


The background is a solid mustard yellow color. It features several five-pointed stars in white outline, solid green, and solid red. A network of thin white and green lines crisscrosses the page, some connecting the stars and others forming a grid-like pattern. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is centered in the upper half of the page, containing the title and subtitle.

# SUCCESS FOR ALL

*ENSURING ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR  
UNIQUE STUDENT POPULATIONS IN  
HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

September 2015



*“Children are likely to live up  
to what you believe of them.”*

**LADY BIRD JOHNSON**, *Former U.S. First Lady*

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Corey Moses  
Table 1  
Advocate's Examination Committee



# **LETTER** TO THE SUPERINTENDENT AND

## BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We entered the teaching profession and return each year because of our desire to make a difference in the lives of our students. We are proud to teach in Hartford and we believe in all of our students. We know all students carry their own strengths and challenges; as educators, our goal is to help our students achieve success. However, our district is failing two unique populations of students that have been historically underserved: students with special needs and English-language learners. For decades, our education system has perpetuated achievement gaps that prohibit our most vulnerable students from reaching their potential.

As a district, we often talk about the value of equity and ensuring that all students are supported to succeed. The principle of equity is powerful, and we must do better to live up to our own rhetoric. What better place to start than with our commitment to unique student populations who have been underserved for years?

We can no longer maintain a system that leaves our most vulnerable students behind. In the spirit of collaboration, we seek your partnership in change to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to reach their dreams.

In partnership,

*2015 Educators 4 Excellence—Connecticut*

*Teacher Action Team on Unique Student Populations*

*"Everyone within the district must work together to ensure that we can do what's best for all of our kids."*

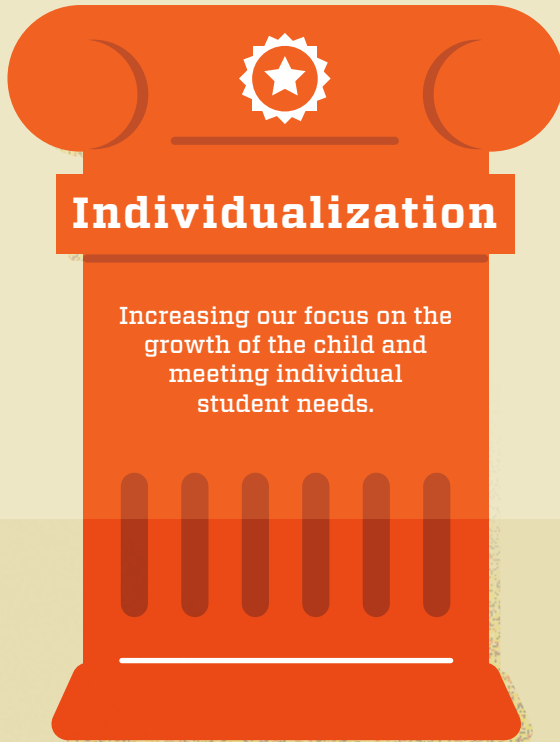
*Chelsea Usher,*

*High School English, Pathways Academy of Technology and Design*

# FOUR PILLARS TO ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

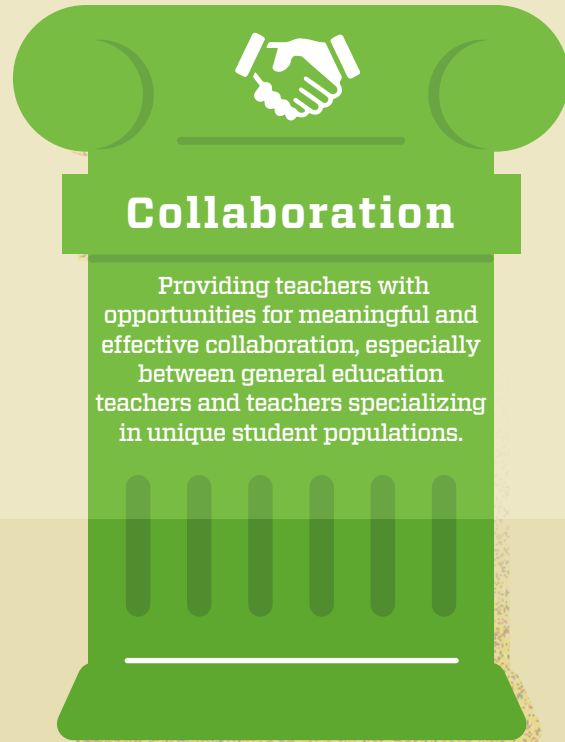
A wide body of research confirms the ability of students with special needs and English-language learners to perform at high levels with the correct supports.<sup>2,3</sup> With this goal in mind, we spent several weeks examining how we currently serve unique student populations in our district, reviewing research, and gathering input from our colleagues to help inform the recommendations in this paper.

