Stamford Full-Service Community Schools

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Stamford Full-Service Community Schools Project Narrative

Introduction

The United Way of Western Connecticut (UWWC) has served as the backbone for the Strive Together, Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) since its inception in 2014. As the backbone organization, UWWC sponsors and coordinates the overall SC2C program. Additionally, as a city-wide collective impact partnership, SC2C has its own 17-member governing board, called the Executive Team, which reviews and approves its operating budget and activities. The mission of SC2C is to collectively align community resources to ensure equity and excellence in education, for every child from cradle to career so that all youth are prepared to succeed in education and life.

The improvement of US schools, particularly in large, diverse cities, has been recognized as America's moon shot for the twenty first century. There are very few national programs that have a track record of success dealing with all the complexities. Strive Together, which originated in Cincinnati, has spread to over 70 communities in the US, and has been recognized by professors at the Harvard Business School and many others as one of the few successful efforts.

In Stamford, SC2C is a collective impact organization, that convenes local stakeholders (public school system, nonprofits, higher education, city government, civic organizations, the business community, parents, and youth) to address the complexities of improving educational outcomes which cannot be adequately addressed in silos. In this coordinated approach we align the efforts of stakeholders, use data to inform our work, and implement

and advocate for strategies that work to benefit children. Stamford Cradle to Career remains committed to elevating the voice of traditionally underrepresented members of our community. We value the perspective, ideas and lived experiences of our families; regarding them as experts in the decision-making process of school improvement and positive systems change. We are excited to advance our work in family, student, and community engagement by broadening opportunities for students and families to experience a Full-Service Community Schools model in Stamford. Through innovative programing, greater access to advocacy, and an integrated approach to supports, the students and families of Stamford will thrive.

1 Need for Project

The US high school graduation rate in 2018-19 hit an all-time high of 86% (*COE - Public High School Graduation Rates*, n.d.). In Stamford, CT, public high schools reported a graduation rate of 87% that year, just exceeding the national average (*Four-Year Graduation Rates*, n.d.). However, subsequent years have seen that rate decline in Stamford to 85% in the 2020-21 school year; partially a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and mix of remote and hybrid learning (*Four-Year Graduation Rates*, n.d.). Furthermore, hidden in Stamford's high school graduation rates is the wide disparity in achievement for Black and Hispanic students who comprise the majority of Stamford Public School (SPS) students. Two out of every ten Black students and nearly one out of every four Hispanic student's fail to graduate high school (*Four-Year Graduation Rates*, n.d.). Additionally, fewer than two thirds of English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education students graduate (*Four-Year Graduation Rates*, n.d.). It is with this lens that Stamford

Cradle to Career (SC2C) is approaching our funding application for the creation of two Full-Service Community Schools.

Table 1: Stamford Public Schools' Four-Year High School Graduation rates

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Stamford District	**91%**	**87%**	**87%**	**86%**	**85%**
Asian	99%	96%	93%	95%	92%
Black	92%	90%	87%	84%	80%
Hispanic	86%	81%	80%	80%	79%
White	96%	92%	93%	94%	94%
Free Lunch	88%	85%	81%	80%	79%
Reduced Lunch	88%	89%	88%	92%	84%
ELL	72%	66%	65%	61%	62%
Special Education	77%	72%	72%	75%	63%

The impact of not completing high school is well documented. High School dropouts face higher rates of unemployment, lower wages, suffer from more adverse health outcomes, and are more likely to interact with the criminal justice system (Rumberger, 2013). Researchers have found that ninth graders frequently indicate skills such as time management, ability to stay on task, and meet more rigorous academic standards as key factors to success in high school (Zeedyk, et al., 2003). However, students also comment that these keys to success are often overcome by social and personal challenges related to peer relationships, bullying, and navigating new and larger educational spaces (Maute & Brough, 2002). As a result, equipping incoming ninth grade students with the

foundation to bridge their middle and high school years academically and socially can drastically improve a student's likelihood of high school graduation. Using the four pillars as a guide, Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) has created a proposal focusing on the formative middle school years to create opportunities for students, families, and the school community to foster academic, physical, mental, and social success in high school.

