer schools and the district.
- HMTCA and JAH Milner both saw a drop in the percentage of students who improved one or more levels in math. However, HMTCA is coming from a much higher mean 'raw' score base than any other school, as illustrated in Table 1 above.

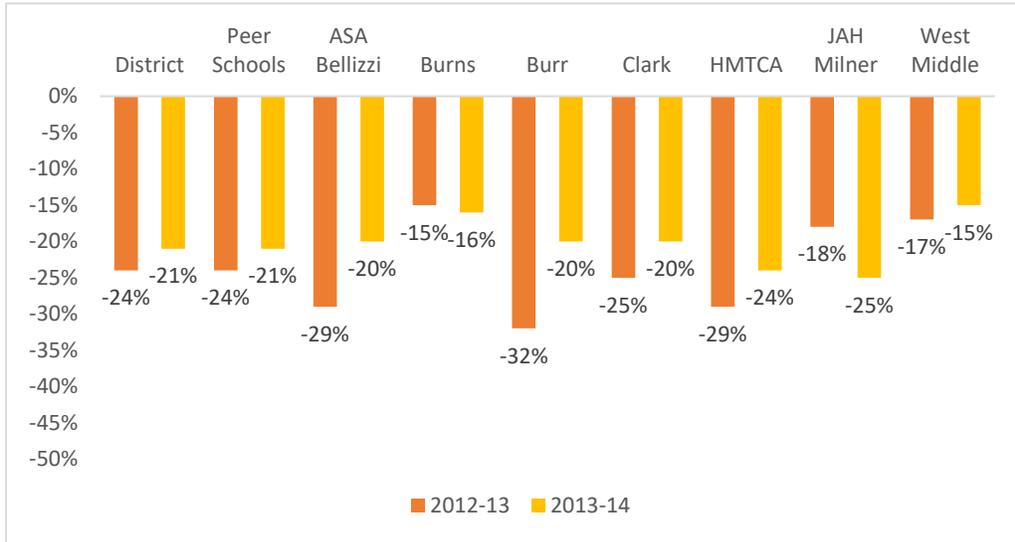
Figure 2: Percentage of students who improved one or more levels on Math MAP from 2013 to 2014 academic year



Figures on the percentage of students who declined one or more levels also indicates improvement for the HCS schools. For example, as outlined in Figure 3:

- In five out of seven HCS schools (ASA Bellizzi, Burr, Clark, HMTCA and West Middle) fewer students declined in one or more levels in reading in 2014 than they did in 2013.
- Fewer students in West Middle, ASA Bellizzi and Burns declined in reading scores than district and peer schools – although 1% more students in Burns declined one on more levels since 2013.
- The most significant check on student decline was in Burr and ASA Bellizzi where the numbers who declined one or more levels in reading went down by 12% and 9% respectively between 2013 and 2014. This compares to a fall in the numbers who declined by 3% in both peer schools and the district.
- JAH Milner had the poorest performance in student decline in reading with the numbers declining one or more levels going up from 18% to 25%. This compares, as noted above, to an increase of just 3% in JAH Milner in the numbers who improved by one or more levels.

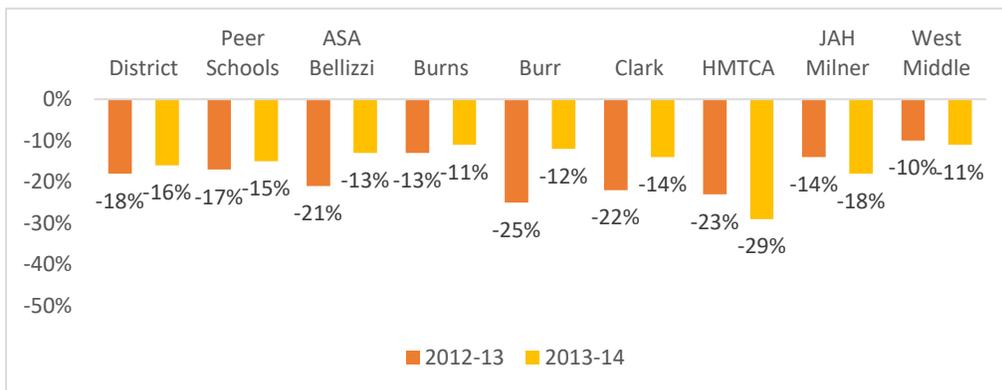
Figure 3: Percentage of students who declined one or more levels on Reading MAP from 2013 to 2014 academic year



Similar improvements are apparent in figures relating to the numbers declining in math which are illustrated in Figure 4. This shows that:

- Fewer students in five out of seven HCS schools (ASA Bellizzi, Clark, Burr, Burns and West Middle) declined in one or more levels than the district and the peer schools in math in 2014. However, even though fewer students in West Middle declined than the district, the numbers who declined went up by 1% compared to 2013.
- The biggest decreases in the numbers of students who declined in math were in Burr, Clark, and ASA Bellizzi, decreasing by 13%, 8% and 8% respectively in 2014 compared to 2013.
- More students in both HMTCA and JAH Milner declined in their scores in math in 2014 compared to 2013. However, it should be noted that in terms of ‘raw’ MAP scores HMTCA is coming from a very strong base in math compared to other HCS schools.

Figure 4: Percentage of students who declined one or more levels on Math MAP from 2013 to 2014 academic year



Clark and JAH Milner, as noted, have done less well than the other HCS schools in terms of MAP scores and both also had the lowest base scores in reading and math starting out in 2013. However, Clark has faced particular challenges and has been identified as a turnaround school given the level of disadvantage it has faced. Interviews with school personnel indicated that the school was making progress in putting in place some of the foundational preconditions for student progress, particularly centered on creating a more positive school climate and culture. Progress on school climate has been confirmed in the results of the School Climate and Connectedness Survey which show significant improvement for Clark relative to other schools.

A similar context was observed in relation to JAH Milner where there has been a significant change in school management side-by-side with a focus on changing a very problematic school culture and climate. Progress on school climate is again very evident from school climate surveys (illustrated in section 3.3 below).

ACADEMIC RESULTS FOR AFTERSCHOOL STUDENTS

Students in afterschool programs improved more in MAP scores in reading and in math than non-afterschool participants in 2014. This is a turnaround from 2013 when afterschool students improved less on average than their counterparts not in afterschool programs. In particular:

- Afterschool students increased their mean score in reading by 5.17 compared to 2.04 for non-afterschool students.
- Afterschool students also increased their mean change score in math by 4.68 compared to a 0.66 improvement for students who did not participate in an afterschool program.