Here, we outline our path to ensure success for all students in a four-pillared proposal:



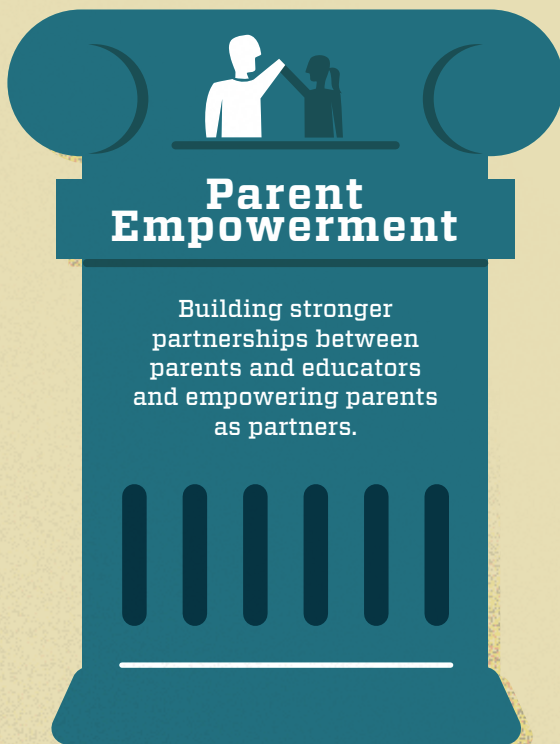
**Individualization**

Increasing our focus on the growth of the child and meeting individual student needs.



**Collaboration**

Providing teachers with opportunities for meaningful and effective collaboration, especially between general education teachers and teachers specializing in unique student populations.



**Parent Empowerment**

Building stronger partnerships between parents and educators and empowering parents as partners.