The demographics of the two middle schools included in this application are in the following table:

Table 2: Demographics for Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools (2021-2022)

	Dolan	**Rippowam**
Total Enrollment	**626**	**746**
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	*
Asian	27 (4%)	35 (5%)
Black/African American	99 (16%)	128 (17%)
Hispanic/Latino	296 (47%)	357 (48%)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	*	*
Two or More	*	21 (3%)
White	182 (29%)	202 (27%)
FRL	384 (61%)	464 (62%)
Student's w/ Disabilities	113	142
ELL	72 (12%)	104 (14%)
% Chronically Absent **	98 (16%)	186 (23%)
Discipline **	15 (2%)	12 (1%)

* Data suppressed for confidentiality

** 2020/21 data

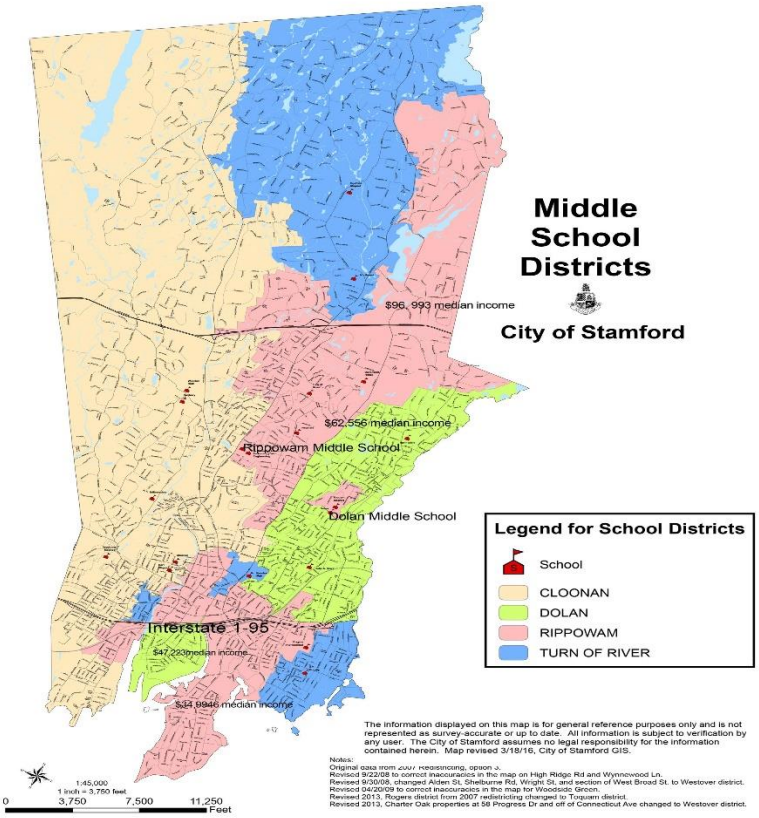
Student, Family and School Community to Be Served

The students and families of Rippowam and Dolan Middle Schools will benefit from this systemic approach to providing academic, physical, and social supports in their schools. Stamford Public Schools has invested in a long-term facilities plan that has many of our existing schools evolving into a continuous Kindergarten to eighth grade model. However, for the next five years Dolan and Rippowam middle schools will remain in a traditional sixth through eighth grade model. This is why Stamford Cradle to Career and Stamford Public Schools, as well as our community partners, selected these two schools to improve the alignment of resources, strategy, and leadership practices to enhance the learning and social outcomes for some of the most deserving families in Stamford.