Table 2: Academic Results of HCS afterschool participant’s in 2013 and 2014 academic years

HCS Afterschool Students	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Afterschool Students	188.90	194.07	↑ 5.17	192.85	197.53	↑ 4.68
Non-Afterschool Students	196.79	198.83	↑ 2.04	202.13	202.79	↑ 0.66

The biggest improvement in change scores for afterschool participants for both reading and math occurred in ASA Bellizzi, Burns, Burr and West Middle. JAH at Milner had a higher increase in reading than in math. These and other results for each school are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Academic results of afterschool participants in each school in 2013 and 2014 academic years

By School Afterschool Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	Afterschool Students	194.31	200.41	↑ 6.10	194.06	201.59	↑ 7.53
	Non-Afterschool Students	187.76	190.15	↑ 2.40	189.03	190.36	↑ 1.34
Burns Latino Studies Academy	Afterschool Students	186.87	191.75	↑ 4.88	193.05	197.34	↑ 4.29
	Non-Afterschool Students	188.27	188.56	↑ 0.29	192.77	192.11	↓ -0.66
Burr School	Afterschool Students	187.26	191.83	↑ 4.57	191.44	196.47	↑ 5.03
	Non-Afterschool Students	188.47	194.40	↑ 5.93	194.68	198.72	↑ 4.04
Clark School	Afterschool Students	182.95	184.65	↑ 1.70	183.58	186.30	↑ 2.72
	Non-Afterschool Students	194.20	191.78	↓ -2.42	196.20	194.47	↓ -1.73
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	Afterschool Students	212.62	214.03	↑ 1.41	218.68	219.95	↑ 1.28
	Non-Afterschool Students	217.24	217.50	↑ 0.26	226.23	224.74	↓ -1.49
Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner Elementary School	Afterschool Students	181.31	187.23	↑ 5.93	188.63	190.58	↑ 1.95
	Non-Afterschool Students	183.24	186.19	↑ 2.95	188.27	187.90	↓ -0.36
West Middle School	Afterschool Students	188.43	194.90	↑ 6.47	193.49	198.75	↑ 5.27
	Non-Afterschool Students	194.05	198.43	↑ 4.38	198.80	201.33	↑ 2.53

Improvements in afterschool performance would appear to reflect the success of efforts by all schools since 2013 to align afterschool programs to daytime academic provision and to build a greater academic focus into afterschool programs. Measures and activities have included more effective coordination between afterschool and daytime activities and activities in afterschool such as homework help, tutoring and 'fun' activities incorporating an academic element.

ACADEMIC RESULTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

Continuing a stronger performance in 2013, ELL students also increased more in MAP scores in reading and math in 2014. A significant factor for this progress, according to a number of school personnel interviewed, was the capacity of the community schools to identify specific languages of new students and seek teachers proficient in that language.

As illustrated in Table 4:

- Mean change scores in reading for ELL students improved by 4.36 compared to 2.56 for non-ELL students.
- Equally, mean change scores in math was 2.04 compared to 1.57 for non-ELL students from 2013 to 2014.
- ELL students had lower total mean scores across both periods but the relatively stronger improvement in MAP scores has led to a narrowing of the gap with other students.

Table 4: Academic results of HCS ELL students in 2013 and 2014 academic years

HCS ELL Students	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
ELL Students	180.26	184.62	↑ 4.36	187.68	189.72	↑ 2.04
Non-ELL Students	199.81	202.37	↑ 2.56	204.18	205.75	↑ 1.57

There is some variance across schools for ELL students compared to non-ELL students on MAP scores. For example, the improvement in reading of ELL students in West Middle and JAH at Milner compared to non-ELL students was much higher than in other schools – however, ELL students at JAH at Milner started at a lower reading base than any other schools in Spring 2013 (the end of 2013 academic year).

Variance is also evident in math score results. For example, in West Middle ELL students improved by 5.82 compared to 1.76 for non-ELL students whereas scores for ELL students in math declined in three schools (Burns, Burr and HMTCA).

Table 5: Academic results of ELL students for each school in 2013 to 2014 academic years

By School ELL Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	ELL Students	180.08	184.26	↑ 4.18	181.80	186.39	↑ 4.59
	Non-ELL Students	194.22	198.50	↑ 4.29	194.42	198.15	↑ 3.72
Burns Latino Studies Academy	ELL Students	178.35	179.86	↑ 1.51	186.44	185.93	↓ -0.51
	Non-ELL Students	195.97	198.63	↑ 2.65	198.24	201.15	↑ 2.91
Burr School	ELL Students	182.27	185.37	↑ 3.09	193.10	192.47	↓ -0.63
	Non-ELL Students	190.45	197.90	↑ 7.45	194.62	200.95	↑ 6.33
Clark School	ELL Students	177.66	180.48	↑ 2.82	180.94	185.19	↑ 4.25
	Non-ELL Students	193.44	191.00	↓ -2.45	194.80	192.81	↓ -1.99
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	ELL Students	197.69	201.90	↑ 4.21	207.04	205.06	↓ -1.97
	Non-ELL Students	217.95	217.92	↓ -0.03	226.81	225.30	↓ -1.51
Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner Elementary School	ELL Students	169.74	178.01	↑ 8.28	175.98	180.56	↑ 4.57
	Non-ELL Students	186.63	189.61	↑ 2.98	192.79	191.96	↓ -0.82
West Middle School	ELL Students	182.83	191.22	↑ 8.40	191.08	196.89	↑ 5.82
	Non-ELL Students	197.65	200.72	↑ 3.07	200.88	202.63	↑ 1.76

ACADEMIC RESULTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (SE) STUDENTS

Students who are eligible for special education services in the HCS improved more in both reading and in math than non-special needs students over the period 2013 and 2014. This is illustrated in Table 6 which shows that:

- SE students had a mean change score of 4.81 in reading compared to 2.07 for non-SE students.
- SE students improved in math by 1.86 compared to 1.09 for non-SE students.

SE students had a lower total mean score for reading and math in both 2013 and 2014. However, the relatively stronger improvement in reading has led to some narrowing of the gap with other students.