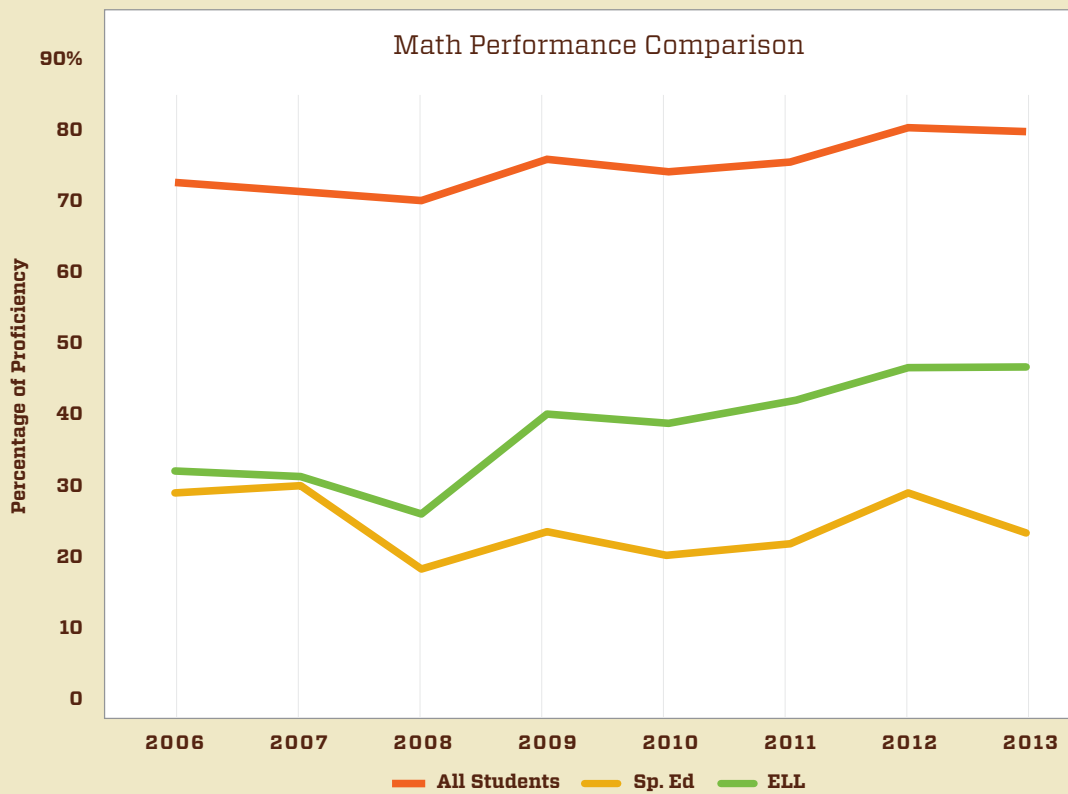
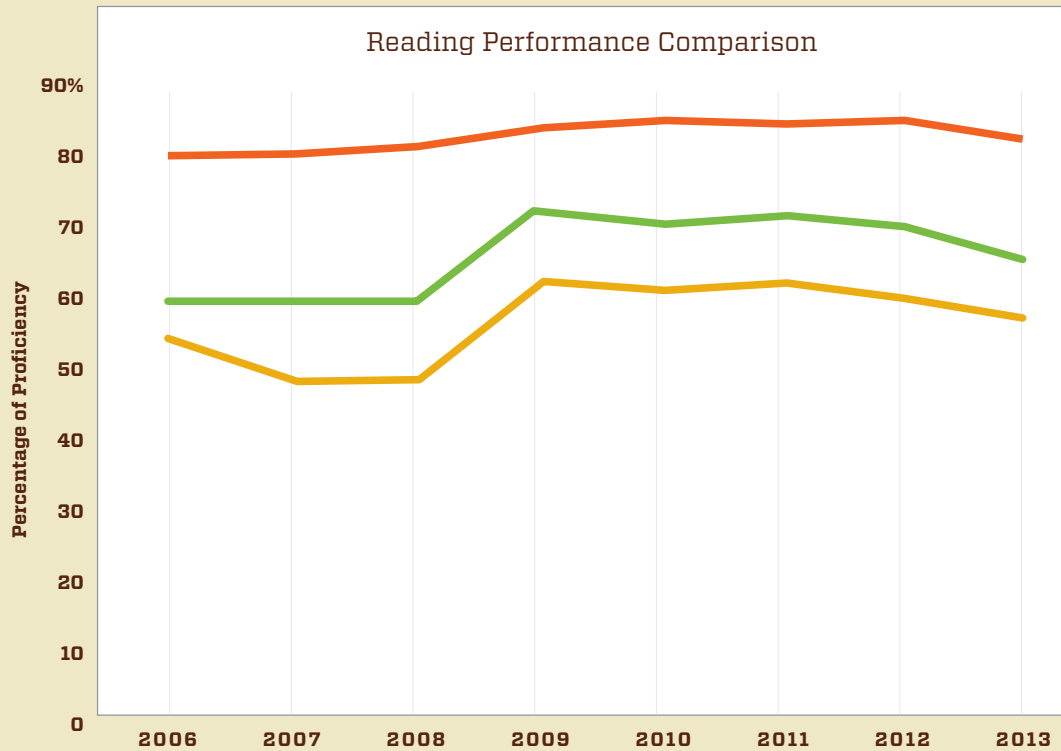


**Accountability**

Holding ourselves accountable to academic growth for unique student populations.



**Fig. 1 Who are unique student populations?**



When we use the term “unique student populations,” we are referring to two specific groups of students: English-language learners and students with special needs. In doing so, we are not attempting to trivialize the distinct experiences of the two groups or exclude any other groups who have unique needs. We call attention to these populations because of the dire need for change for these students in Hartford. English-language learners, as defined by Connecticut statute, are students whose dominant language is not English and whose proficiency in English is not sufficient to ensure equal educational opportunity.<sup>4</sup> Students with special needs are students who have an identified disability and receive services according to their individualized education program (IEP).<sup>5</sup>

# INDIVIDUALIZATION

All teachers can agree that no two students are the same; yet, in our district, we often treat our students as if they were. We believe unique student populations should receive an education that is personalized to their individual needs. We call on the district to adopt sound strategies to better support teachers in individualizing instruction for diverse learners.

## STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH TO LEARNING

Currently in the district, efforts to individualize learning for unique student populations focus on accommodations, or providing students with the tools they need to work within the existing curriculum and education structure. We believe the district can further its efforts to individualize for unique student populations by adopting student-centered approaches to learning.

