

ActKnowledge

365 Fifth Avenue, 6th Floor

New York, NY 10016

Telephone 212.817.1906

www.actknowledge.org



Evaluation Report

(2016-2017)

January 2018

Table of Contents

Executive SummaryES-1

1.Introduction 1

2. Hartford Community Schools: Overview, Model and Implementation 2016-2017 1

 2.1 Overview of Hartford Community Schools (HCS)..... 1

 2.2 Community Schools Model and HCS Theory of Change 3

 2.3 Implementation of Interventions Linked to Theory of Change Development Bands..... 3

3. Results: Student and Parent/Family Outcomes 2016-2017 11

 3.1 Academic Results..... 11

 3.2 Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism 16

 3.3 Students’ Physical and Emotional Safety 17

 3.4 Student Behavior 19

 3.5 Students’ Perceptions of Enrichment Opportunities 20

 3.6 Parent/Family Outcomes 22

4. Conclusions and Recommendations 24

 4.1 Summary of Results..... 24

 4.2 Recommendations 25

Appendix 1: Evaluation Methods 26



Executive Summary

ES. 1 Introduction

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) have developed and implemented a community school model that encompasses a broad array of services and interventions for students and parents/families including the provision of afterschool programs. This model is based on the HCS Theory of Change, which is one of the most comprehensive Theories of Change yet developed by a community schools initiative.

In accordance with the model, the community schools focus on aligning afterschool and school-day programming, building stronger academic elements into afterschool programs, and developing activities targeting students who fall behind academically and face problems around attendance and behavior. Schools also work on activities designed to support other key preconditions for student success including developing a welcoming school climate and promoting parent/family engagement.

In doing this work, the community schools have been guided and supported by Hartford Partnership for Student Success (HPSS), a multi-sectoral partnership involving the four main investors in HCS: Hartford Public Schools, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. HPSS also includes three private sector organizations: Aetna, Travelers and The Hartford.

This report outlines the results of the external evaluation of HCS for the academic year 2016-2017. This is the fifth year of the evaluation work performed by ActKnowledge. The evaluation is once again based on the HCS Theory of Change, which continues to evolve to reflect demonstrated best practice in promoting the overall goal of student achievement.

ES. 2 Highlights of Results

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has continued to make impressive progress in 2017 despite continuing challenges in the broader context in which it is operating.

Academic Achievement Results

- Participants in the afterschool program in all schools (a key component of the community school model) have continued to improve on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) in both reading and math compared to students who did not participate.

- The academic impact of the afterschool program is reflected in responses to the survey of afterschool students. The number of students who reported learning reading, writing and math skills in their afterschool program increased in all schools.
- MAP scores in reading and math increased for English Language Learners in all seven HCS schools from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP results for cohorts of English Language Learners who received targeted supports (in Burns LSA, Burr and Milner) substantially improved in both reading and math from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP scores in reading improved for Special Education Students in all seven community schools while scores in math improved in four out of seven community schools from 2016 to 2017.
- Special Education students who received targeted supports (in Milner) demonstrated much stronger improvements in MAP results in both reading and math from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP results for cohorts of academically “at-risk” students connected to programs or services targeted at their needs also showed strong improvement in all seven Hartford Community Schools. There was a particularly substantial improvement for a targeted group of students at Milner who received one-on-one and group literacy intervention, accessed clinical services and whose parents frequently engaged with the school.

Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism and Behavior Results

- Chronic absenteeism rates fell in the three schools (Burns LSA, Burr, and West Middle) that have had the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. This reflects the priority these schools have attached to addressing chronic absenteeism in their schools over the year.
- Days-absent declined for cohorts of chronically absent students who participated in a truancy prevention program at Burr. At Milner days-absent decreased for cohorts of students where a consistent level of engagement with their parents was observed.
- Once again, mental health supports at Milner led to improvements in behavior among a cohort of students who had used this service. This validates the emphasis in the HCS Theory of Change on the importance of mental health as a precondition for positive behavior. Burns LSA also had success in addressing behavior among students who participated in AVID mentoring program for young people.

ES. 3 Recommendations

The commitment of main investors in HPSS, including Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to providing ongoing funding for HCS has resulted once again in increased student achievement. To build on this work the following priorities are suggested.

- Given the continued importance of the afterschool program it is recommended that HCS continue to support the retention of participants in the afterschool program and to enhance the contribution of the program to academic achievement.
- HCS outcomes demonstrate the importance of strategically targeting resources towards cohorts of students with particular needs. This is especially important in the context of resource constraints where it may not be possible to implement all components of the community school model (for example, constraints on the numbers in afterschool). It is recommended that HCS continue to improve its strategic capacity to target resources in this way, including building the capacity of schools to assess individual needs and link these to appropriate services.
- Each school should continue to develop interventions linked to those intermediate outcomes (set out in the bands of the Theory of Change) which are most relevant to their particular challenges. This should include continued support for the mental health of students and families, which has been associated with better behavior and attendance.
- The Theory of Change has been further developed to recognize the role of the community school director and support for this role by the principal and school leadership. It is recommended that Hartford Public Schools build on its work in supporting these key preconditions for effective community school implementation through its participation in HPSS and through its day-to-day supports for the schools.

1. Introduction

This is a report of the external evaluation of Hartford Community Schools (HCS) for the academic year 2016-2017. This is the fifth year of the evaluation work performed by ActKnowledge. The evaluation is once again based on the HCS Theory of Change, which has been further developed to reflect demonstrated best practice in promoting the overall goal of student achievement.

The report begins with a brief overview of the community school model in Hartford, including the HCS Theory of Change, how the model has been implemented, and the challenges and opportunities identified by key stakeholders at different levels of the initiative. It then goes on to outline the key outcomes in 2017:

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

The report then outlines a set of conclusions and recommendations for HCS based on the evaluation findings. [The research methods are outlined in Appendix 1.](#)

2. Hartford Community Schools: Overview, Model and Implementation 2015-2016

2.1 Overview of Hartford Community Schools

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has comprised 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 model¹. However, from 2016, John C. Clark Jr. (Clark) Elementary and Middle School, one of the seven community schools, was consolidated with Fred D. Wish Elementary school². The consolidated Wish/Clark school has not continued as a community school but has retained many of the resources provided through a partnership with HCS, including the maintenance of links with its lead agency (The Village for Families and Children) and the continuation of the Community School Director position.

¹ This model is based on a holistic approach to the well-being and development of children, their families and the wider community.

² Clark had been relocated to Wish Elementary in 2015 due to safety concerns about the physical environment. Tests carried out in the school building had revealed high levels of PCBs.

Hartford Community Schools Evaluation 2016-2017

HCS is guided by Hartford Partnership for Student Success (HPSS), which is comprised of its main investors: Hartford Public Schools, the City of Hartford, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. The partnership also provides a representative seat for each school principal and lead agency. Since 2016, the partnership has expanded to include partners from the private sector, including Aetna, Travelers, and The Hartford.

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

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

The community schools are serving communities and students facing serious challenges. Six of the seven community schools are located within High Priority Neighborhoods as identified in the Hartford Public Schools Neighborhood Assessment in 2012. A ‘High Priority Neighborhood’ label reflects challenging levels of poverty, education and crime; and poor housing, health, and neighborhood stability.

2.2 Community Schools Model and HCS Theory of Change (ToC)

Community schools expand and enhance the resources available to children and their families around the conditions necessary for student achievement. These encompass health, mental health, parent and family support, academic support, and community engagement. However, rather than simply locating social services or ‘after-school’ programs or services in schools, the community school model has been conceived as a strategy or as an “organizing principle” where the vision of education as a common good is realized through common action.

Hartford Community Schools (HCS) has been developed and continues to develop in line with this approach. This is reflected in the HCS Theory of Change, which is one of the most comprehensive Theory of Change-based program models yet developed for a community school strategy. It is also used consistently to inform planning and capture learning about best practice³. The ToC model sets out (in the outcomes map outlined in the following pages) the broad range of conditions through which community schools contribute to the ultimate vision of a “sustainable and thriving community.” At its core is the central goal of ensuring that “students succeed (academic, social, emotional, and health)” –in other words, student success is defined holistically to include both academic success and also social, emotional, and health attainment.

The Theory then maps out pathways of preconditions or supporting outcomes for students, parents, schools, community, and partnerships/system level supports necessary for this long-term goal to be achieved. The number of stakeholders encompassed by these preconditions reflects an idea of public education as a “shared interest and responsibility of the community as a whole,” as one member of HPSS put it.

2.3 Implementation of Interventions Linked to ToC Development Bands

The ToC model was further amended in early 2018 to align with the Community School Standards developed by Coalition for Community Schools and Institute for Educational Leadership in 2017. In many respects, the Theory of Change was already aligned with the standards, particularly around the importance placed on the collection and use of student level data to inform effective planning. Student-level data is important in assessing outcomes for individual students who have been targeted for particular programmatic or service supports.