Over sixty percent of the families served at Dolan and Rippowam middle schools qualify for free and reduced lunch, displaying greater need than both the school district and state levels. To create demographic balance among schools, Stamford Public Schools (SPS) created school attendance zones. Interstate 95 runs along the edge of Downton Stamford, bisecting the city into the larger, more affluent northern portion, and the smaller, more diverse and economically constrained southern portion. Twenty-six out of Stamford's 28 public are located north of the I-95 split. Because SPS uses school attendance zones, this means that families who live in the neighborhoods and send their children to Dolan and Rippowam tend to be more affluent, the median household income for North Stamford families is $96,993, while students bussed in to create balanced enrollment quotas tend to come from the southern and eastern portions of Stamford

where annual household income is nearly three times less, averaging $34,996. As a result, these school attendance zones inadvertently create two separate school communities; those who live near and can utilize the school as a central hub of their neighborhoods and those (many of whom are black, brown, and/or coming from immigrant families) who are “bussed-in” from across town and therefore less likely to see the school as a hub they can utilize. Utilizing the Full-Service Community School Model would allow Stamford to create highly engaging activities at school and in the community that foster value and worth among all our students. With this project students and families that attend schools far from their homes can build community connections and cohesive school partnerships that foster more educational access and higher learning outcomes.

Image 1: Map of Stamford Middle School Zoning Geographies and Income



Plan for Needs Assessment

In partnership with Stamford Public Schools, Stamford Cradle to Career mines valuable data to inform educational strategy in our community. In this core competency of our organization a Needs Assessment will be conducted during year one to identify what academic and socially motivating activities should be provided to increase: student preparation for high school, student access to physical and behavior health, families' sense of belonging and access to school information, as well as the creation and maintenance of a safe and supportive school culture. To do this we must understand what research-based supports students, families, and school communities identify as beneficial to the itemized goals. An example of this fact finding would include questions like: Would a greater number of students access behavioral health services at school if appointments were made available after school from 3-6pm? With the assistance of an independent evaluator, the integrated leadership team will determine actionable program steps.

The social and academic needs of the students we serve are paramount to the development of this program. The program managers, our independent evaluators, and Stamford Cradle to Career's internal data manager will utilize existing academic data such as Smarter- Balanced Assessment information as well as other formative measures. The school district also administers an annual School Climate Survey allowing us the ability to analyze what families, students, and teachers have experienced overtime as it relates to how they feel at school. As a team we will also build our needs assessment of off the information derived from the DESSI-mini. This social emotional screener was piloted in a sampling of Stamford Schools Spring2022 with Rippowam's participation. Annually,

Stamford Public Schools will add additional schools. This new data point will help determine student's need for social emotional support.

The design of the Needs Assessment will be decided by an initial focus group made up of the program directors, parents, students, school staff and community partners. It is essential that all collaborators have influence as decision makers.

The focus group will design the selection criteria for priority students to be served directly through this program. Stamford Cradle to Career in collaboration with Stamford Public Schools will work to strengthen the existing Scientifically Research Based Intervention (SRBI) process. This will allow a hybrid of school staff referral and pre-determined data selection criteria for students prioritized to participate. In reinforcement of Pillars one and four this process will include an individual asset grid per student to identify existing supports, leverage positive relationships and reduce duplication of services.

Support, Resources and Services to Close Identified Educational Gaps

The Stamford Full-Service Community School project is designed to coordinate academic, social-emotional, and physical health offerings for students and families in order to produce broader access to sustainable living, resulting in students being more prepared to enter and succeed in high school. Students will benefit from targeted academic support in response to individual performance. This academic support will target areas of growth for all students with a particular focus on middle school math as this is an established predictor of academic success in the transition from middle to high school. Stamford Public Schools currently determines Algebra 1 aptitude by assessing student performance in grades six and seven on the Orleans Hanna Algebra Prognosis

Test. In this model, students can receive support prior to taking the annual high stakes exam.

With a continued investment in Restorative Practice Professional Development with both Rippowam and Dolan Middle Schools, all staff will be immersed in this school climate and culture methodology. Students and families will be widely exposed to this problem-solving approach to foster better relationships evidenced by a greater sense of belonging.

Out of School time enrichment activities are a key component in this program. Middle School students need opportunities to be exposed to concepts and activities that are new and socially-motivating. Our Needs Assessment will help determine what activities will foster higher school engagement as well as academic outcomes.