Student-centered approaches, like project-based learning and blended learning, will help teachers ensure that students are placed on their individualized paths<sup>a</sup> toward success because they allow for a higher degree of specialized instruction and also offer instruction through multiple learning styles for greater access to content (see footnote on page 5).

The district has already begun its work to bring student-centered approaches to classrooms. In 2013, Hartford Public Schools (HPS) received a grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to conduct a blended learning pilot in two Hartford schools: Bulkeley High School and Pathways Academy of Technology and Design. Due to the

success of this pilot, Nellie Mae awarded the district a larger, multi-year grant for phase two of implementation in early 2015. Through this grant HPS will implement a districtwide system of student-centered approaches to learning. To ensure that this districtwide implementation of blended learning is successful, we call on the district to provide educators with the support and accountability that will encourage us to try new instructional methods. Specifically, the district should:

**CREATE SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT.** The district should lean on the leadership of teachers to share best practices and lessons learned when testing new student-centered learning methods. For example, teachers who participated in the first year of the district's pilot on blended learning could facilitate professional development sessions to support teachers who are new to blended learning.

**ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY.** The district should release a report to highlight progress and areas for continued improvement in its execution of blended learning, project-based learning, and other student-centered individualization strategies.

## CHALLENGE

Our instructional practices do not currently meet the unique needs of all students, especially English-language learners and students with special needs.

## SOLUTION

The district should support principals and teachers to individualize instruction inside their schools and classrooms.



*“As a teacher, feeling that you have no voice may be your reality, but you are still the best voice, the best chance, the one who has been given the job of being a change agent for your students.”*

*Debra St. Germain, Special Education Teacher, Bulkeley High School*

## **INDIVIDUAL STUDENT SUCCESS PLANS**

Since 2012, Connecticut Public Act 11-135 has required Connecticut districts to create Student Success Plans (SSPs) for every sixth-grade student. As outlined in the law, Student Success Plans are individualized plans developed to address each student’s unique needs and to ensure the student’s educational and career success. SSPs were designed to follow students through high school and to put students on a path toward postsecondary success. We believe that SSPs could provide educators with an opportunity to tailor education for unique student populations. However, as a district, we are not using SSPs to their highest potential.

The district should ensure that Student Success Plans are implemented effectively by:

**STARTING THE PROCESS EARLY.** In elementary grades, the district should require teachers to document unique student strengths and interests.

**ENCOURAGING INTEGRATION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH.** In middle and high school, the district should require teachers to have regular conversations about SSPs and postgraduation goals with students who have unique needs. For example, the district could create a curriculum for teachers to use with students during scheduled advisory time.

## **STREAMLINED DATA SYSTEMS**

Knowing which skills and concepts our students have mastered is necessary if we are to individualize instruction effectively. However, currently, student data is uncoordinated and teachers do not have easy and streamlined access to the data we need to effectively teach students with unique needs. In fact, in our survey of Hartford educators, almost two-thirds of educators reported they did not have the student information they needed to effectively teach unique student populations at the start of the school year, and nearly 100 percent of teachers believed that Hartford Public Schools should provide better access to student data to support teachers’ understanding of and planning for unique student populations.

Fortunately, the district has already begun to put a powerful solution in place with its adoption of Performance Plus. When fully operational, Performance Plus has the potential to provide teachers with a single point of contact to easily access all academic student data. This level of availability of student data is urgently needed to better serve our students in unique populations, but the implementation of Performance Plus has been slow. To prevent further delay in the rollout and consistent use of Performance Plus, the district should set a public timeline for the transfer and consolidation of data into this data system and release regular progress updates on the rollout at board meetings.

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**Student-Centered Approaches to Learning:** An encompassing term that describes learning methods that are intended to address the distinct learning needs and interests of individual students. Student-centered learning is a shift from the traditional instructional model in which teachers stand in front of the room and deliver a lecture to note-taking students.

**Blended Learning:** An instructional approach in which students learn in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

**Project-Based Learning:** A student-guided instructional approach in which students gain knowledge and skills by investigating and responding to a complex problem or challenge.<sup>6</sup>

**Performance Plus:** A data tracking system that provides educators with a single point of contact to easily access student assessment data.

# COLLABORATION

We envision a redesigned schooling experience where teaching unique student populations can become a true partnership between general education teachers and specialists.

To realize our vision, research confirms what we, as educators, already know: teacher collaboration is key.<sup>9</sup>

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TIME

While teacher development time is built into our district's union contract,<sup>10</sup> we fail to use this time effectively to promote meaningful teacher collaboration, especially among general educators and teachers who specialize in unique student populations. To maximize the impact of collaboration, the district should foster common planning both within schools and across schools.