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Table 6: Academic results of HCS Special Education students in 2013 to 2014 academic years

HCS Sp.Ed Students	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Sp.Ed Students	181.00	185.81	↑ 4.81	187.98	189.84	↑ 1.86
Non-Sp.Ed Students	197.28	199.35	↑ 2.07	202.09	203.18	↑ 1.09

When analyzed across schools, Special Education Students in Burr, ASA Bellizzi and Burns in particular, had improved scores in reading and in math compared to other schools, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 7: Academic results of Special Education for each school Comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

By School Sp. Ed Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	Sp.Ed Students	180.26	187.09	↑ 6.83	180.21	189.33	↑ 9.12
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	191.69	194.57	↑ 2.88	192.44	194.93	↑ 2.48
Burns Latino Studies Academy	Sp.Ed Students	173.60	178.63	↑ 5.04	181.27	186.81	↑ 5.54
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	189.90	191.13	↑ 1.23	194.45	194.76	↑ 0.31
Burr School	Sp.Ed Students	172.16	183.81	↑ 11.65	183.60	186.96	↑ 3.36
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	191.39	195.75	↑ 4.37	196.19	200.33	↑ 4.14
Clark School	Sp.Ed Students	175.35	176.65	↑ 1.30	181.03	179.17	↓ -1.86
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	193.78	191.20	↓ -2.58	194.71	193.41	↓ -1.30
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	Sp.Ed Students	201.00	203.59	↑ 2.59	206.87	206.42	↓ -0.45
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	218.98	218.54	↓ -0.44	228.24	226.17	↓ -2.07
Jumoke Academy Honors at Milner Elementary School	Sp.Ed Students	174.63	177.56	↑ 2.94	185.31	184.47	↓ -0.84
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	183.68	188.24	↑ 4.56	189.06	189.98	↑ 0.92
West Middle School	Sp.Ed Students	183.55	187.43	↑ 3.88	189.38	190.41	↑ 1.02
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	194.81	199.45	↑ 4.64	199.42	202.62	↑ 3.20

ACADEMIC RESULTS FOR STUDENTS TARGETED FOR SPECIFIC SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS ('TARGET COHORTS')

The cohorts of students targeted by the schools and the academic results achieved are summarized for each HCS schools as follows. Other progress, for example the impact of specific services on attendance, absenteeism and behavior are elaborated in subsequent sections.

ASA Bellizzi: Academic Results for Targeted Students

All students accessing specific interventions relating to academic improvement in ASA Bellizzi improved their MAP scores in reading and math over the period 2013 and 2014. As outlined in Table 8, students in both the daily and weekly tutoring program and the extended homework club had lower MAP scores starting out but improved their scores in reading and math in 2014. Students accessing the Flocabulary program also improved in both reading and math. However, unlike the other programs, these students had started out with higher scores.⁵

Table 8: ASA Bellizzi target cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohorts at ASA Bellizzi		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Daily Tutoring Program	Participants (N=147)	183.22	189.25	↑ 6.03	182.07	187.18	↑ 5.11
Weekly Tutoring Program	Participants (N=44)	188.97	198.05	↑ 9.08	185.97	195.55	↑ 9.58
Extended Homework Club	Participants (N=21)	186.76	195.19	↑ 8.43	184.00	190.48	↑ 6.48
Flocabulary	Participants (N=16)	192.36	199.25	↑ 6.89	190.29	199.88	↑ 9.59

Burns Latino Studies Academy: Academic Results for Targeted Students

Students identified by Burns as struggling with academic and behavioral issues and targeted for particular interventions improved their MAP scores in both reading and math. These include an academic/behavior cohort and a cohort of students participating in READ 180, both of which improved their MAP scores. ELL students targeted showed an improvement in reading but not

⁵ The daily tutoring program covered the entire K-4th grade and the weekly tutoring program covered 44 students. Both were funded by Travelers Insurance. Afterschool provision included the extended homework club (21 students) and Flocabulary (16 students), an afterschool program connecting recreational activities with literacy development.

in math. The number of students identified by Burns for targeting tracking is much smaller than the number of cohorts tracked by other schools.⁶

Table 9: Burns target cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohorts at Burns LSA		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Academic/Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=4)	202.67	218.25	↑15.58	207.33	210.75	↑3.42
ELL Target Cohort	Participants (N=5)	194.00	196.00	↑2.00	203.00	195.40	↓7.60
READ 180 Target Cohort	Participants (N=11)	170.30	176.91	↑6.61	183.20	190.09	↑6.89

Burr School: Academic Results for Targeted Students

Students participating in the Travelers Tutoring program and United Way reading program showed improvement in both reading and math MAP from 2013 to 2014, as shown in Table 10.

- Participants in both Travelers Tutoring program and United Way Reading program improved in reading by 9.86 and 8.38, respectively from 2013 to 2014.
- Participants in both Travelers Tutoring program and United Way Reading program improved in math by 8.48 and 8.47, respectively from 2013 to 2014.

Table 10: Burr target cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohorts at Burr School		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Travelers Tutoring Program	Participants (N=30)	183.54	193.40	↑9.86	186.00	194.48	↑8.48
United Way Reading Program	Participants (N=11)	162.80	171.18	↑8.38	172.80	181.27	↑8.47

⁶ The cohort of students struggling academically and with behavior issues is small (four in all) and had one youth academic advisor that worked with them two hours a week. A number of English Language Learners in the afterschool program were selected by the ELL coach to provide additional academic support two times a week from February 7 to May 30th. Students in grades 4-8 that are categorized as Tier 2 literacy are receiving READ 180 in the afterschool program. This particular cohort received READ 180 from January 7th to May 23rd.

HMTCA: Academic Results for Targeted Students

Students in the homework club improved in both reading and math by 1.36 and 1.81, respectively from 2013 to 2014, as illustrated in Table 11 below.

Table 11: HMTCA target cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohort at HMTCA		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Homework Club Cohort	Participants (N=56)	212.14	213.50	↑ 1.36	219.38	221.19	↑ 1.81

JAH at Milner: Academic Results for Targeted Students

Selected students participating in Flocabulary improved in both reading and math by 7.96 and 6.44, respectively from 2013 to 2014, as illustrated in Table 12.

JAH at Milner had tracked the academic progress of those students who had been identified as falling behind academically and who were targeted for participation in Flocabulary, an afterschool program connecting recreational activities with literacy development. The students consisted of 20-25 first to fifth graders that participated in Flocabulary twice a week from late April to June 17th (14 of whom took the MAP).

Table 12: JAH at Milner target cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohort at JAH at Milner		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
Flocabulary Cohort	Participants (N=14)	172.83	180.79	↑ 7.96	176.64	183.08	↑ 6.44

West Middle: Academic Results for Targeted Students

West Middle provided a number of specific interventions relating to academic improvement. These included ConnectiKids program⁷, Tutoring program⁸, Reading Buddies and Math Buddies⁹.

⁷ Every student in the afterschool program participates in ConnectiKids, where they receive an hour of additional academic support once a week. Each student has a tutor that assists with homework and does additional supplemental work in literacy and math. Students participated in ConnectiKids from October to end of May.

⁸ In the Tutoring program, tutoring is provided by certified teachers in afterschool for 30 K-3rd grade students and for 15 5th-8th grade students for one hour twice a week from February to June 4th.

⁹ Reading and math buddies are assigned to 3rd and 4th grade students during the school day. All 3rd grade students are assigned a reading buddy while 4th grade students are assigned with a math buddy, and they received this intervention for one hour twice a month.