The amended Theory of Change has incorporated and highlighted a number of outcomes from the Coalition Standards. These include recognition of the community school director plays in the school leadership, the importance of ongoing, evidence-based reviews of student progress, to

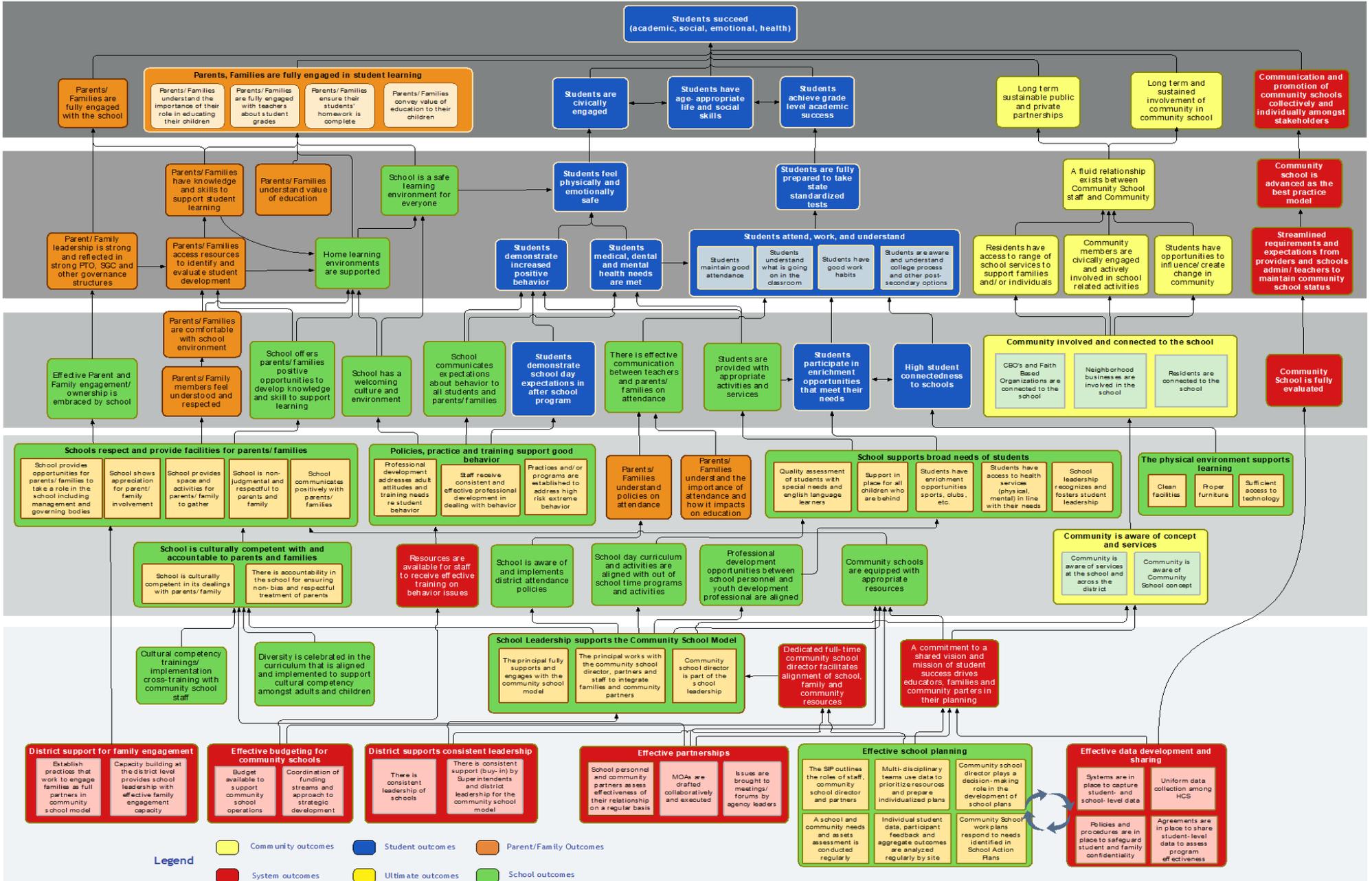
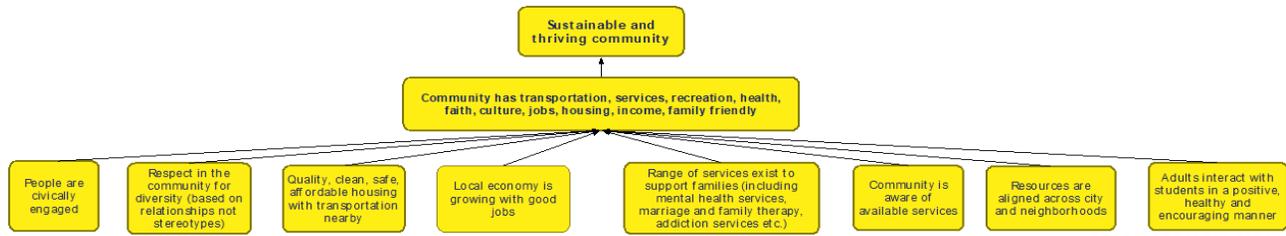
³ The Theory of Change was first developed in 2012 by a broad range of stakeholders. These included representatives from the City of Hartford, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, lead agency representatives, community directors from each of the seven community schools, school principals, other school staff and staff from the National Center for Community Schools.

guide the allocation of resources towards those most in need; and the alignment of school plans (including the school improvement plan) with the community school work plan.

The amended Outcomes Map (illustrated overleaf) is divided into horizontal “bands,” each of which encompasses a set of outcomes that represent different stages of the development trajectory of the community school model. Band 1, at the bottom of the map, contains the “foundational preconditions,” in other words, conditions that need to be in place for community school programming to be implemented effectively. It is these foundational preconditions that have been revised this year to align with the Coalition Standards. The bands then proceed upwards to the intermediate outcomes necessary to achieve the long-term goal of student success expressed in band 5.

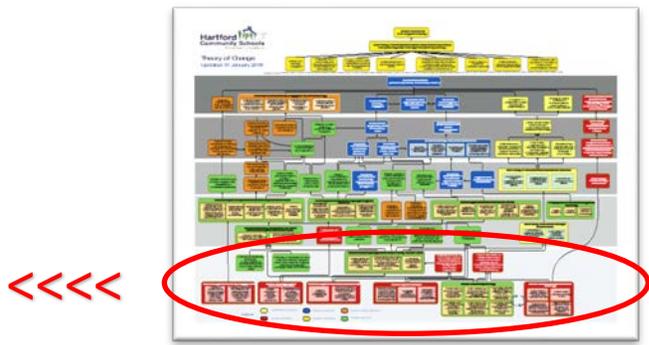
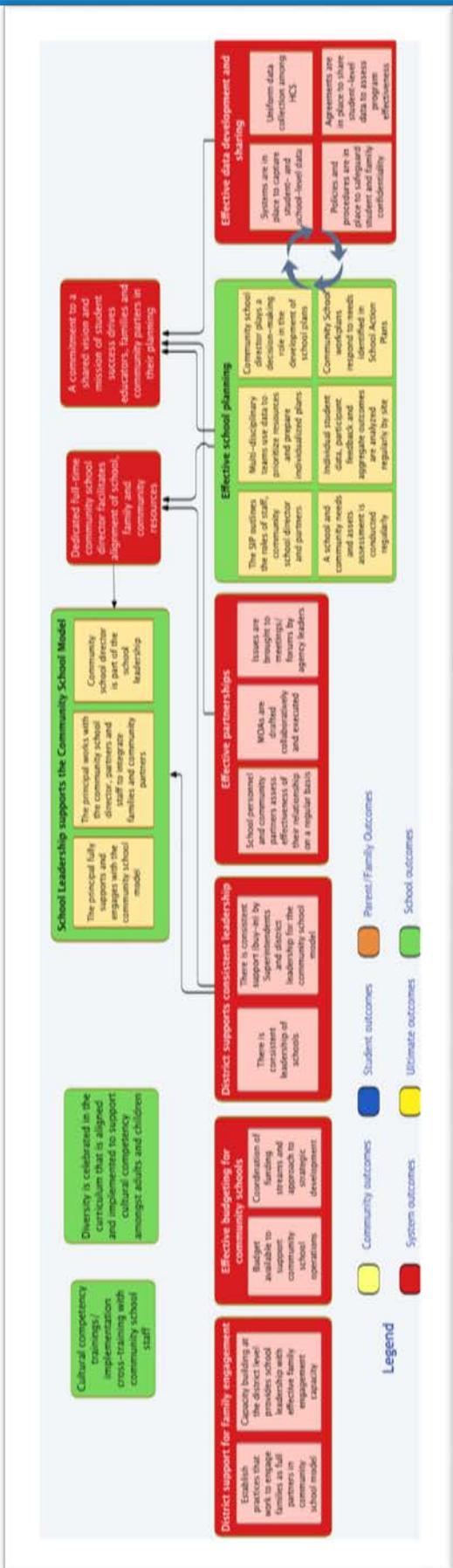
Progress made in developing and implementing interventions designed to achieve the outcomes across different bands of the Theory of Change are outlined in the sections that follow. These include:

- Band 1, Foundational outcomes: progress made in building systems-level supports.
- Bands 2 and 3: Outline of interventions designed to support school and community level preconditions for student success.
- Bands 4 and 5 primarily relate to results of the community school model to date in achieving key student outcomes relating to academic achievement and direct preconditions for this including attendance, behavior, and parental support for student learning. These results are outlined in detail in chapter 3.



Legend

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



Band 1, Foundational Outcomes: Progress in Building “Systems-Level” Support

As noted above, the HCS Theory of Change articulates foundational supports at a “systems level” necessary to establish and sustain an effective community school system. These foundational outcomes or preconditions for HCS (expressed in the red boxes at the bottom of the map) include support from the superintendent and Hartford Board of Education and effective budgeting for community schools. These have in turn been identified as preconditions to ensure that school leadership supports the community school model.

Support from principals has consistently been identified by HCS community school directors as essential if they are to fulfill their role. This role however (in line with the community school model), involves not only leveraging outside resources, but linking these resources to identified needs, and integrating and aligning the resources with the schools’ core instructional programs and other educational activities. The importance of the community school director in this respect, and of the director functioning as part of the school leadership, as set forth in the Coalition for Community School Standards, has prompted HCS to revise its ToC model accordingly.

In interviews with the evaluator, HCS stakeholders have highlighted the involvement in HPSS of key district personnel such as the school district's Chief Improvement Officer as an indication of greater support from the school district. One community school director noted the growing support from the district provided by assistant superintendents. This she considered extremely important in securing the principal's support and buy-in to the community school model.