Access to physical and behavioral health is paramount to the school readiness of students. As a result, our plan offers a collaborative and extended approach to reaching students and their families with health and mental well-being supports and services they need. Keeping students and their family healthy reduces the likelihood of chronic absenteeism related to preventable conditions. It also strengthens the foundation for students to make the transition to high school.

Mentoring and Peer-Mentoring are additional necessary components of our Full-Service Community Schools Grant application. Stamford Cradle to Career is intent on fostering nurturing relationships in schools between a trusted adult and students as well as student, peer mentoring opportunities. Acknowledging that the transition from middle to high school can be fraught with social adaptations and increased levels of autonomy, we see

peer and adult mentoring as opportunities to help students learn how to plan for their future and make new and meaningful social connections.

Providing resources to families is the cornerstone of systems change. Parents of Rippowam and Dolan Schools will have increased access to the Parent Leadership and Training Institute (PLTI) and Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) program, offered in Spanish, to hone civic skills. These skills allow for more formal civic engagement as well as individual advocacy at the school and community level. This project also includes the creation of a Parent Resource Center providing valuable information regarding Early Childhood programs, food assistance programs, and healthcare resources.

Lastly, Rippowam Middle School currently serves as the hub for Adult and Continuing Education for Stamford Public Schools. The Adult and Continuing Education program offers adult English as a Second Language, citizenship courses, GED, National External Diploma, and various workforce development certification programs covering professions such as para-educators, Certified Nurses Assistance, retail, and bookkeeping. Efforts to grow enrollment in these programs particularly among families from Dolan and Rippowam would provide tangible opportunities for families to grow their skills and earning potential.

Addressing Needs of Underserved and Highly Impacted Populations

Through our concerted efforts this project will address the needs of students requiring individualized instruction and their family's greater access to information. This approach will also offer collaboration with other community providers to coordinate supports that impact and improve school attendance. Through enriching out-of-school time activities, student mentoring, preventative clinical and mental health supports, Stamford's most

deserving students will be greatly impacted and more ready to enter high school with a foundation for success.

2 Quality of the Project Design

The following goals and objectives will guide the planning and implementation of this five-year Full-Service Community Schools project to ensure students are prepared academically and socially to transition successfully from middle to high school.

Annual Measurable Performance Objectives and Outcomes

In conjunction with the independent evaluators discussed later in this proposal, SC2C and partners will refine the objectives and outcomes below to align with the outcomes of the needs assessment and proposed evaluation. Our goals and objectives have been considered based on research and data described below in addition to a guiding theory of change that says: By providing students and their families in grades six through eight with integrated supports, expanded learning opportunities for engagement, and strengthening collaborative leadership practices, students will enter ninth grade with a stronger social, academic, mental, and physical foundation that better prepares them to succeed and graduate high school.

Table 3: Stamford Full-Service Community Schools Grant Goals and Objectives

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
1 Students are prepared to succeed academically and socially during the transition from middle to high school.	1, 2	1.1 2% increase annually in the percent of students in grades 6-8 at Dolan meeting grade level standards on standardized ELA assessments.	• % of students achieving grade level standards on standardized ELA assessments	• Academic tutoring • Special Education awareness building and advocacy • Out-of-school time academic support • Increased project-based learning opportunities • Summer School • Summer Transition Weeks (5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade)	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Sensational Achievement • Domus • ROSCCO • Stamford Public Schools • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau • Beyond Limits

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		1.2 2% increase annually in the percent of students in grades 6-8 at Dolan meeting grade level standards on standardized math assessments.	• % of students achieving grade level standards on standardized Math assessments	• Academic tutoring • Special Education awareness building and advocacy • Out-of-school time academic support • Increased project-based learning opportunities • Summer School • Summer Transition Weeks (5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade) • Promotion of importance of algebra 1 in middle school	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Sensational Achievement • Domus • ROSCCO • Stamford Public Schools • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau • Beyond Limits

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		1.3 2% increase annually in the percent of students in grades 6-8 at Rippowam meeting grade level standards on standardized ELA assessments.	• % of students achieving grade level standards on standardized ELA assessments	• Academic tutoring • Special Education awareness building and advocacy • Out-of-school time academic support • Increased project-based learning opportunities • Summer School • Summer Transition Weeks (5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade)	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Sensational Achievement • Domus • ROSCCO • Stamford Public Schools • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau • Beyond Limits