Students participating in all four interventions had an improvement in both reading and in math from 2013 to 2014. As illustrated in Table 13 below:

- Students participating in the ConnectiKids program improved in both reading and math by 7.22 and 5.82, respectively from 2013 to 2014. The participants in the ConnectiKids also narrowed the gap in reading and math between non-participants.
- Participants in the Tutoring program improved in both reading and math by 9.50 and 10.75, respectively from 2013 to 2014. Students in the Tutoring program outperformed non-participants in reading and math in 2014.
- The Reading buddies participants improved in reading by 10.48 points from 2013 to 2014, while the Math buddies participants improved in math by 9.21 points from 2013 to 2014 and also outperformed non-participants in 2014.

Table 13: West Middle target cohorts comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

Target Cohorts at West Middle		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Change Score
ConnectiKids Program	Participants (N=83)	189.82	197.04	↑ 7.22	194.41	200.23	↑ 5.82
Tutoring Program	Participants (N=4)	194.25	203.75	↑ 9.50	192.00	202.75	↑ 10.75
Reading Buddies Cohort	Participants (N=12)	181.10	191.58	↑ 10.48			
Math Buddies Cohort	Participants (N=13)				195.17	204.38	↑ 9.21

3.2 ATTENDANCE/CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

A key precondition in the HCS Theory of Change for students to succeed academically is “Students maintain good attendance.” Regular attendance is essential to student learning and positive outcomes such as academic achievement and graduation. A school with high attendance rates however, 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 student(s) can miss a month or more of school over the course of the school year.¹⁰In 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.¹¹

¹⁰ 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 et al, 2008).

¹¹ The Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools proclaimed September as “Attendance Awareness Month” to “commit to focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism.”

At the time of writing, comparative data on attendance and absenteeism for HCS schools and district and peer schools was not available. However, data was available from Achieve Hartford on chronic absenteeism in Burns¹² and attendance data was available from some schools on target cohorts who have been tracked to observe the impact of particular programs to address absenteeism.

The specific figure for Burns shows that the chronic absentee rate in the school over the past three years has dropped from 50 percent in 2011-2012, to 43 percent in 2012-2013 and 34 percent in 2013-2014.

These results would appear to reflect the work of Burns in developing effective practice in combating chronic absenteeism. This work has included the establishment of an attendance team, hiring a full-time attendance case worker to coordinate efforts of the attendance team, putting in place measures to track student attendance and communicating with staff and parents. The attendance team also undertakes outreach to the families of children who are chronically absent to help those families get their students to school every day. For example, Burns guarantees that public transportation is available for students who have moved into shelters or had other changes in their housing. Housing issues have been identified as a significant problem for students and families in Burns.

As noted in Table 14, students specifically targeted to improve their attendance at Burr and West Middle saw a decrease of 1 and 3 days absences, while at JAH at Milner, number of days absent by targeted students had increased.

¹² See Education Matters! Extra Achieve Hartford! Sept. 18, 2014.

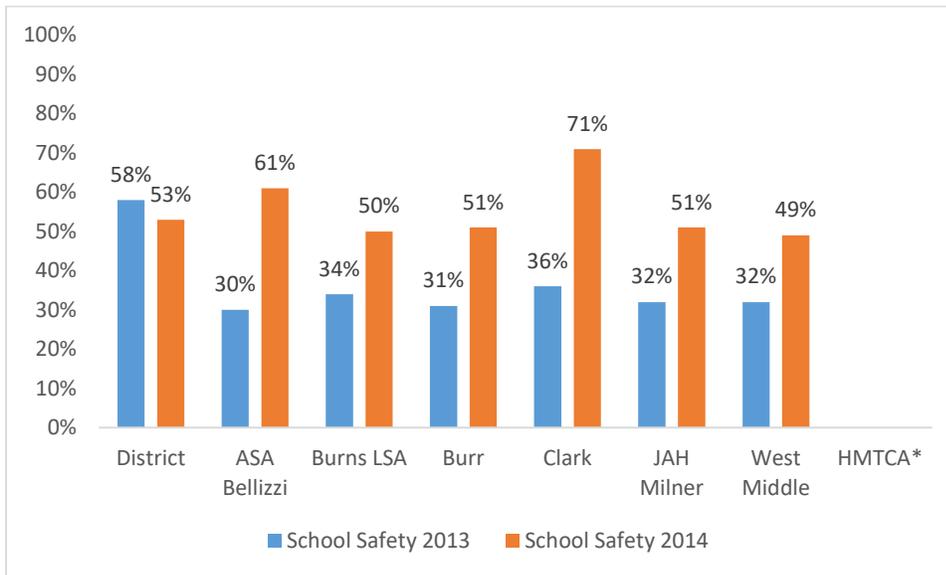
Table 14: Absenteeism cohort comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

HCS Absenteeism Cohorts		Days Absent		
		2013	2014	Change Score
Burr Truancy Prevention Cohort	Participants (N=18)	16	15	↓ -1
	Non-Participants (N=726)	14	11	↓ -3
JAH Milner Truancy Prevention Cohort	Participants (N=8)	28	30	↑ 2
	Non-Participants (N=362)	17	16	↓ -1
West Middle Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=9)	14	11	↓ -3
	Non-Participants (N=603)	11	11	↔ 0

3.3 STUDENTS PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Figures from Hartford Public Schools Climate and Connectedness Surveys show significant increases in perceptions of school safety among grades 3-4 in six of the seven Hartford Community Schools (no figures were available for HMTCA). This compares to a reduction in student perception of safety in the schools in the district as a whole.

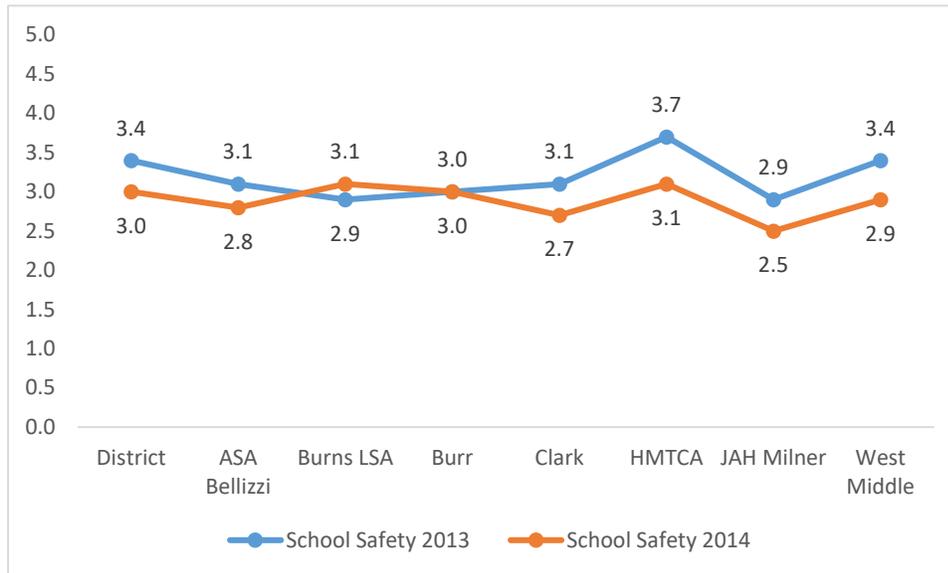
Figure 5: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on school safety 2013 to 2014.