**WITHIN SCHOOLS.** School administrators should build time for teacher collaboration between general education teachers and specialty teachers—special education teachers,

reading specialists, speech and language pathologists, or bilingual teachers—who teach the same students. During school-team common planning, teachers can share best practices and effective teaching strategies for unique student populations; teachers may also review SSPs (see recommendation #1) and progress for individual students to ensure that all children receive the support they need.

**ACROSS SCHOOLS.** By repurposing the existing districtwide professional development days, teacher leaders in the district who have achieved success with unique student populations could lead small learning communities where teachers come together to share data, successes, and challenges, and begin to define what high expectations should look like for diverse learners in the district.



## CHALLENGE

Classroom teachers are often unsupported to effectively collaborate with their colleagues who specialize in unique student populations.

## SOLUTION

The district should invest in teacher collaboration, particularly between general education teachers and teachers specializing in unique student populations.



*“If we expect our students to collaborate as 21st-century learners, we, too, need to prioritize collaboration as teachers.”*

*Paul Griswold, High School English, Bulkeley High School*

## **CO-TEACHING PILOT**

To meet the unique needs of diverse learners, the district should pilot models of co-teaching in several classrooms across the district. Co-teaching is an alternative learning environment in which multiple educators, often a general education teacher and a specialist, work collaboratively to deliver instruction to a shared classroom of students with diverse needs. Co-teaching often includes:

- Co-planning—when multiple teachers plan for instruction together.
- Co-instruction—when multiple teachers are actively engaged with students.
- Co-assessment—when multiple teachers evaluate student progress.<sup>11</sup>

We recommend that the district pilot models of co-teaching in several elementary, middle, and high school classrooms across the district—with a particular emphasis on schools that serve high numbers of students with unique needs.

Co-teaching is a research-based best practice. In districts we studied,<sup>12,13</sup> co-teaching helped drive positive student outcomes, particularly for unique student populations. However, co-teaching is a complex and sophisticated model that requires deep commitment among educators in addition to clear systemic supports to ensure success. In our research, we found three key considerations for successful co-teaching: strong working relationships, common planning time, and administrative support.<sup>14</sup>

**STRONG WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.** Co-teaching requires a high level of commitment from educators. To be successful, co-teachers not only must deeply care about the academic success of their students and work relentlessly to achieve that success, but they also must establish a strong relationship between themselves as educators.

Given this, we recommend during the pilot that all co-teaching partners be voluntary. As self-selecting volunteers, early co-teaching adopters will approach the pilot with enthusiasm and greater patience while the co-teaching program is improved.

**COMMON PLANNING TIME.** Common planning time, as discussed above, is an essential component of co-teaching. When developing the master schedule for the year, teacher collaboration time must be reserved for all teachers participating in the co-teaching pilot. In one survey, co-teachers expressed a need for at least one weekly co-planning period for each co-teaching partnership.<sup>15</sup>

**SUPPORT FROM ADMINISTRATORS.** Finally, the district should enlist committed school administrators when selecting schools and teachers for the co-teaching pilot. It is more likely that needed co-planning time will be provided if the school leader is invested in the success of the co-teaching pilot. Additionally, in districts where co-teaching is successful, school administrators have worked with co-teachers to monitor the program’s effectiveness and participate with teachers in collaborative problem-solving when challenges arise.<sup>16</sup>



## POLL

Hartford Public Schools should provide opportunities for **COLLABORATION** between teachers to plan and share strategies for supporting unique student populations.

**95%**

Agree or  
Strongly Agree

**4%**

Disagree or  
Strongly Disagree

**<1%**

Undecided



# PARENT EMPOWERMENT

The need for parent involvement is not unique to students with disabilities and English-language learners. For years, research has shown that active parent and family engagement in schooling positively impacts student learning.<sup>18</sup> But for students with unique learning needs, parent involvement is even more critical.

In Hartford, we work with families who have not been adequately served by our schools. Whether as a result of language or cultural barriers between staff and home or a product of their own negative schooling experience as students, Hartford parents—particularly parents of unique student populations—have not always felt welcome in our education system.

We must ensure that our families know their voices are important and valued. To achieve a deep level of parent engagement, the district should increase accessibility of key documents and empower parent voices to help drive success for all students in the district.