Bands 2 and 3: Key School Level Preconditions for Student Achievement

Bands 2 and 3 (next page) contain the "school level" preconditions to promote student achievement. For example:

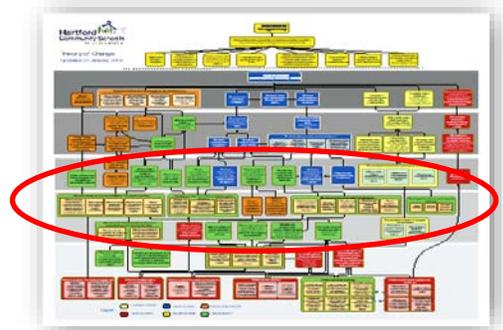
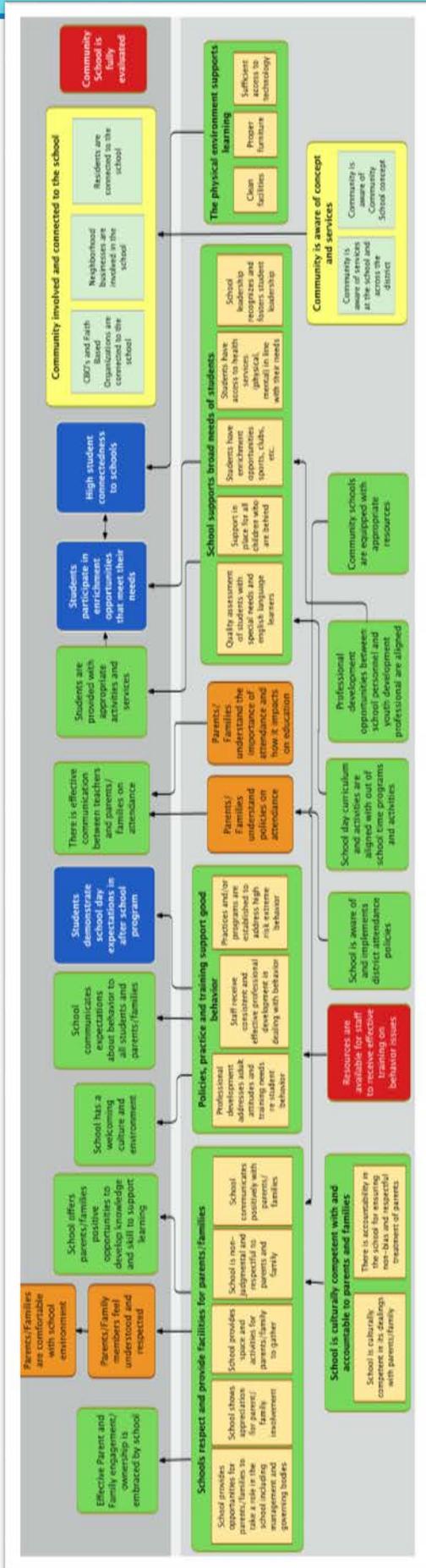
- The school supports the "broad" or holistic needs of students which includes: "Quality assessment" of what these needs are, developing services for students left behind academically and developing services that encompass holistic needs (including mental and physical health).
- School day curriculum and activities are aligned with "out of school time" activities, curriculum, and staff capacity.
- The physical environment of the school supports learning.
- Policies, practice, and training supports good behavior and attendance.
- The school is culturally competent and accountable to parents and creates opportunities for their involvement in the school.
- The whole community is involved with and connected to the school.

The importance of these preconditions and the progress the schools have made in putting in place interventions and activities to deliver on them are further apparent in 2017, as follows.

School Supports the 'Broad' or Holistic Needs of Students

Quality assessment of student needs

Most community schools in Hartford do not provide full health services on site. Some schools have sought to facilitate access to mobile clinics. Others, like Burns LSA, provide dental and mental health services onsite. In 2016-17 Milner's licensed child guidance clinic continued to work with children and families on mental health issues including traumas that impact on behavior and educational attainment more generally. The evaluation this year has continued to track outcomes from this service, showing a positive impact on academic achievement and behavior for students engaged with this service (see chapter 3 of this report).



The capacity to assess student needs is a key function of the community school and a critical precondition for leveraging resources in the community that are strategically linked to meeting the needs identified. One intervention for assessing individual needs has been the use of City Connects, which has been expanded to include ASA Bellizzi in 2016-17. Prior to this it was implemented in Burr, Burns LSA, Wish and Milner four schools.⁴

Targeted Academic Supports for students falling behind

In meeting the needs of students falling behind academically, the community schools have developed or leveraged a range of targeted academic interventions— one-to-one and group tutoring programs across all schools—which continue These include Travelers Tutoring Programs, United Way Readers, ConnectiKids, University of Saint Joseph Literacy Program, and programs delivered directly by the schools, such as HMTCA academic interventions and Milner literacy intervention.

The evaluation this year has focused on tracking academic progress of students participating in these targeted programs (see chapter 3).

Access to health services (including mental health services)

⁴ At the core of the model is a survey that assesses the strengths and needs of every student in four key areas: a) academics, b) socio-emotional development, c) health, and d) family stability. <http://www.bc.edu/schools/lsoe/cityconnects/our-approach.html>

Aligning “Out of School Time” Activities, Curriculum and Staff Capacity

As noted in the 2015-16 evaluation, afterschool programs, which encompass services designed to support student academic performance and broader youth development outcomes, continue to be a major component of the HCS model.⁵ However, a concern expressed at that time was the decline of afterschool attendance. Attendance fell further in 2016-17. This is an issue of concern given the clear link established once again for 2016-17 between participation in the HCS afterschool program and academic achievement (see discussion in 2015-16 evaluation on potential reasons for declines in attendance).

The Physical Environment of the School Supports Learning

Recognizing the role of physical environment in supporting learning, the Theory of Change specifies clean facilities, proper furniture and sufficient access to technology. It is not possible in the context of this evaluation to identify progress across each of these preconditions in a comprehensive way. However, one major development in 2016-17 has been the opening of new purpose-built community school building for West Middle. This building will include health facilities and Hartford Public Library will have a facility in the building to which students will have their own access.

Policies, Practice and Training Supports Good Behavior and Attendance

Attendance and chronic absenteeism have been significant issues for most of the community schools and the schools have prioritized strategies and actions to address these problems. This focus on promoting attendance and addressing chronic absenteeism is consistent with the priority placed on attendance by the Hartford Public School (HPS) district. For example, the HPS strategic plan 2015-2020 includes a target for reducing chronic absenteeism by 60 percent over the next five years.

As before, principals interviewed highlighted the importance of the community school model in helping to address attendance issues. Key activities in this respect included:

- Active leadership of or participation on attendance teams by the community school directors that allowed for the development of strategic approaches to promoting attendance and addressing chronic absenteeism in particular.

⁵ Because of capacity limits not all students can access afterschool programs. Within these capacity constraints access is generally provided on a “first come first served basis.” However, schools have tried to accommodate additional students with particular needs, including students referred by teachers or social workers.

- Support for the implementation of strategic approaches by community school directors and program staff that has included active engagement with parents and families and the development of services linked to the needs of those at risk.

The impact on cohorts of students of targeted activities and services to address chronic absenteeism is outlined in chapter 3.

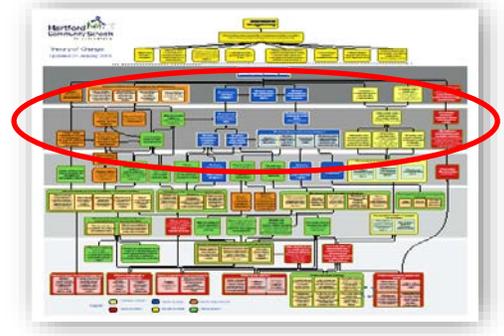
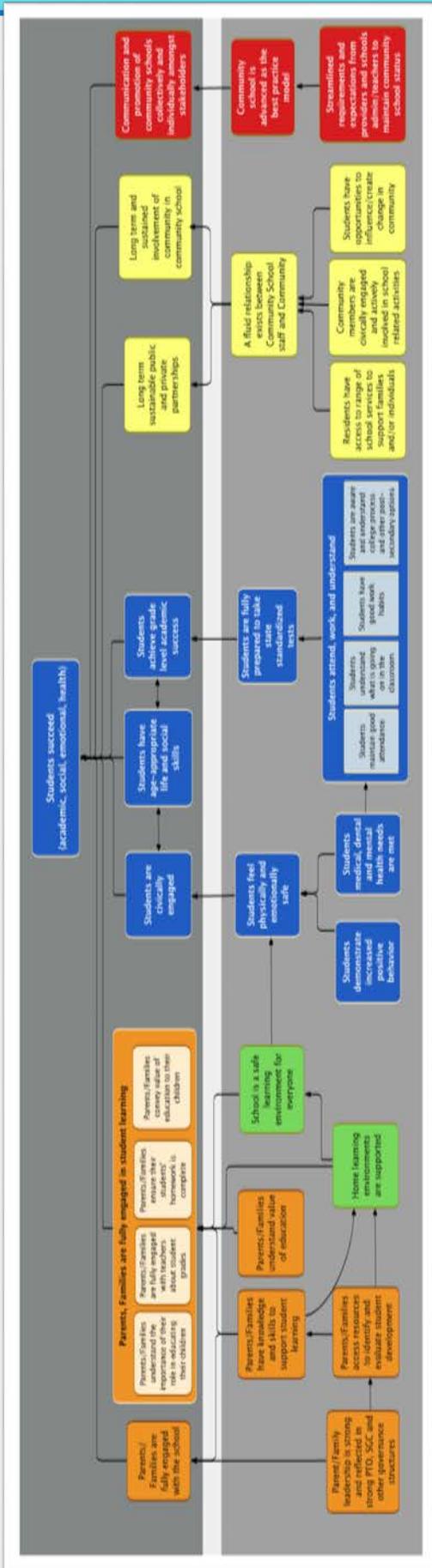
School is Culturally Competent and Accountable to Parents and Creates Opportunities for their Involvement in the School.

Family and community engagement is an important feature of the HCS model, the conditions for which (as noted above) have continued to be developed in the Theory of Change. A range of activities have been undertaken to support engagement by parents with the school and in particular to support their engagement with the education of their child.