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		1.4 2% increase annually in the percent of students in grades 6-8 at Rippowam meeting grade level standards on standardized math assessments.	• % of students achieving grade level standards on standardized Math assessments	• Academic tutoring • Special Education awareness building and advocacy • Out-of-school time academic support • Increased project-based learning opportunities • Summer School • Summer Transition Weeks (5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade) • Promotion of importance of algebra 1 in middle school	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Sensational Achievement • Domus • ROSCCO • Stamford Public Schools • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau • Beyond Limits

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		1.5 Students at Dolan and Rippowam have access to at least 2 opportunities to build relationships with a trusted adult with 1 additional mentoring opportunity added per year.	• # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities created in years 2-5 • % of students responding favorably to school climate question about feeling connected to adults in school	• Adult mentoring (community) • Creating opportunities for more adult connections between students • Summer Transition Weeks	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Cares Mentoring Network • Beyond Limits • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau • Stamford Public Schools
		1.6 Students at Dolan and Rippowam have access to at least 2 peer mentorship opportunities, with at	• # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities created in years 2-5 • % of students responding favorably	• Summer Transition Week peer mentorship • Creating opportunities for peer mentorship within the schools	• Stamford Public Education Foundation • Mayor's Youth Services Bureau

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		least one opportunity added annually.	to school climate question about how much students respect them at their school		• Stamford Public Schools
		1.7 Students at Dolan and Rippowam have access to a minimum of 5 enrichment activities with 2 activities added annually.	• # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities created in years 2-5	• Out-of-school time Enrichment • Summer enrichment	• ROSCCO • Stamford Public Schools
2 Students are healthy and able	1	2.2 Provide opportunities for families to receive	• # of opportunities in year 1	• Preventative behavioral health training • Mental Health First Aid	• Family Centers • Community Health Centers

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
to participate fully in school		training aligned to school staff training on mental wellness for students and add an additional opportunity annually.	• # of opportunities created in years 2-5 • % of families who receive at least one training per year	• Mental Health treatment options & supports	• Youth Mental Health Alliance
		2.3 Increase the percentage of students enrolled in the school-based Health Center by 5% annually	• % of students and families accessing the school-based health center in year 1 • % of students and families accessing the school-based health center in years 2-5	• Provision of preventative care services to students and families • Provision of school physical and immunization services to students and families	• Family Centers • Community Health Centers • Health Department

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		2.4 Add 2 additional wrap around services families can access by year three.	• % of families accessing additional services	• Possible addition of dental services • Possible addition of farmers market and nutritional education • Possible expansion of health services to families • Possible expansion of clinic hours	• Family Centers • Community Health Centers • Health Department • Fairgate Farms
3 Families have a sense of belonging within the schools and have access to knowledge on	1, 3	3.1 Establish a centralized Parent Resource Center at Dolan and Rippowam in year 1 that offers families a connection to at least	• #/% of families accessing the resource center annually • # of resources available for families in year 1	• Connections to childcare • Support for early learning and new parent resources • Employment support • Housing support • Food security • Cost saving opportunities	• Stamford Public Schools • Sparkler • Family Centers • SPEF-Here to Help • Person to Person

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
how to best support their child		2 services with 1 additional service added annually	• # of resources added for families in years 2-5		• ALICE Enrichment Fund • Prosperi-Key • School Readiness Council
		3.2 Caregivers are provided with 2 easily accessible educational opportunities annually to further their knowledge and/or build their skills with 1 additional activity added annually.	• #/% of families joining activities through the family resource center • # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities added years 2-5	• Financial Literacy • Adult Education/GED programs • Adult ESL • Special Education Advocacy and Information • Parenting support • Promotion of Algebra 1 importance • Restorative Practices training	• Stamford Public Schools • Stamford Public Education Foundation • Ferguson Library • Sensational Achievement • DOMUS • Jewish Community Center