A photograph of a woman with long, dark braids, wearing a white headband and a light-colored, patterned button-down shirt. She is looking down and slightly to her left. The background is a bright, out-of-focus classroom or office space with windows and desks. The entire image has a warm, orange-yellow tint.

## CHALLENGE

Parents of students with unique needs are too often inauthentically or inconsistently engaged in their school's community, which limits their ability to advocate for their children's success.

## SOLUTION

The district should ensure parents of students with unique needs are empowered to be true partners in our schools and district.



# RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE COUNCILS

PER CONNECTICUT PUBLIC ACT 10-111

## 1. ANALYZING

school achievement data  
and school needs

## 2. ASSISTING

in developing and approving  
the School Accountability Plan

## 3. DEVELOPING AND APPROVING

a written school-parent  
involvement policy

## 4. WORKING WITH

administrators in developing and  
approving a school-parent compact

## 5. ASSISTING WITH

programmatic and  
operational changes to  
improve student achievement

## ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

Parent knowledge is the starting point for parent engagement. But, as a district, we have not effectively provided parents of unique student populations with the information they need. Critical information either is not shared or is presented in a fashion that is inaccessible to parents and families. For example, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are often written with pedagogical or legal jargon that is unfamiliar to parents. Too often, parents sit across the table at annual Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings, unable to fully engage. Similarly, with parents of English-Language learners, parent engagement is impeded because information is not presented in the family's native language.

The district should increase accessibility of information in important documents. Specifically, we call on the district to improve the following:

**WEBSITE TRANSLATION.** Translate the HPS website into Spanish immediately and release a timeline outlining when the website will be translated into the other languages native to our families, including Karen (Burmese), Portuguese, Arabic, and Bosnian. This school year, the district released guidelines for the choice lottery in several languages.<sup>19</sup> We applaud the district's work to ensure equity for all families, and urge the district to continue its effort to make our education system more accessible.

**ACCESSIBILITY OF DOCUMENTS.** Revise language on the Hartford Public Schools website and in other key documents to ensure accessible special education resources for parents. Currently the HPS website directs parents to review materials and forms in the Special Education Document Library. While there are many resources available on the website, including a parent checklist for PPT meetings, much of the content contains jargon that is unfamiliar to parents. Specifically, these resources use acronyms (e.g., NCLB, CMT, FAPE, LRE) and terms (e.g., Extended School Year Services and Assistive Technology Evaluation) with, at best, a cursory explanation of what each term or acronym means. We recommend that the district remove or clearly define all jargon found in the available resources for parents of students with unique needs.

## EMPOWERED PARENT VOICES

Once information is shared in a way that is accessible to parents, the district should also proactively approach parents as partners in our education system.

While there are some avenues for parent voice in our district, these systems are not fulfilling their potential.

School Governance Councils (SGCs) were introduced in the state with the passage of Connecticut Public Act 10-111 in 2010. SGCs were developed to provide an opportunity for parents and community members to engage in school-level, strategic conversations about student success. We believe SGCs offer an opportunity for schools to partner with parents in their work to close achievement gaps, particularly gaps between unique student populations and their peers.<sup>20</sup>

However, implementation of SGCs has been inconsistent, and there is no accountability structure to ensure that SGCs are high quality across schools. According to the meeting notes archive page on the Hartford Public Schools website, only six SGC meetings occurred during the 2014-15 school year across the district.<sup>21</sup>

We call on the district to hold schools responsible for implementing SGCs with fidelity and to ensure greater transparency around each school's implementation of School Governance Councils. This begins with posting minutes of each school's monthly SGC meeting on the website. The district should also ensure that SGCs have sufficient representation of parents of students with disabilities and English-Language learners.

By better utilizing existing parent empowerment systems, the district can begin a new era of parent involvement for unique student populations in Hartford—an era where parents of unique learners are empowered as:

- **INFORMED PARTNERS** and knowledgeable members of the school community.
- **SUPPORTERS OF STUDENT LEARNING** who reinforce academic skills and strategies at home.
- **DECISION-MAKERS** who help drive real change for unique student populations in the district.

## POLL

All parents should be able to understand their children's **UNIQUE LEARNING NEEDS** and be informed about the expectations for their children's growth.

97%

Agree or Strongly Agree

3%

Disagree or Strongly Disagree

<1%

Undecided

Source: E4E-Connecticut survey of Hartford Public Schools educators, n=188

# ACCOUNTABILITY

As teachers, we want the best for our students, especially for those most vulnerable. This desire is what motivates us to give our best every day, but we also have to admit that our students deserve better than what we are currently providing.