Family resource coordinators have continued to be an important resource for supporting parent engagement with the school. As in 2015-16, however, some concern was expressed this year about the impact of the fiscal challenges faced by Hartford, which have led to reductions in the number of family resource coordinator posts and other staff cuts (for example, in Burr in 2016).

Community School staff and parents interviewed during the course of the evaluation have continued to draw attention to the challenges involved in engaging with parents. A particular challenge in this respect is how to extend involvement beyond a core set of parents who tend to be involved with the school consistently.





Bands 4 and 5: Key Results for Students and Parents

All the preceding preconditions in the Theory of Change Map lead to results for students set out at the top of the map. These include:

Academic achievement and its preconditions: positive behavior, consistent attendance and an end to chronic absenteeism, parent/family engagement with the school and with student learning; and health, including mental and physical health (which are linked to attendance and good behavior).

Key results across these outcomes for 2015-16 are set out in the next chapter.

3. Results: Student and Parent/Family Outcomes 2016-2017

3.1 Academic Results

3.1.1 MAP results for community schools and for participants in the afterschool program

The overall average ‘raw’ MAP scores for Hartford Community Schools on reading and math increased slightly, from 194.30 to 197.49 and from 197.88 to 200.99, respectively, from 2016 to 2017.⁶ Each of the seven schools saw an increase on both reading and math scores from this time period. Students at Milner, however, had the highest increase, of 10.64 in reading and 10.58 in math, among HCS schools. This is illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1: HCS MAP Reading and Math Results in 2017

Hartford Community Schools	READING			MATH		
	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy	180.20	188.28	↑ 8.08	187.01	190.12	↑ 3.11
Burns Latino Studies Academy	181.83	189.48	↑ 7.65	184.36	192.03	↑ 7.67
Burr School	185.06	189.77	↑ 4.71	194.20	195.11	↑ 0.91
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	217.81	220.95	↑ 3.14	222.17	224.74	↑ 2.57
Milner School	176.99	187.63	↑ 10.64	179.26	189.84	↑ 10.58
West Middle School	190.50	197.05	↑ 6.55	196.83	201.16	↑ 4.33
Wish School	178.48	184.92	↑ 6.44	185.91	188.25	↑ 2.34

The average ‘raw’ MAP scores for students who attended the afterschool program also increased in both reading and math at each of the seven schools from spring 2016 to spring 2017. Furthermore, afterschool program participants scored higher on MAP reading and math than non-afterschool participants in five out of seven HCS schools, in spring 2017. This is illustrated in table 2 below.

⁶ It was not possible to provide a longitudinal analysis of MAP test scores from 2013 to 2017 as the method for administering MAP changed in 2016. The MAP test is only administered once in the school year since 2016, where as in prior years it was administered twice in the school year (in Fall and Spring).

Table 2: MAP Reading and Math Results of afterschool participants in 2017

By School Afterschool Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	Afterschool Students	188.27	193.17	↑ 4.9	190.08	194.79	↑ 4.71
	Non-Afterschool Students	176.52	186.38	↑ 9.86	185.17	188.38	↑ 3.21
Burns Latino Studies Academy	Afterschool Students	183.01	189.92	↑ 6.91	185.88	192.68	↑ 6.8
	Non-Afterschool Students	181.32	189.30	↑ 7.98	183.71	191.76	↑ 8.05
Burr School	Afterschool Students	183.15	190.51	↑ 7.36	186.07	196.47	↑ 10.4
	Non-Afterschool Students	185.54	189.60	↑ 4.06	194.80	194.89	↑ 0.09
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	Afterschool Students	213.41	217.27	↑ 3.86	218.46	221.01	↑ 2.55
	Non-Afterschool Students	218.24	221.30	↑ 3.06	222.54	225.09	↑ 2.55
Milner School	Afterschool Students	177.34	188.03	↑ 10.69	179.96	190.68	↑ 10.72
	Non-Afterschool Students	176.66	187.34	↑ 10.68	178.64	189.25	↑ 10.61
West Middle School	Afterschool Students	190.21	195.02	↑ 4.81	195.44	198.55	↑ 3.11
	Non-Afterschool Students	190.58	197.63	↑ 7.05	197.21	201.89	↑ 4.68
Wish School	Afterschool Students	197.45	199.70	↑ 2.25	201.21	202.08	↑ 0.87
	Non-Afterschool Students	174.40	182.40	↑ 8.00	182.24	185.75	↑ 3.51

3.1.2 MAP results for English Language Learners (ELL)

MAP scores in reading and math increased for English Language Learners (ELL) in all seven community schools from spring 2016 to spring 2017. These results are outlined in Table 3.

Hartford Community Schools Evaluation 2016-2017

Table 3: MAP results for English Language Learners (ELL) students compared to non-ELL students from 2017

By School ELL Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	ELL Students	169.92	178.13	↑ 8.21	180.36	182.33	↑ 1.97
	Non-ELL Students	185.16	193.04	↑ 7.88	190.17	194.01	↑ 3.84
Burns Latino Studies Academy	ELL Students	174.87	181.33	↑ 6.46	178.65	186.88	↑ 8.23
	Non-ELL Students	187.16	195.85	↑ 8.69	188.95	196.04	↑ 7.09
Burr School	ELL Students	172.18	174.33	↑ 2.15	182.04	182.25	↑ 0.21
	Non-ELL Students	190.48	198.51	↑ 8.03	199.67	202.33	↑ 2.66
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	ELL Students	197.15	198.28	↑ 1.13	203.04	205.09	↑ 2.05
	Non-ELL Students	219.30	222.57	↑ 3.27	223.66	226.14	↑ 2.48
Milner School	ELL Students	170.87	179.11	↑ 8.24	176.53	181.38	↑ 4.85
	Non-ELL Students	178.48	189.67	↑ 11.19	179.99	192.12	↑ 12.13
West Middle School	ELL Students	179.19	185.58	↑ 6.39	186.57	191.43	↑ 4.86
	Non-ELL Students	196.06	202.88	↑ 6.82	202.29	206.10	↑ 3.81
Wish School	ELL Students	169.28	174.57	↑ 5.29	180.56	182.37	↑ 1.81
	Non-ELL Students	181.58	188.33	↑ 6.75	187.44	191.19	↑ 3.75

MAP scores of ELL students who received targeted supports from the community school demonstrated substantial improvement in MAP scores. This is outlined in table 4 which shows the results for ELL students who received targeted supports in Burns LSA, Burr (United Way Readers and Travelers mentoring program) and Milner.

Table 4: ELL Target cohort comparison 2016-2017 academic year

HCS ELL Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Burns LSA - ELL Target Cohorts	Participants (N=19)	182.16	194.74	↑ 12.58	189.16	196.68	↑ 7.52
Burr - United Way Readers (ELL)	Participants (N=4)	164.50	182.00	↑ 17.5	184.00	194.00	↑ 10.00
Burr - Travelers Mentoring Program (ELL)	Participation (N=5)	165.20	178.40	↑ 13.2	161.75	181.60	↑ 19.85
Milner - ELL Cohort	Participants (N=10)	185.89	188.60	↑ 2.71	188.33	191.70	↑ 3.37

3.1.3 MAP results for Special Education (SE) Students

MAP scores in reading improved for Special Education students (SE) in all seven HCS schools, while scores in math improved in four out of seven HCS schools from 2016 to 2017, as illustrated in table 5 below.

Table 5: MAP results for Special Education (SE) students compared to non-SE students from 2016 to 2017

By School Sp. Ed Students		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Asian Studies Academy at Bellizzi	Sp.Ed Students	170.30	173.08	↑ 2.78	175.98	175.97	↓ -0.01
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	181.66	190.56	↑ 8.9	188.79	192.17	↑ 3.38
Burns Latino Studies Academy	Sp.Ed Students	175.99	181.81	↑ 5.82	178.03	185.59	↑ 7.56
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	183.32	191.48	↑ 8.16	185.99	193.66	↑ 7.67
Burr School	Sp.Ed Students	174.61	178.50	↑ 3.89	188.55	182.03	↓ -6.52
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	187.32	192.06	↑ 4.74	195.38	197.68	↑ 2.3
Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy	Sp.Ed Students	200.13	203.26	↑ 3.13	206.16	207.74	↑ 1.58
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	220.14	223.30	↑ 3.16	224.26	227.00	↑ 2.74
Milner School	Sp.Ed Students	168.92	184.38	↑ 15.46	171.36	186.38	↑ 15.02
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	178.10	188.07	↑ 9.97	180.37	190.29	↑ 9.92
West Middle School	Sp.Ed Students	178.54	181.96	↑ 3.42	186.95	186.10	↓ -0.85
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	193.10	200.19	↑ 7.09	198.95	204.29	↑ 5.34
Wish School	Sp.Ed Students	169.15	178.48	↑ 9.33	178.02	180.86	↑ 2.84
	Non-Sp.Ed Students	181.36	186.63	↑ 5.27	188.12	190.23	↑ 2.11

While overall results for Special Education students in Milner improved, there was also a substantial improvement among students targeted for specific supports (although the number of students involved are small). These are outlined in table 6.

Table 6: Sp. Ed. Target cohort comparison 2017 academic year

HCS Sp.Ed. Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
Milner - Sp.Ed Cohort	Participants (N=7)	170.29	183.86	↑ 13.57	172.83	184.14	↑ 11.31

3.1.4 MAP results for participants for targeted cohorts of “at-risk” students

The results for cohorts of other academically at risk students (not ELL or special education) targeted for particular academic supports are outlined in table 7. There were substantial improvements in both reading and math from 2016 to 2017 for targeted group of students at Milner who received one-on-one and group literacy intervention, who used clinical services, and of students whose parent frequently engage with the school.