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
					• PLTI/PEP • Raising Highly Capable Kids
		3.3 Families at Dolan and Rippowam have exposure to 2 local enrichment events exposing students to new activities growing this opportunity to a quarterly experience.	• # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities added in years 2-5	• Family fun days • Local outings at sport and cultural centers	• Stamford Public Schools • PTO
4 Community schools create and maintain a safe and	1, 3, 4	4.1 Teachers and school staff at Dolan and Rippowam receive a minimum of	• # of trainings in year 1 • # of trainings added in years 2-5	• Restorative Practice Trainings • Mentor training	• School Climate Consultants

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
supportive school climate and culture		2 trainings a year on creating an inclusive and restorative environment with 1 additional opportunity for training offered annually.			
		4.2 Establish a consistent opportunity for families and students to participate in events related to building school culture and creating an inclusive and restorative	• # of opportunities in year 1 • # of opportunities in years 2-5 • #/% of students and families attending at least 1 event in year 1	• Restorative Practice trainings • Empathy project • Creation of a full-time Restorative Practice Facilitator • Trainings on creating inclusive environments	• Stamford Public Schools

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
		environment by the end of year 1.	• % increase in number of students and families attending events in year 2-5		
		4.3 Increase the percentage of students who positively rate the school climate and culture by 3% annually	• % of students responding favorably to questions in school climate section of school climate survey • % of students responding favorably to questions in sense of belonging	• Regular assemblies to build culture and climate • Peer mentoring opportunities • Adult mentoring opportunities • Out-of-school time enrichment	• Stamford Public Schools

Goal	Pillar	Objective	Measures	Sample Activities May Include…	Potential Partners
			section of school climate survey		
		4.4 Increase the percentage of families who positively rate their child's school climate by 3% annually	• % of families responding favorably to questions in school climate section of school climate survey	• Parent resource center • Enrichment outings • Family mental wellness trainings	• Stamford Public Schools

Evidence Basis for Proposed Interventions and Project Design

The design and interventions selected for this project were created using research, data, and input from the schools and existing community partners involved in this grant. The project design uses four overall goals; aligned to the four pillars of Community Schools. Subsequent measurable objectives will help define our success in achieving these goals. A detailed needs assessment to be conducted during year one will provide more baseline data to add to and refine proposed activities and identify additional partners who may need to be included in carrying out the interventions. Underpinning the four goals is a commitment to creating an integrated approach that fosters a restorative school environment. This approach places the child at the center of the school community and fosters the creation of meaningful relationships and support systems that foster a child's academic, social, and physical wellbeing (DePaoli et al., 2021).

Goal 1: Preparing students academically and socially for success in the transition to high school: The transition from middle to high school is marked by numerous social and academic adjustments for students. From a more rigorous and less structured learning environment, to changes in friend groups and an increase in the number of children students are interacting with, an inability to cope with any one of these changes can impact a student's success in high school. A research brief by Education Partnerships, Inc. cites a book by the National Association of Secondary Schools highlighting the importance of three experiences connected to student success in higher level high school courses. The first is studying algebra in middle school, the second is reading at least 10 books a year, and the third is expecting to graduate from college. With this in mind, our first objective focuses on ensuring middle school students are meeting

grade level expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math from the time they enter middle school until the time they leave. Connecticut state test scores for Stamford Public Schools (SPS) further support this effort. In the 2018/19 and 2021/22 school year less than half of SPS middle school student met state standards in ELA and Math.[1] Additionally, the outcomes for Black and Latino students, who comprise the majority of SPS students, were even lower. This inequitable outcome highlights the need for efforts supporting student's academic preparation through Pillar One's integrated student support approach.