However, as shown in Figure 6 below, students surveyed in grades 5-12 (which used mean scores rather than percentages) responded less favorably on school safety questions than students in lower grades.¹³

West Middle had a significant drop in perceptions of school safety among grades 5-12, which likely relates to the temporary relocation of the school in the building which it now shares with another school. Students in West Middle interviewed in focus groups during the evaluation noted the significance of this move on their sense of comfort and safety in the school.

Figure 6: Mean scores of grade 5-12 students who responded to questions on school safety 2013 to 2014 (responses scored on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the most positive response).



Hartford Community Schools also saw improvements in perceptions of peer climate¹⁴ among all grades. For example, with regards to grades 3 and 4, Figure 7 shows that:

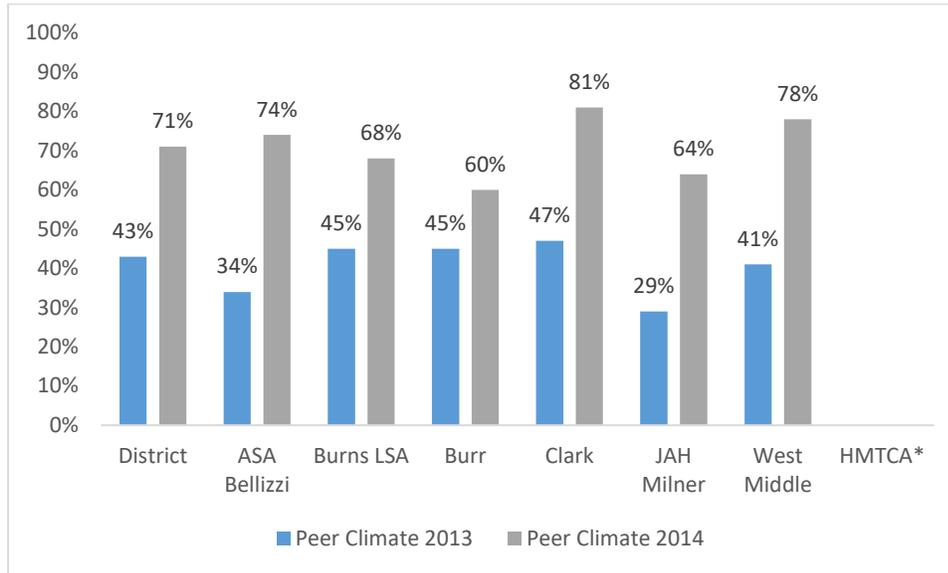
- All seven schools improved their results on peer climate in 2014 when compared to peer climate results in 2013.
- Clark, West Middle and ASA Bellizzi had the highest percent of favorable responses to peer climate of 81%, 78% and 74%, respectively, and their results are better than the district average of 71% in 2014.

¹³ Questions pertaining to School Safety for grades 5-12 included ‘I am safe at school’, ‘This school is being ruined by bullies’, ‘This school is badly affected by crime and violence in the community’, ‘Gang members make this school dangerous’, and ‘Crime and violence are major concerns at school’.

¹⁴ Questions pertaining to Peer Climate for students in grades 3-4 and 5-12 included ‘Students in this school help each other, even if they are not friends’, ‘students here treat me with respect’, and ‘when students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it’.

- ASA Bellizzi, West Middle, JAH Milner and Clark had the biggest increases in positive perceptions by students of peer climate, increasing by 40%, 37%, 35% and 34% respectively since 2013.

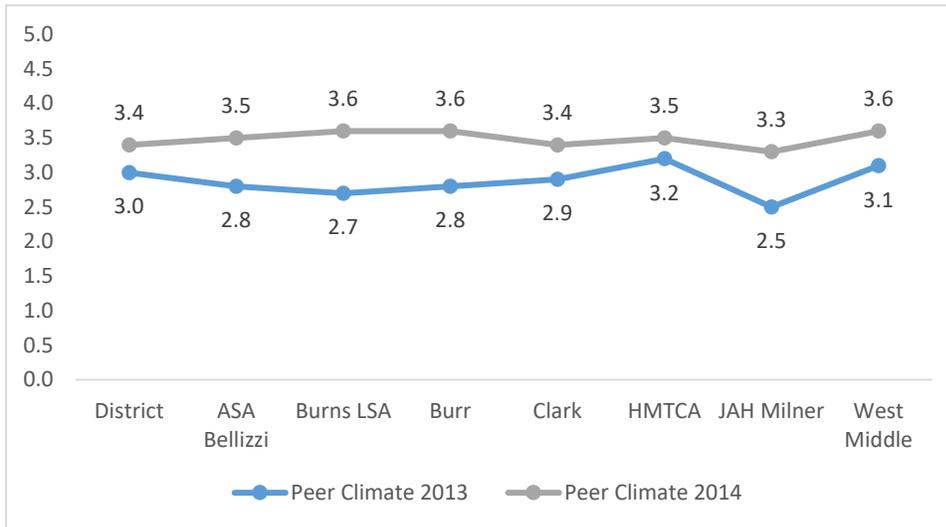
Figure 7: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on peer climate 2013 to 2014.



Students in grades 5-12 also responded favorably on questions relating to peer climate in 2013-2014. As shown in Figure 8 below:

- All seven schools had positive results on peer climate in 2013-2014 when compared to 2012-2013 results.
- Five schools had better results than the district in 2013-2014.
- Burns, Burr, JAH Milner and ASA Bellizzi had the highest improvements on results when comparing last year (2012-2013) to this year (2013-2014).

Figure 8: Mean scores of grades 5-12 students who responded to questions on peer climate 2013 to 2014 (responses scored on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the most positive response).



Focus groups undertaken by ActKnowledge with students in five out of the seven community schools confirm some of the positive results around school safety and school climate. Interestingly, most students noted that they felt safer in their school than they did in their own neighborhood. They spoke of crime and violence in their community including for example, hearing gunshots or witnessing robberies.

Afterschool students also reported feeling safer in the afterschool program. For example, some students said that they witnessed bullying or were bullied at school, but did not witness bullying in afterschool programs and felt that in these programs they were with their friends and with staff that they trust.