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

Table 7: MAP results for target cohorts for 2017

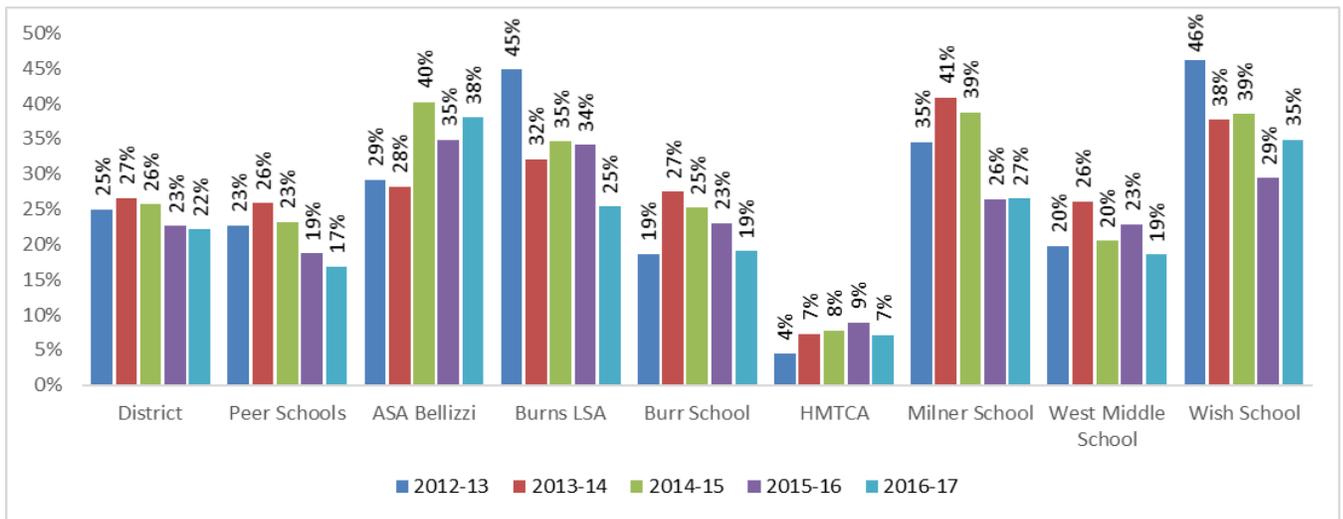
HCS Target Cohorts - Academics		READING			MATH		
		Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Change Score
ASA Bellizzi - Travelers Tutorial Program	Participants (N=30)	177.21	185.83	↑ 8.62	180.61	188.41	↑ 7.8
ASA Bellizzi - United Way Readers (Fall)	Participants (N=7)	141.43	157.71	↑ 16.28	N/A	173.71	N/A
ASA Bellizzi - United Way Readers (Spring)	Participants (N=14)	142.09	163.43	↑ 21.34	N/A	166.21	N/A
ASA Bellizzi - University of Saint Joseph Literacy Program (Fall)	Participants (N=12)	174.08	185.75	↑ 11.67	184.77	187.82	↑ 3.05
ASA Bellizzi - University of Saint Joseph Literacy Program (Spring)	Participants (N=17)	187.88	196.89	↑ 9.01	188.41	195.00	↑ 6.59
Burns LSA - CK3L/Lit Art Target Cohorts	Participants (N=21)	160.68	167.90	↑ 7.22	161.00	171.10	↑ 10.1
Burns LSA - United Way Readers	Participants (N=16)	168.88	178.35	↑ 9.47	171.38	182.82	↑ 11.44
Burr - Students with Parental Engagement	Participants (N=9)	193.78	198.00	↑ 4.22	196.75	200.00	↑ 3.25
HMTCA - Academic Intervention	Participants (N=26)	207.88	210.07	↑ 2.19	208.81	210.62	↑ 1.81
Milner - Clinic participants	Participants (N=12)	181.25	190.83	↑ 9.58	184.75	192.75	↑ 8.00
Milner - Literacy Intervention	Participants (N=13)	146.38	161.62	↑ 15.24	145.23	163.38	↑ 18.15
Milner - Students with Parental Engagement	Participants (N=10)	161.67	173.60	↑ 11.93	165.33	181.00	↑ 15.67
West Middle - Academic Tutoring	Participants (N=19)	188.00	198.63	↑ 10.63	187.86	201.47	↑ 13.61
West Middle - ConnectiKids Tutoring Program	Participants (N=19)	195.08	199.53	↑ 4.45	201.85	204.32	↑ 2.47
Wish - Clinic participants	Participants (N=10)	168.40	176.93	↑ 8.53	179.25	179.27	↑ 0.02
Wish - TOP	Participants (N=34)	201.50	203.24	↑ 1.74	204.82	207.39	↑ 2.57

3.2 Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism

Figure 1 shows that rates of chronic absenteeism fell in the three HCS schools that have had the highest rates of the chronic absenteeism (Burns LSA, Burr, and West Middle). This is important given the priority these schools and HPSS have placed on reducing chronic absenteeism. For example, in the case of Burns LSA, where chronic absenteeism fell by nine percentage points, the attendance team, supported by the community school director and other program staff has actively worked on addressing chronic absenteeism. This work involved intensive interaction between community school staff and chronically absent students and their parents/guardians.

The principal in Burr yet again highlighted the importance of the community school director in leading and facilitating a strategic focus of the school attendance team in addressing chronic absenteeism.

Figure 1: Percentage of students who are chronically absent from 2013 to 2017 academic years



The specific impact of the work to promote better attendance is outlined in table 8 which tracks days absent for chronically absent cohorts of students that the community schools have targeted for specific interventions. This shows that the most substantial decreases in days absent were for students in Milner whose parents have been the focus of activities to promote their engagement with the school. According to a focus group of school staff interviewed in the course of the evaluation at Milner, having a Family Resource Center and a parent coordinator as part of the community school team has been crucial in engaging parents. Burr also saw a decrease in days absent for students participating in the truancy prevention program.

Table 8: Absenteeism cohort comparison 2016 to 2017 academic year

HCS Absenteeism Cohorts		Days Absent		
		2016	2017	Change Score
Burns LSA Chronic Absenteeism/YAA Cohort	Participants (N=12)	18	17	↑-1
Burns LSA Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=20)	9	8	↑-1
Burr Truancy Prevention Program	Participants (N=10)	22	7	↑-15
HMTCA Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=21)	17	21	↓4
Milner - Clinic Participants	Participants (N=12)	11	13	↓2
Milner - Students with Parental Engagement	Participants (N=10)	13	6	↑-7
West Middle Chronic Absenteeism Cohort	Participants (N=16)	15	19	↓4

3.3 Students' Physical and Emotional Safety

Figures 2 and 3, from Hartford Public Schools Climate and Connectedness Surveys, show increases in favorable perceptions of peer climate (one of the indicators of climate more generally) among grade 3-4 students and grades 5-7 students in each of the seven HCS schools.

Figure 2: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on peer climate 2016 to 2017

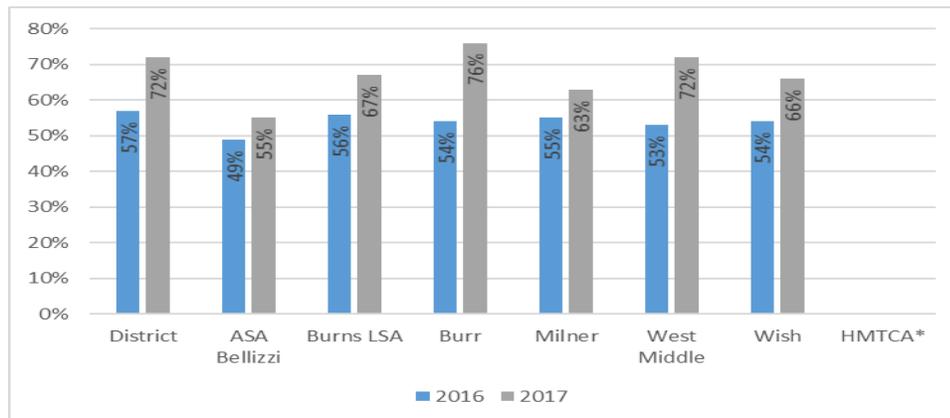
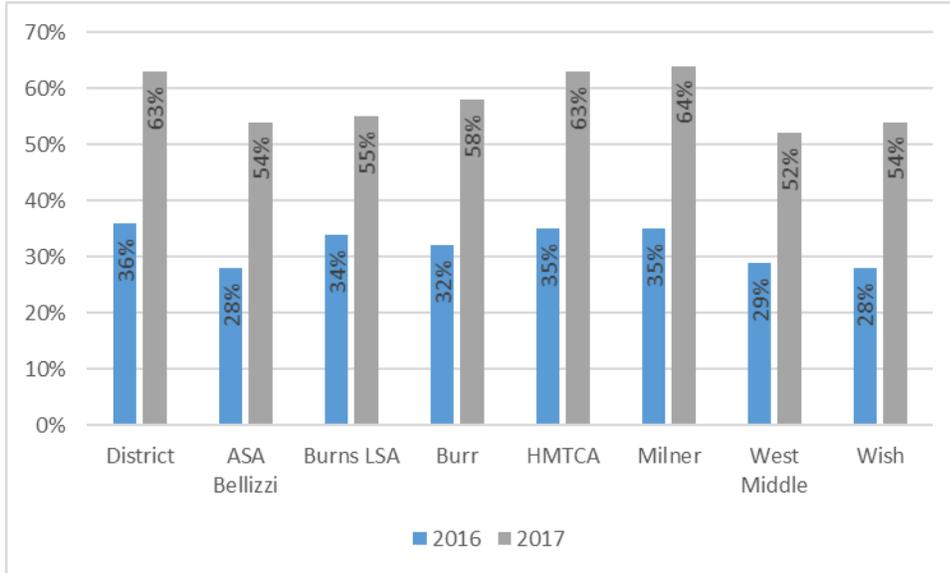


Figure 3: Percentage of grade 5-7 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on peer climate in 2017



Hartford Public Schools Climate and Connectedness Surveys also show increases in favorable perceptions on school safety among grade 3-4 students and grades 5-7 students in each of the seven HCS schools. For example, the most substantial increase on perceptions of school safety among grades 3-4 and 5-7 was in Burr, by twenty-three percentage points and nineteen percentage points, respectively, as illustrated in figures 4 and 5 below.