Table 4: Stamford Public Schools' Middle School Test Results from Connecticut SBAC ELA and Math

	ELA		**Math**	
	2018/19	2021/22	2018/19	2021/22
6th grade	**48.3%**	**39.1%**	**38.7%**	**25.9%**
Black/African American Students	*31.9%*	*24.4%*	*20.1%*	*
Hispanic/Latino Students	*39.2%*	*30.4%*	*26.9%*	*16.0%*
7th grade	**45.3%**	**39.6%**	**38.4%**	**26.1%**
Black/African American Students	*27.5%*	*22.5%*	*17.6%*	*11.3%*
Hispanic/Latino Students	*35.3%*	*28.8%*	*27.2%*	*15.9%*
8th grade	**46.9%**	**41.9%**	**35.0%**	**24.4%**
Black/African American Students	*28.3%*	*20.1%*	*14.7%*	*8.2%*
Hispanic/Latino Students	*37.7%*	*31.1%*	*26.2%*	*12.3%*

[1] State testing in 2019/20 was not conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and testing in 2020/21 was reported separately and not released by district due to the disrupted learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

** Number suppressed for confidentiality*

Building on Pillar One's integrated supports, our second and third objectives center on creating more opportunities for students to form meaningful relationships with adults and their peers both at the middle and high school level. A May 2000 edition of the Middle School Journal notes the importance of increasing opportunities for friendship and connection among eighth graders in particular (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). In this review, the authors noted many studies have found that high school transition programs "providing students social support during the transition" were key to creating a better bridge from eight to ninth grade (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). This research is further supported by a research brief that notes the importance of social supports to incoming nineth graders. In this brief, the authors cite research from the Southern Regional Education Board (2002, 2005, 2008) as well as from Maute & Brough (2002) highlighting the importance of creating occasions where eighth graders can build their self-esteem, improve their problem-solving skills, and interact with high schoolers to dispel some of their fears or misconceptions, all areas we are looking to include in our final plan with input from the first year needs assessment.

Lastly, our project design and proposed interventions utilizes the critical time when students are not in school to offer activities and programs designed to support learning, engage with families, and offer the school community opportunities to explore the larger Stamford and neighboring communities. In a series of conversations SC2C held with families and community partners in 2022, a reoccurring theme was the dearth of opportunities for middle school students during out-of-school time, on top of a lack of affordability for families in accessing the few programs that currently exist. Stamford is a

vibrant and diverse city allowing for the creation of enrichment activities that expose students and their families to new cultures, foods, and experiences right in their own backyard. By creating partnering with existing organizations and finding ways to create new occasions for students and families, our hope is to expand student interests and ideas of what is available to them now and as possible future careers.

Goal 2: Healthy students and families: Chronic absenteeism has many root causes, but absenteeism due to health and wellbeing of students and their families is an area we hope to address through this grant. Our two proposed school locations already offer school-based health centers and there is an interest in the operating partners to grow this service. Our objectives for goal two are related to supporting this expansion of services to ensure students and their families can receive the healthcare they need both mentally and physically. Aligned to Pillar One's integrated supports, the need for expanded health and mental health in schools is backed by multiple studies. A 2010 evaluation on the role of school-based health centers in Alameda County, CA, found that the school health center was the most commonly reported source for medical care and counseling among students studied (Soleimanpour et al., 2010). The pre to post-test findings also revealed most students agreed the health center helped them get "the resources and information they needed" in addition to getting these resources sooner or that they otherwise would not have tried to access (Soleimanpour et al., 2010). The study also highlighted students self-reported positive outcomes related to their mental health and that the convenience of the center being in school was highly desirable (Soleimanpour et al., 2010). Recent national data shows 96% of public schools provide some kind of mental health services for students however, only 56% report they "moderately to strongly agreed" they could

effectively provide these services (Anon, 2022). By strengthening the capabilities of the current school-based health centers in our proposed schools, in addition to providing training to families on supporting student mental well-being, our goal is to ensure students have access to the resources they need to consistently attend and actively participate in school.