To create a path toward success for all students in Hartford, the district must individualize instruction to meet students' diverse needs, encourage teacher collaboration, and treat parents as true partners. However, it is not enough to create and implement a plan in these areas; as a district, we must also hold ourselves accountable for achieving ambitious growth for unique student populations.

## CHALLENGE

As a district, we have not held ourselves accountable to achieving consistent academic growth for unique student populations.

## SOLUTION

The district should use the existing accountability and support structure of the portfolio district model to drive academic growth for unique student populations.



# INVESTING IN THE PORTFOLIO MODEL

The district already has a structure in place to deliver differentiated support to schools and drive growth for unique student populations. Two key components of this structure include (1) school quality data meetings between school administrators and their associate superintendents and (2) instructional rounds or school walkthroughs. With these structures, the district has taken important first steps to ensure accountability and support for schools. In an effort to further the district's efforts, we recommend the following enhancements to ensure that our portfolio model is using growth-based accountability, support, and extensive engagement and empowerment of key stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, and families.

*"The strength of the portfolio district concept is that you do this work, school by school, child by child, according to whatever is in the best interest of the students and families you serve."*<sup>24</sup>

***Superintendent Beth Schiavino-Narvaez***

## POLL

HPS should ensure that educators hold **HIGH EXPECTATIONS** for unique student populations.

**94%**

Agree or Strongly Agree

**4%**

Disagree or Strongly Disagree

**2%**

Undecided

Source: E4E-Connecticut survey of Hartford Public Schools educators, n=188.

# WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY COULD LOOK LIKE

## SCHOOL QUALITY DATA MEETINGS

## INSTRUCTIONAL ROUNDS

Current Practice

School administrators present data and conduct data reflections with their associate superintendent for instructional leadership.

During data reflections, school administrators and associate superintendents review entire school results without an emphasis on unique student populations.

After data reflections, school administrators inconsistently follow up with teachers and staff to share takeaways and next steps from data reflections.

Before hosting a school walkthrough, school administrators identify a problem of practice, for which they seek feedback and assistance.

A team of associate superintendents conducts a school walkthrough. During the walkthrough, the team collects data and observations related to the problem of practice.

After school walkthroughs, overarching observations are shared with school administrators; however, follow-up with teachers and staff does not consistently occur.

We Recommend

Collectively, school administrators and teachers present data and conduct data reflections with their associate superintendent.

During data reflections, school administrators, teachers, and associate superintendents review entire school results, with a specific emphasis on growth and challenges among unique student populations.

After data reflections, school administrators provide clear and consistent follow-up to celebrate success and address concerns reflected in data, particularly for students with disabilities and English-language learners.

Before hosting a school walkthrough, the school administrators and teachers collaboratively identify a problem of practice, for which they seek feedback and assistance. The problem of practice should highlight its impact on unique student populations.

A team of associate superintendents, parents, and teachers conduct a school walkthrough. During the walkthrough the team collects data and observations related to the problem of practice, with particular attention to the problem of practice in a variety of education settings, including inclusion classrooms, pullout services, and self-contained classrooms.

After school walkthroughs, overarching observations on the problem of practice are shared with both school administrators and teachers.



## POLL

Hartford Public Schools should hold schools **ACCOUNTABLE** for the academic growth of unique student populations.

**80%**

Agree or  
Strongly Agree

**14%**

Disagree or  
Strongly Disagree

**2%**

Undecided



# CONCLUSION

As teachers, we believe in the ability of every child, and we know it is our responsibility to ensure that our students achieve their dreams. For far too long, our district has failed to effectively meet the needs of our most vulnerable students: students with special needs and English-language learners. To be successful as a district, we must focus on equity. Equity requires that we work tirelessly to close gaps between groups of students in our city. We believe there is a path to high expectations and successful outcomes for all students in our district. To ensure that all our students achieve their full potential, our district must individualize instruction to meet students' diverse needs, encourage teacher collaboration, treat parents as true partners, and then hold our schools accountable for achieving ambitious growth.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Education. (2014). ELL Enrollment Counts and Special Education Enrollment Counts (Data file). Retrieved from [http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct\\_report/CedarHome.aspx](http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/CedarHome.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Center for Public Education. Special Education: A better perspective. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Evaluating-performance/Special-education-At-a-glance/Special-education-A-better-perspective-full-report.html>