3.4 STUDENT BEHAVIOR

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

Burns and JAH Milner identified students with behavior problems as an issue for them and the school and have developed a range of measures to support behavioral change among these targeted cohorts of students. West Middle on the other hand, has focused on improving student behavior among all afterschool students (termed ‘progress form’ cohorts). As a result:

- The number of suspension days for students targeted for behavior improvement decreased by 11 and 9 at JAH Milner and West Middle, respectively, from 2013 to 2014 (see Table 15). The same targeted students at West Middle saw a decrease in referrals

by -21 from 2013 to 2014 (see Table 16). Number of days suspension for targeted students in Burns, on the other hand, increased in 2014.

- Also non-targeted students at Burns and JAH Milner decreased their suspensions by 58 and 11, respectively, from 2013 to 2014 academic year. The same-targeted students at Burns also decreased their referrals by -653 from 2013 to 2014.

Burns and JAH Milner’s main priority for the 2014 academic year was to change the school culture and develop a school structure.

Table 15: Behavior cohort suspensions comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

HCS Behavior Cohorts		Suspensions		
		2013	2014	Change Score
Burns Academic/Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=4)	3	13	↑ 10
	Non-Participants (N=569)	643	585	↓ -58
JAH Milner Girls Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=9)	17	6	↓ -11
	Non-Participants (N=361)	367	356	↓ -11
West Middle Progress Forms Cohort	Participants (N=84)	11	2	↓ -9
	Non-Participants (N=528)	101	199	↑ 98

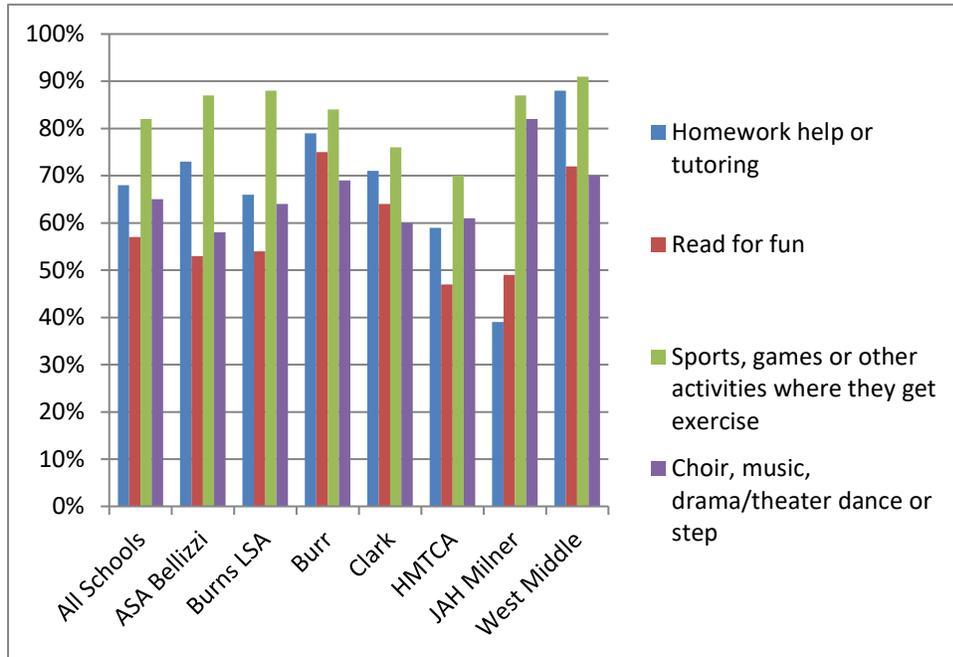
Table 16: Behavior cohort referrals comparison 2013 to 2014 academic year

HCS Behavior Cohorts		Referrals		
		2013	2014	Change Score
Burns Academic/Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=4)	6	11	↑ 5
	Non-Participants (N=569)	1504	851	↓ -653
JAH Milner Girls Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=9)	0	0	↔ 0
	Non-Participants (N=361)	5	8	↑ 3
West Middle Progress Forms Cohort	Participants (N=84)	57	36	↓ -21
	Non-Participants (N=528)	454	585	↑ 131

3.5 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

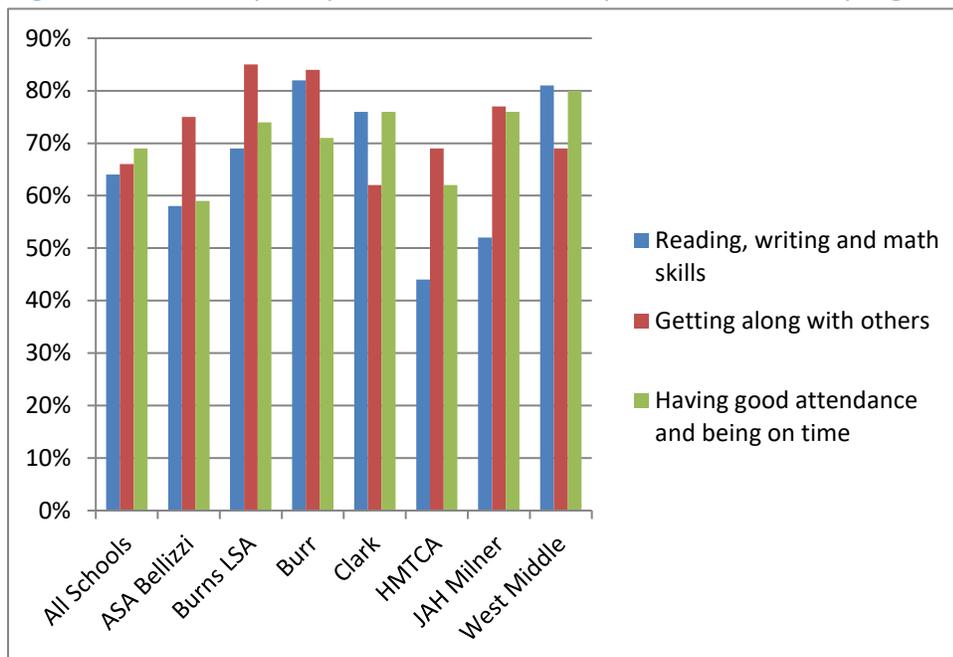
One of the preconditions set out in the Theory of Change as necessary for students to improve work habits, attendance and understanding of their school work (which are necessary conditions for achieving good academic grades) is that they participate in enrichment opportunities that meet their needs. All schools continue to integrate an academic element into afterschool programs while still providing enrichment activities such as sports and drama/dance. As illustrated in Figure 9 below, on average across all schools, the participation of afterschool students is over 50% in all four activities, with ‘sports’ being the highest at 82%, ‘homework help or tutoring’ at 68%, ‘drama/dance’ at 65%, and ‘reading for fun’ at 57%.