Figure 4: Percentage of grade 3-4 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on school safety 2016 to 2017.

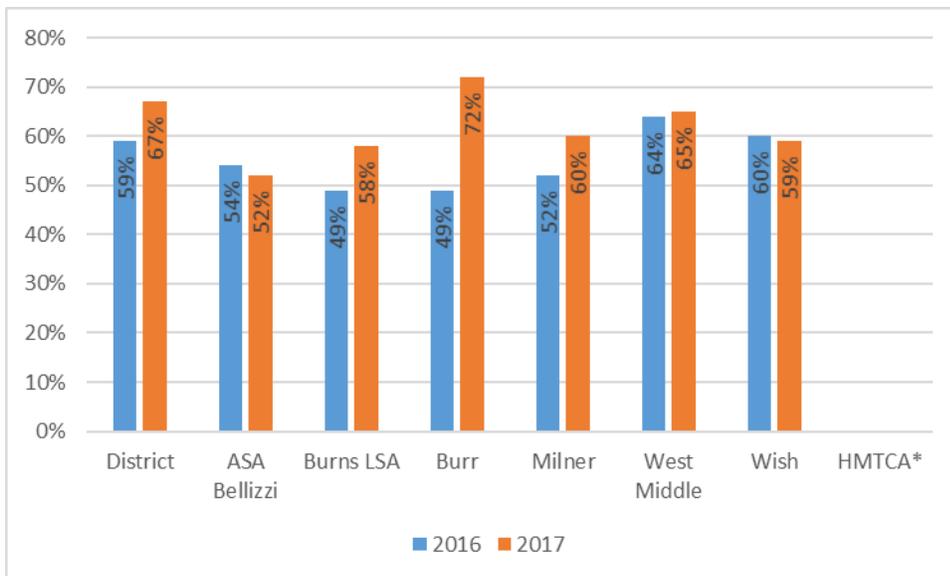
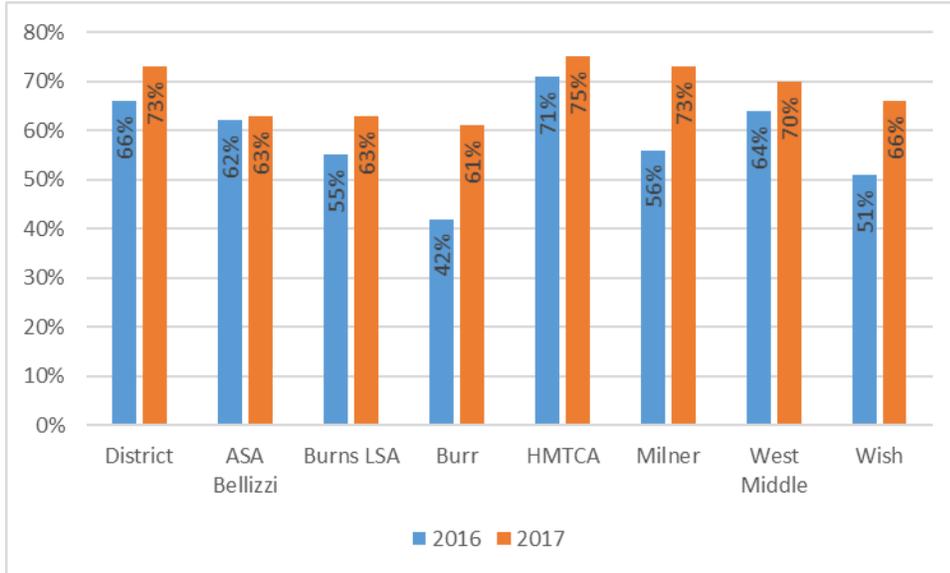


Figure 5: Percentage of grade 5-7 students who responded favorably to questions on perceptions on school safety in 2016 to 2017.



3.4 Student Behavior

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

Burns LSA had success in addressing behavioral issues through the AVID program and Milner through the provision of clinical services for students with behavioral issues. Although most schools use suspensions less than they used to in dealing with behavior issues, suspensions data is a good indicator in this instance as it encompasses aspects of behavior where suspensions are mandated by HPS.

Table 9: Behavior cohort suspensions comparison 2016 to 2017 academic year

HCS Behavior Cohorts		Suspensions		
		2016	2017	Change Score
ASA Bellizzi - Girls Empowerment	Participants (N=10)	N/A	48	N/A
ASA Bellizzi - Manalogy	Participants (N=10)	20	47	↓27
Burns LSA AVID Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=9)	28	20	↑8
HMTCA Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=6)	8	17	↓9
Milner Clinic Cohort	Participants (N=12)	19	16	↑3
West Middle Behavior Cohort	Participants (N=7)	9	18	↓9

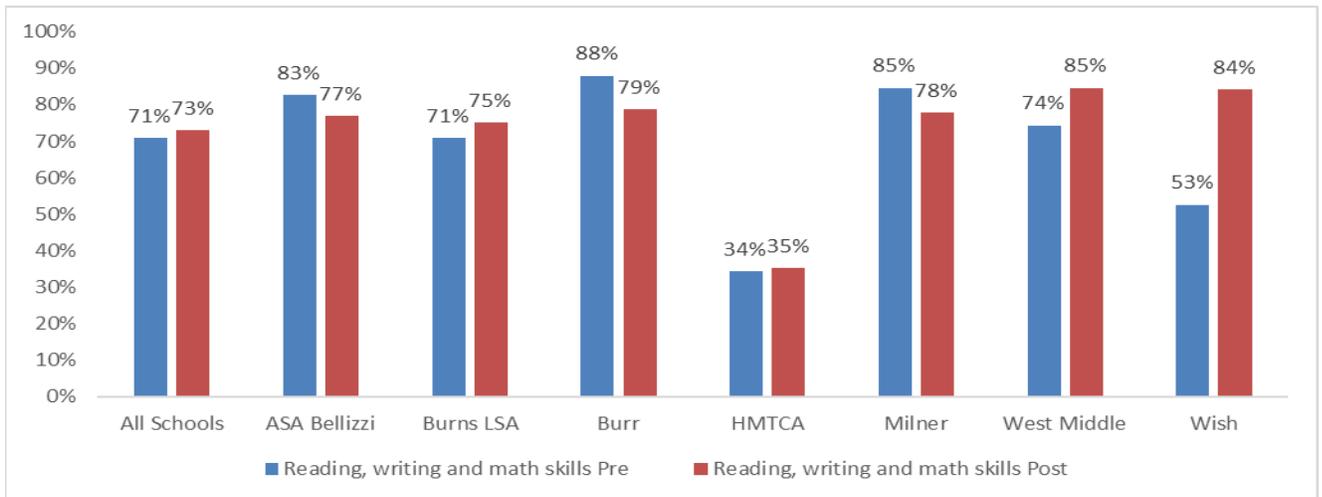
Table 9 above also shows more limited progress was made in other schools in addressing behavior among cohorts of students targeted for particular behavior interventions.

The challenge in moving towards more “restorative justice” practices was raised in two schools as a factor in addressing behavioral issues. One issue identified in this respect was the need for greater training to apply restorative justice effectively. Other school personnel saw a lag between the ending of punitive practices and the implementation of restorative practices, and thought this may have resulted in a temporary escalation of behavior incidents.

3.5 Students’ Perceptions of Afterschool Enrichment Opportunities

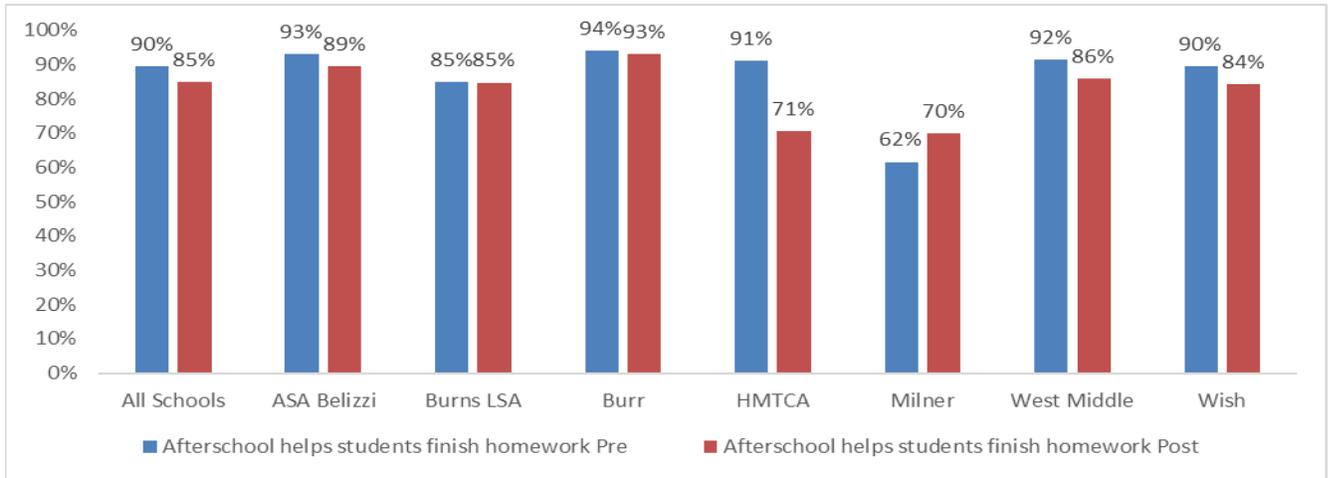
A greater focus on academic work in afterschool programs is reflected in responses to surveys distributed to afterschool students at the start and at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Figure 6 shows that a higher number of students (73%) in all schools reported learning reading, writing and math skills in their afterschool programs compared to 71 percent at the beginning of the year.