<sup>3</sup> Hillman, A., Velazquez, L., Oppenheimer, C. (2010). English Language Learning Students in Connecticut. Retrieved from <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/edu10englishlanguage.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Bilingual Education Statute, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-17e (2010)

<sup>5</sup> The Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004)

<sup>6</sup> Hartford Public Schools. (2013). Hartford Teachers Embark on Action Research to Identify Student-Centered Learning Approaches: Project Funded by Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Retrieved from [http://www.hartfordschools.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=734](http://www.hartfordschools.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=734)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education. (2012). Student Success Plan: Mission and Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/ssreform/>

[studentsuccessplan\\_mission\\_skills.pdf](#)

<sup>9</sup> Conderman, G. (2011). Middle School Co-Teaching: Effective practices and reflections. *Middle School Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 24–25

<sup>10</sup> Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Hartford Board of Education and the Hartford Federation of Teachers Local No. 1018, AFT, AFL-CIO. (July 1, 2014). Retrieved July 17, 2015

<sup>11</sup> Conderman, G. (2011). Middle School Co-Teaching: Effective practices and reflections. *Middle School Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 26–29

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 29–31

<sup>13</sup> Dieker and Murrawski, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Friend, M. (2008). Co-Teaching: A simple solution that isn't that simple after all. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 12–16

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 12

<sup>16</sup> Friend, p. 16

<sup>17</sup> Dieker, L., Murrawski, W. (2003). Co-Teaching at the Secondary Level: Unique issues, current trends, and suggestions for success. *High School Journal*, Vol. 86, No. 4, pp. 2

<sup>18</sup> Comer, J. (2005). The Rewards of Parent Participation. *Education Leadership*, Vol. 62, No. 6, pp. 38–42

<sup>19</sup> Hartford Public Schools. Choice Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.hartfordschools.org/choice-top-menu>

<sup>20</sup> An Act Concerning Educational Reform, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 12-116 (2012)

<sup>21</sup> Hartford Public Schools. SGC Minutes Archives. Retrieved from <http://www.hartfordschools.org/sgc-meeting-minutes-archive>

<sup>22</sup> Epstein, J. L. (1995). School, Family, Community Partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 76, No. 9, pp. 701–712

<sup>23</sup> An Act Concerning Educational Reform, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 12-116 (2012)

<sup>24</sup> Schiavino-Narvaez, B. (2014). Address to our Teachers by Superintendent Beth Schiavino-Narvaez Teacher Convocation, Monday August 25, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.hartfordschools.org/news-alerts/80-spotlight/1140-dr-narvaez-convocation-2014-address>

# TEACHER ACTION TEAM PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

## **IDENTIFYING E4E'S POLICY FOCUS**

To select this policy issue, Educators 4 Excellence—Connecticut held more than 150 focus groups, school visits, and individual conversations with Hartford educators and stakeholders. We also surveyed 10 percent of the district's teachers. Supports for unique student populations emerged as one of the most critical issues in our outreach, with 60 percent of teachers ranking the issue as one of the two most important issues for change.

## **REVIEWING RESEARCH**

We met for six weeks to review research on school climate and discipline. In our process, we looked at current problems, root causes, barriers, and potential solutions. As we explored solutions, we studied programs and ideas from across the nation, as well as promising policies and practices right here in Hartford. We used this knowledge along with our collective experiences as Hartford Public Schools teachers to draft this paper's recommendations.

## **CONDUCTING LOCAL RESEARCH**

We conducted interviews with our teacher colleagues and district leaders to gather critical information about current policies and practices related to unique student populations. When developing our policy recommendations, Teacher Action Team members held focus groups and surveyed our colleagues. In total, we gathered feedback from over 200 educators.

# THE 2015 EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE—CONNECTICUT HARTFORD TEACHER ACTION TEAM ON UNIQUE STUDENT POPULATIONS

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Danielle Knobloch

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Debra St. Germain

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Justin Taylor

*High School Social Studies Teacher at Bulkeley High School Upper School*

Kristen Luckawicz

*Elementary School Teacher at Parkville Community School*

Lauren Midgette

*High School English Teacher at Bulkeley High School Upper School*

Paul Griswold

*High School English Teacher at Bulkeley High School Upper School*

Stuart Beckford

*Fine Arts Teacher and Union Representative at Burr School*

Syeita Rhey

*Elementary School Teacher and Union Representative at Burr School*

Tara Phillippi

*Elementary School Teacher at Parkville Community School*

Wendy Turek

*High School Science Teacher at Bulkeley High School Lower School*

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