Figure 9: Participation of students in selected afterschool activities



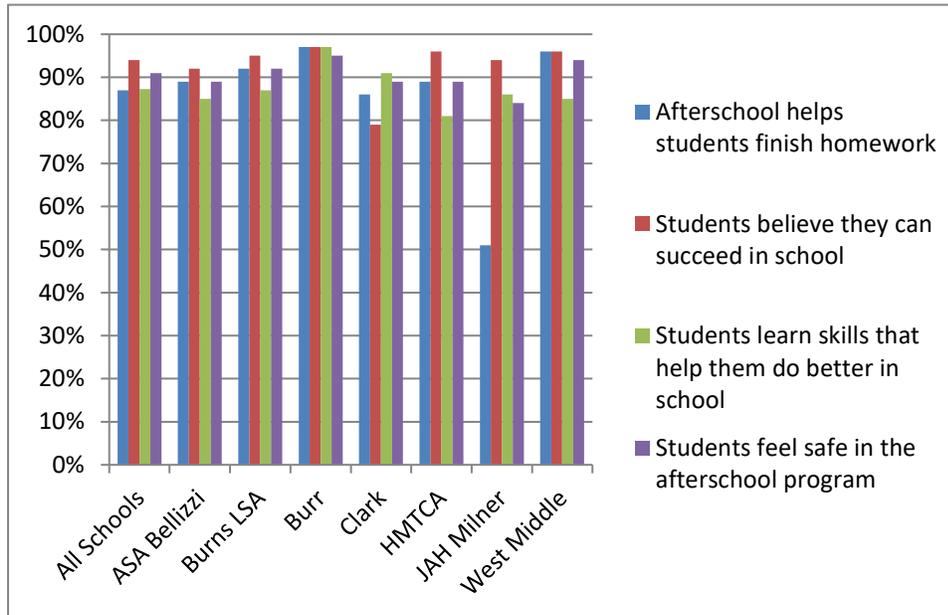
Students are also developing skills in the afterschool programs. As illustrated in Figure 10 below, on average across all schools, above 60% of students report learning skills such as ‘having good attendance and being on time’ as the highest skills that they are learning at 69%, ‘getting along with others’ at 66%, and ‘reading, writing and math skills’ at 64%.

Figure 10: Student perceptions of skills developed in afterschool programs



Students’ perception on the impact of the afterschool program was also positive. As illustrated in Figure 11 below, on average across all schools, above 85% of students believe that the afterschool program is having an impact on ‘finishing their homework (87%)’, ‘learning skills that help them do better in school (87%)’, ‘believing they can succeed in school (94%)’, and ‘feeling safe in the afterschool program (91%)’.

Figure 11: Student perceptions of impact of afterschool programs



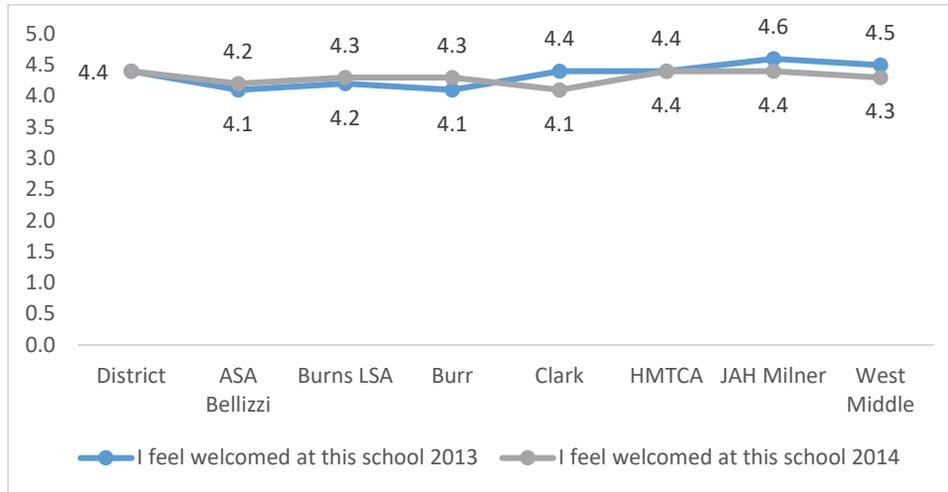
3.6 PARENT/FAMILY OUTCOMES

Figure 12 shows that there has been some improvement in parents perceptions of feeling welcome in the schools, which is one of the key preconditions for parent involvement identified in the Theory of Change. In three out of seven schools (ASA Bellizzi, Burns and Burr) there has been positive changes in perceptions of parents. This improvement is in line with feedback from personnel in each of these schools. For example, in Burns, strides made in first stabilizing and then improving school climate and more positive relationships developed with parents was highlighted by a range of staff interviewed.

Declines in parent perceptions in other schools (Clark, JAH Milner and West Middle) may relate to very specific issues arising in these schools. For example, West Middle, as noted, has been temporarily relocated and is sharing accommodation in areas less accessible to many parents. Also, as West Middle has more limited control over its physical space (for example it does not control the entrance space) it has somewhat less control over how parents and students are greeted upon entry into the school. In the case of JAH Milner, the lead agency has not had responsibility for parent and family engagement and would like to see more effective and

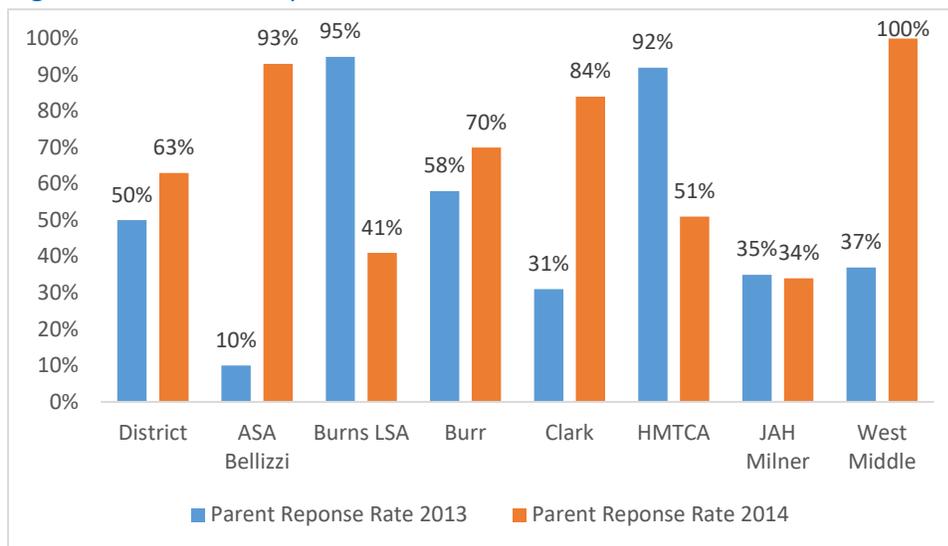
coordinated actions (including for example, having a parent coordinator responsible for coordinating parent engagement across all aspects of the school).