Figure 6: Percentage of student who reported they were learning reading, writing and math skills in afterschool program



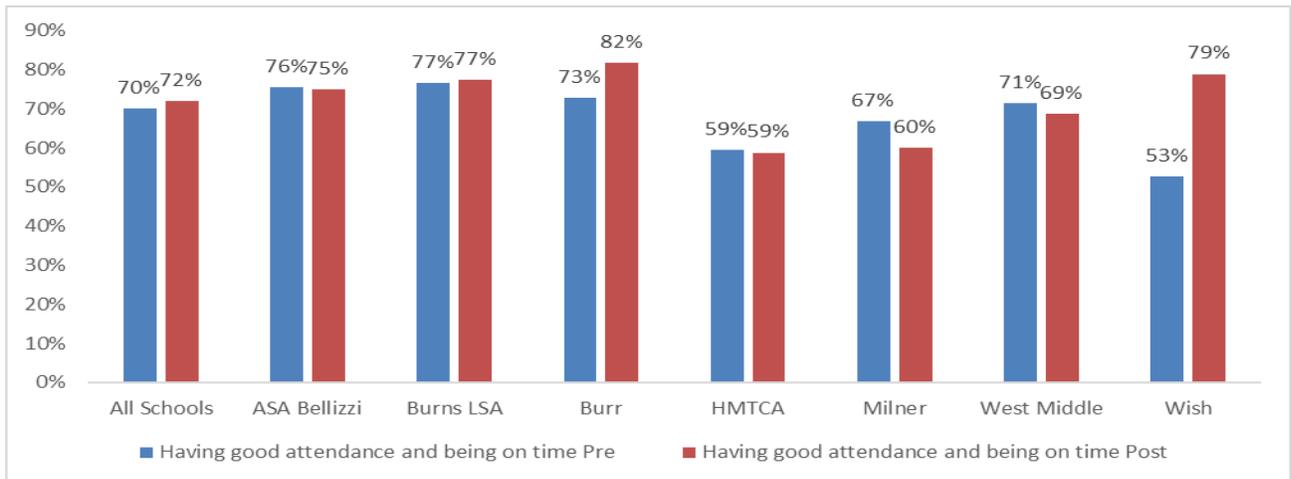
The focus on academic support is also reflected in the number of afterschool participants who reported that the program helped them to finish their homework (as outlined in figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage of students reporting that afterschool helps them finish their homework



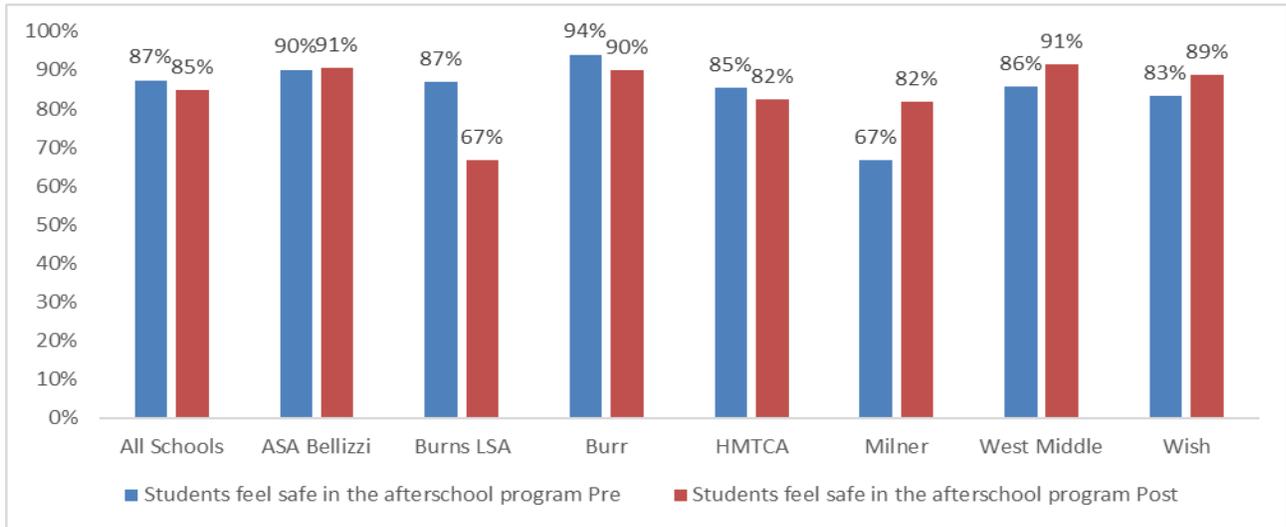
The number of students who reported learning skills relating to attendance and being on time in their afterschool program has also been high. This is outlined in figure 8 and is an important result given the emphasis schools have placed on attendance and timeliness.

Figure 8: Percentage of student who reported they were learning skills relating to having good attendance and being on time in afterschool program



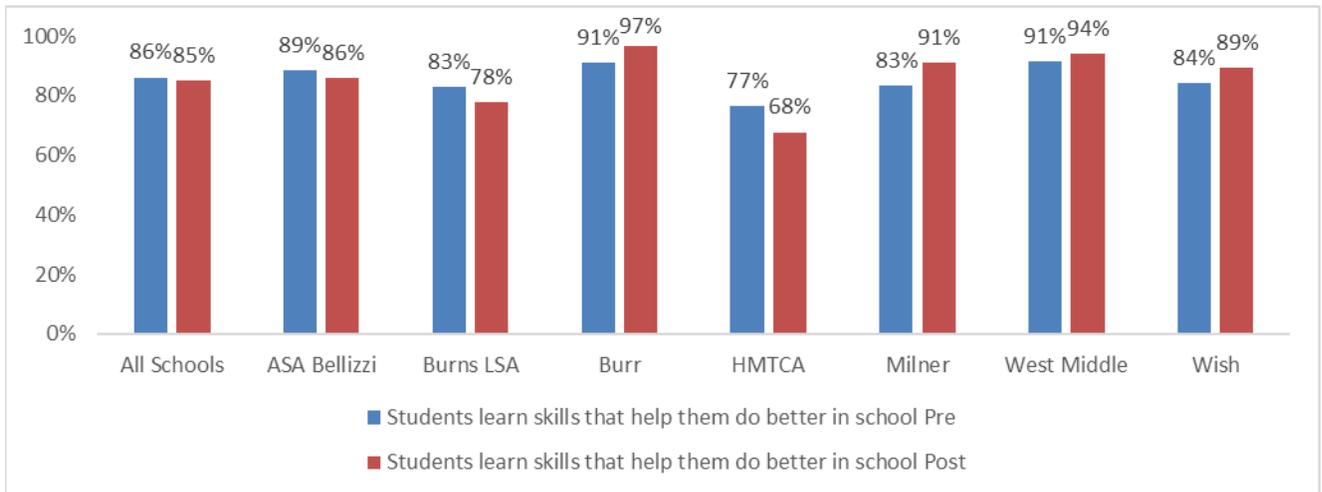
Given the importance of student safety as a precondition for participation and progression in school it is notable that the vast majority of afterschool students felt very safe in the afterschool programs. This was the case even though perceptions of safety in afterschool dropped slightly. However, in all cases perceptions of safety exceeded 80 percent.

Figure 9: Percentage of students who reported feeling safe in the afterschool program



Finally, a majority of students reported that they were learning skills that helped them do better in school. These expectations did not change substantially over the year.

Figure 10: Percentage of students who stated that they learn skills in afterschool programs that will help them do better in school