Figure 12: Parents perception on feeling welcomed in 2014 compared to 2013



One important outcome around engaging with parents has been the success of efforts to improve the response rate by parents to the HPS School Climate and Connectedness Survey, as illustrated in Figure 13. However, it is difficult to derive strong conclusions from these figures given methodological changes in the HPS survey since 2013 in calculating response rates (for example, addressing double counting which had led to response rates over 100%).¹⁵

Figure 13: Parents response rate on school climate and connectedness survey



¹⁵ See Achieve Hartford! 2013 Report. School Climate and Student Connectedness in the Hartford Public Schools, March 27, 2013.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

HCS has made important progress in 2014 on key student outcomes and in building on and adapting its programs and services to deliver on key preconditions identified for further progress in the future. In particular:

- There have been improvements in MAP scores in reading and math in most schools and some schools have increased more than the average for schools in the district and peer schools in reading (Burr and HMTCA) and in math (Burr and ASA Bellizzi).
- Students who participated in afterschool programs improved more than other students in MAP scores in reading and math. This is a turnaround from 2012-2013 when afterschool students did less well. The success would appear to reflect the greater focus of schools on building an academic component in to afterschool programs and in aligning such programs with daytime school activities.
- The development of services targeted at specific cohorts of students (including those facing particular levels of academic disadvantage) has succeeded in improving academic performance and other preconditions for student participation, including behavior and attendance. The need to identify and track students who are participating in more than just afterschool programs had been recommended in the 2012-2013 evaluation as a means of illustrating the impact of the broader components of the community school model and of providing more nuanced evaluation findings.
- There has also been significant improvement in student perceptions of the school climate, which includes increased perceptions of safety and 'peer climate', the latter relating to how students get along with one another. Improving school climate is of particular significance for some HCS schools given the level of disadvantage and problematic school climates they have faced and the need to get to grips with these before significant progress on student academic outcomes can be progressed.
- Feedback from site visits has indicated important progress in integrating the community school model into the schools and in creating an identity for the community schools that encompasses the whole school in which they are operating. This has been evidenced in schools such as Burns, ASA Bellizzi, West Middle and JAH Milner where there would appear to be a stronger identity of being a community school and very close working relationships established between school and lead agency staff. Greater integration has facilitated more tailored approaches and greater integration of afterschool and daytime provision, which as

noted, has resulted in improved academic performance among afterschool students and students at risk.

- There has also been important progress in terms of integration across schools. This has included the work of the HCS coordinator in working with the schools to develop workplans that are aligned with the Theory of Change and to develop a monthly reporting framework that links activities to different preconditional outcomes relating to school, student, family/parents and community. This has provided an opportunity for schools to illustrate their activities and the rationale for these activities in a more structured and coherent way.

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

- While engagement with parents can be a challenge for any school, parents and families from many of the HCS schools are living in very disadvantaged communities and face particular issues that have an impact on their capacity (and ultimately on the capacity of their children) to engage effectively with school and education. In Burns for example, while important inroads have been made in engaging with parents many parents face very severe difficulties, including actual or risk of homelessness. Housing problems for example, have been identified as a significant factor in student turnover in school.
- The disadvantaged and the low base from which many of the schools are starting (particularly around basic elements of school climate and safety) still need to be taken account of in assessing the impact of community schools. The Theory of Change has been important in this respect in fleshing out the broad range preconditions that schools, especially those starting at the very low base, need to have in place. The progress made by all schools on school climate, especially those schools such as Burns and JAH Milner which faced very severe problems in the past has to take account of this context of disadvantage.
- Afterschool programs that include an academic element would appear to have improved the academic performance of those students who participate in afterschool activities. However, there are capacity constraints for participation in the afterschool programs which does raise the question of how places in the programs are allocated and whether they should be focused specifically on the most disadvantaged students.
- The evaluation has illustrated the value of tracking particular cohorts of students who have received components of the community school model beyond afterschool. This has been important in identifying impacts of the community school model that have been hidden when academic results and other indicators were disaggregated primarily for afterschool students. However, there was some initial confusion about what was meant by 'target cohorts' and why these should be identified and tracked for evaluation purposes. There were also some logistical challenges in tracking students across the school year.

- While the importance of the workplans have been noted, the need to further improve the coordination of workplans with school accountability plans was raised by a number of personnel interviewed. Also highlighted was the need to further refine the application of the workplans to ensure that activities are linked more specifically to particular outcomes and preconditions in the Theory of Change.

Overall, HCS schools, in our opinion, have made a leap in their intentionality to target and broaden services and to attend to all of the components (as illustrated in the Theory of Change) that are crucial for success. The academic results, perceptions of staff and students, and observations of the evaluators provide a triangulation of evidence that significant progress was made over the last year. The schools still have the contextual challenges described in this report, but the community school model has made more inroads to helping more students.

Below are some specific recommendations to address some key issues as well as fine-tune approaches that proved successful over the last year.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The ToC has many detailed conditions of change – in school, systems, parents, teachers – that are deemed necessary to create an environment in which the goals of a community school are met. Though some of these conditions are difficult or sound less important than the long-term goal of academic achievement, they are the foundations on which the long-term goal rests. So, although there are many, we recommend that HCS and each school continue to focus on what preconditions can be effected and how. It should be recognized that if these key preconditions – necessary for ultimate success – cannot be met or fully met – that expectations for all students to improve academically have to be lowered.
- 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. This approach demonstrated both better results for students this year than last; and it allows each school the flexibility to target the students it feels have the most need and/or they have the ability to help the most.
- We recommend that HCS continues to build on the work it has done on data tracking of students by services, so that effects on attendance, behavior and academics can be assessed and evaluated. This is the only way the schools will know, beyond anecdote and experience (which are also valuable), that health services and other components do make the differences intended. On the ground knowledge that they do is sufficient to keep such

programs going, but doesn't provide the kind of empirical evidence outsiders (such as funders) will want. One means of addressing the logistical challenges of tracking different cohorts of students is the expansion of Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), which is currently used for tracking participants in the afterschool programs, to include other cohorts.

- To identify the impact of health services, it is recommended that students who receive a health service arising from community schools are identified to see what impact the receipt of such health services have had on academic outcomes or on other key outcomes for student progression in education.
- Awareness of the community school model is not universal and some school staff and leadership, it has been noted, still view the community schools concept as being primarily related to the provision of afterschool services. Work is still necessary to continue to build the vision of what a community school actually is and to translate this vision into the work practices of all stakeholders, especially school staff. All stakeholders, it has been noted, need to be accountable for the various elements and components of the model and how it is applied in practice – including how it relates to the integration of afterschool and daytime activities.