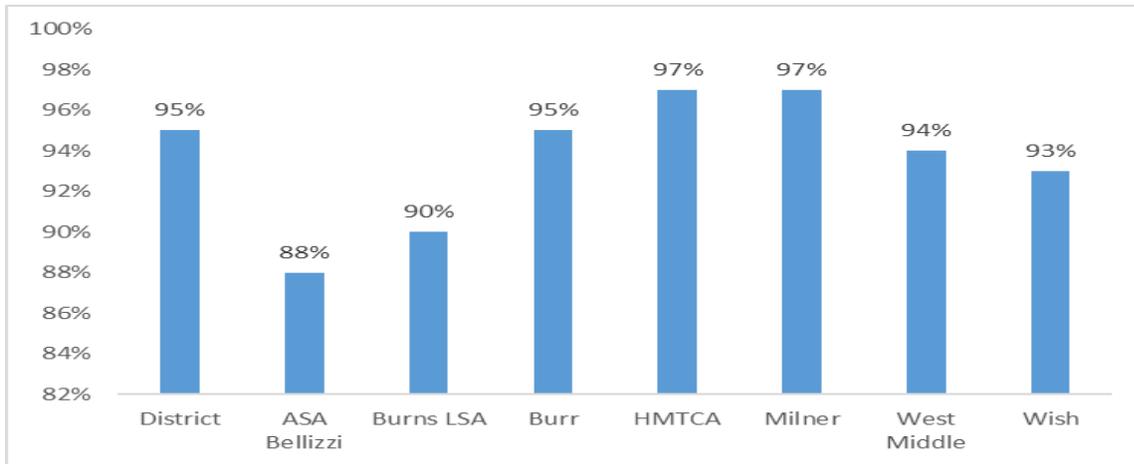


3.6 Parent/Family Outcomes

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

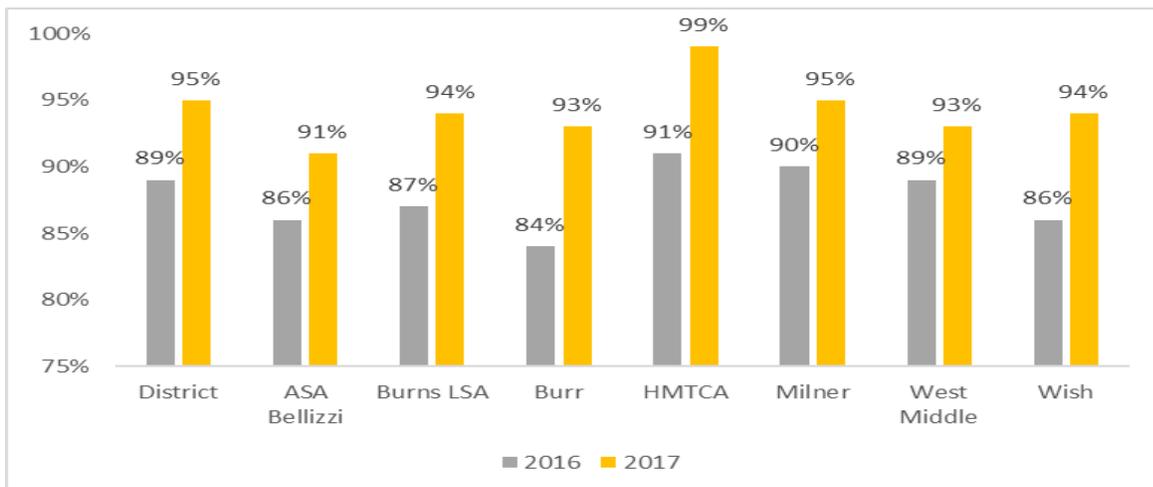
An important foundational precondition for parents/families engaging with the school is that they feel welcome. Figure 11 shows the results from the HPS School Climate and Connectedness Survey of parent/family perceptions of how ‘welcoming and inviting’ they find their child’s school to be. The figures are high across all community schools for 2017 and parent/family perception of feeling welcomed (as this is the first year a question on welcoming and inviting place there are no comparisons to prior years).

Figure 11: Parent/family perceptions on ‘welcoming and inviting place’ in their child’s school in 2017



The results were also favorable when parents were asked whether their child’s school is a ‘supportive and inviting’ place for them. Burr, Burns LSA, Wish and HMTCA saw a higher percentage increase than other schools on this indicator.

Figure 12: Parents perceptions on whether their child’s school is a ‘supportive and inviting place for parents/guardians’ 2016 to 2017



4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Results

Hartford Community Schools has continued to make impressive progress in 2017 despite continuing challenges in the broader context in which it is operating. In particular:

Academic Achievement Results

- Participants in the afterschool program in all schools (a key component of the community school model) have continued to improve on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) in both reading and math compared to students who did not participate.
- The academic impact of the afterschool program is reflected in responses to the survey of afterschool students. The number of students who reported learning reading, writing and math skills in their afterschool program increased in all schools.
- MAP scores in reading and math increased for English Language Learners in all seven HCS schools from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP results for cohorts of English Language Learners who received targeted supports (in Burns LSA, Burr and Milner) substantially improved in both reading and math from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP scores in reading improved for Special Education students in all seven community schools while scores in math improved in four out of seven community schools from 2016 to 2017.
- Special Education students who received targeted supports (in Milner) demonstrated much stronger improvements in MAP results in both reading and math from spring 2016 to spring 2017.
- MAP results for cohorts of academically “at-risk” students connected to programs or services targeted at their needs also showed strong improvement in all seven Hartford Community Schools. There was a particularly substantial improvement for a targeted group of students at Milner who received one-on-one and group literacy intervention, accessed clinical services and whose parents frequently engaged with the school.

Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism and Behavior Results

- Chronic absenteeism rates fell in the three schools (Burns LSA, Burr, and West Middle) that have had the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. This reflects the priority these schools have attached to addressing chronic absenteeism in their schools over the year.

- Days-absent declined for cohorts of chronically absent students who participated in a truancy prevention program at Burr. At Milner days-absent decreased for cohorts of students where a consistent level of engagement with their parents was observed.
- Once again, mental health supports at Milner led to improvements in behavior among a cohort of students who had used this service. This validates the emphasis in the HCS Theory of Change on the importance of mental health as a precondition for positive behavior. Burns LSA also had success in addressing behavior among students who participated in AVID mentoring program for young people.

4.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

The commitment of main investors in HPSS, including Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to providing ongoing funding for HCS has resulted once again in increased student achievement. To build on this work the following priorities are suggested.

- Given the importance of the afterschool program it is recommended that HCS continue to support the retention of afterschool program participants while enhancing the program's contribution to academic achievement.
- HCS outcomes demonstrate the importance of strategically targeting resources towards students with particular needs. This is especially important in the context of resource constraints where it may not be possible to implement all components of the community school model (for example, constraints on the numbers in afterschool). It is recommended that HCS continue to improve its strategic capacity to target resources in this way, including building the capacity of schools to assess individual needs and to link these to appropriate services.
- Each school should be supported in developing interventions linked to intermediate outcomes (set out in the bands of the Theory of Change) that are most relevant to their particular challenges. This should include a continued focus on the mental health of students and families, which has been associated with better behavior and attendance.
- The Theory of Change has been further developed to recognize the importance of the role of the community school director and support for this role by the principal and school leadership. It is recommended that Hartford Public Schools continue to build on its work in supporting these key preconditions for effective community school implementation through its participation in HPSS and through its day-to-day supports for the schools.

Appendix: Evaluation Methods

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

A. Theory of Change

The HCS Theory of Change was further amended in early 2018 to align with the Community School Standards developed by Coalition for Community Schools and Institute for Educational Leadership in 2017. The amended Theory of Change has incorporated and highlighted a number of outcomes from the Coalition Standards that were implicit in the Theory of Change. This includes recognition of the leadership role of the community school director in the school, the importance of on-going and evidence based reviews of student progress to prioritize the allocation of resources towards those most in need, and the alignment of school plans (including the school improvement plan) and the community school work-plans.

B. Site Visits

The ActKnowledge evaluation team undertook comprehensive visits to all of the Hartford Community Schools in 2017 using a set of interview schedules/questionnaires designed to elicit the views of stakeholders on how the community school was developing, what changes had occurred since the previous year, what was achieved and the factors facilitating or hindering progress. This involved:

- Interviews with all Community School Directors and HCS program staff.
- Interviews with seven principals.
- Focus groups/interviews with parents in seven schools.
- Focus groups with students participating in after-school programs in all seven schools.

C. Identification and Analysis of Quantitative Data

As before, a key focus of the evaluation has been working with HCS to identify, source and analyze quantitative data relating to a whole set of preconditions for student achievement. These include academic results, attendance, behavior and measures of school climate which have been disaggregated to allow for comparisons between participants in afterschool and non-participants, targeted cohort of students, ELL and Special Ed. students.

Once again targeted cohorts of students have been included in the disaggregated analysis because prior to this the full impact of HCS programs was being somewhat lost in data that was disaggregated for only certain groups of students. However, the community school model encompasses a wider set of programs and services than just afterschool programs.

The “target cohorts” have been selected by each school (working closely with ActKnowledge) and represent students who have received different interventions developed through the community

school model and who were expected to progress as a *result of these particular intervention(s)*. These cohorts include students that have been targeted for supports because they are academically “at risk” or because they face other challenges such as attendance/behavior problems, or issues arising for English Language Learners (ELL) or Special Education (SE) students. The focus on “target cohorts” is particularly important in the context of community schools where the resources do not exist for every student to receive all services; so the efficacy of the model can only be expected to be fully seen where it is most fully implemented.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

The academic results are based on ‘raw’ scores from Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which were analyzed for each academic year from 2016 to 2017.⁷ There was a number of components and levels of analysis of MAP scores in this respect. In particular:

- MAP scores for students who participated in afterschool programs were analyzed to examine the impact on those who participated in afterschool programs from 2016 to 2017
- MAP scores for target cohorts of students were also analyzed to examine the academic impact.
- Analysis was undertaken of MAP scores for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special education (SE) students between Spring 2016 and Spring 2017. The figures were further disaggregated to examine the impact of interventions targeted at particular cohorts of ELL or SE students.

Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism

In looking at attendance the evaluation focused on rates of chronic absenteeism as opposed to attendance figures overall.⁸In 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.

Chronic absenteeism data was also disaggregated to examine the impact of interventions targeted at cohort of students who are (or at-risk of being) chronically absent.

Behavior

⁷ It was not possible to provide a longitudinal analysis of MAP test scores from 2013 to 2017 as the method for administering MAP changed in 2016. The MAP test is only administered once in the school year since 2016, where as in prior years it was administered twice in the school year (in Fall and Spring).

⁸ A school with high attendance rates can have high “chronic” or “severely chronic” absentee rates – for example, the attendance rate might be 95 percent but when the absences are added together, they can accumulate and the student(s) can miss a month or more of school over the course of the school year. For a fuller analysis of this topic, 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).

The evaluation focused on the impact of interventions targeted at students with behavior issues using suspensions as an indicator. Although schools tend to use suspensions less in dealing with behavior issues, the use of suspensions as an indicator in this instance was reliable as it related to behaviors mandated for suspension by HPS.

School Climate.

To obtain a picture of changes in school climate, the results of the School Climate and Student Connectedness Survey conducted by Hartford Public Schools (HPS) were analyzed. These include responses from students to questions relating to safety and peer climate and responses by parents to questions about whether the school made them feel welcomed or respected cultural diversity.

Student Surveys

The survey questionnaire developed by ActKnowledge in 2012 was again used to elicit the views and perceptions of students (focusing on grades 3 and up) who participated in the afterschool programs on key outcomes (identified through the Theory of Change and 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.

A “pre” survey was administered to afterschool participants in the seven schools in November 2016 and a “post” survey to measure changes in perceptions over the school year was administered in May 2017. A student tracking form was used by the community school directors to ensure that students had completed both “pre” and “post” surveys and that the responses were matched for individual students.

Table (i): Responses by School to “Pre” and “Post” Student Surveys

	# Pre-Survey	# Post-Survey	# Pre-Post Survey Matched
ASA Bellizzi	99	96	91
Burns	68	55	48
Burr	49	60	33
HMTCA	88	79	34
Milner	52	38	13
West Middle	53	41	35
Wish	33	53	19
Total	442	422	273

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