Goal 3: Supporting families through building knowledge: An article in Developmental Psychology notes that across 50 studies, parental involvement at the middle school level was “positively associated with achievement”, particularly around involvement related to academic socialization (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parental involvement during the middle school years is more challenging as it coincides with an increase in student autonomy as they prepare for high school, in addition to a growing number of teachers for families to forge relationships with. In their literature review, Hill and Tyson (2009) suggest that the most salient ways for families of middle schoolers to engage with their child is through helping the child understand the goals and expectations around academic performance coupled with strategies to plan, problem solve, and think critically. Working within the constructs of Pillars One and Two, SC2C and partners aim to build opportunities for parents to model these strategies detailed above while simultaneously increasing a family’s access to local community resources to create strong, stable homes. Stamford has a vast array of community supports available to families. Part of our objectives related to goal three is to centralize as many of these resources as possible within the two partner middle schools so families can easily access things they need or may not even know they need.

Goal 4: Creating a safe and supportive school culture and climate: Creating a sense of belonging at school for students and families requires an investment in building relationships between school staff, students, and families. Since 2019, SC2C has worked with both Dolan and Rippowam middle school to begin laying the foundation of creating a community of restorative justice. As our two identified partner schools for this grant, our final goal seeks to build on this foundation of a restorative school culture and improve the sense of belonging for students and families. In the 2021/22 school year, SPS began using Panorama's school climate survey to measure various indicators of school climate and culture. One of these areas measured a student's sense of belonging in their school. The results for both Dolan and Rippowam were eye opening. Only around one third of students indicated a favorable response to the questions related to the Sense of Belonging section of the survey.

The Sense of Belonging section, according to Panorama's website, is meant to help schools improve the way students feel understood, respected, and like they matter to the school community. By building a school community where students feel respected by their teachers, research has shown that there are fewer behavioral incidents (Blad, 2017). Reducing punitive punishments is a key component to building a restorative school environment and the objectives related to goal four are centered around increasing the trainings for teachers on techniques to build a more restorative school culture in addition to creating more opportunities for students and families to participate in learning about Restorative Practices. Using Pillars One, Three, and Four as a guide, SC2C will use the needs assessment during year one to create activities and programs that involve integrated supports, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership

practices. With these efforts, we expect to see a steady rise in the percentage of students responding favorably to their sense of belonging on the school climate survey in addition to an increase in families favorably rating their child's school climate.

3 Quality of the Project Services

The existing and planned pipeline services will work together to achieve a restorative environment within and around Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools that supports both students and parents academically, socially, and physically to ensure students and caregivers are prepared to successfully transition from middle school to high school. In order to meet the Goals and Objectives outlined in section 2, we plan to establish the following four pipeline services by aligning and enhancing existing services while building in additional services:

- Pipeline 1: High-quality in-school and out-of-school time programs and strategies;
- Pipeline 2: Support for a child's transition from middle school to high school;
- Pipeline 3: Family and community engagement supports;
- Pipeline 4: Social, health, nutrition, and mental health services and supports;

The following outlines both existing services in each pipeline service area as well as proposed enhancements and additions. The enhancements and additions will be shaped and finalized through the year 1 Needs Assessment process.

<u>High-quality school and out of school time programs and strategies</u>

Existing services:

- Rippowam Middle School operates the Rippowam Design Institute to provide both academic and enrichment activities for students after school. This model allows students to benefit from both academic and socially motivating, enrichment

activities. Students are benefiting from individualized or small group tutoring, the Confidence Club, the FISSL project, seasonal intramural sports and varying enrichment activities from the arts to games. This restorative model engages youth in guided dialogue and structured activities designed to build trust, teach valuable life skills and defined success. These after school supports are provided by both school staff and contracted community partners such as the Confidence Club, a local nonprofit whose aim is to “empower girls through year-round leadership development and mentoring that builds self-confidence and fosters diversity. Confidence Club helps young women, especially those who need them most, realize their full potential”, and the Boys and Girls Club who helps facilitate the FISLL Project, which engages youth in guided dialogue and structured activities designed to build trust, teach valuable life skills, enhance spiritual growth, and defined success through mentoring, hands-on workshops, and a digital platform.

- Dolan Middle School currently offers both enrichment and academic activities to students beyond the regular school day. These programs are intentionally designed to meet the individual needs of students by embedding English as a Second Language and Special Education supports and strategies. The school offers multiple after-school sessions targeting both literacy and math skills through explicit instruction. Students are also offered a host of engaging age-appropriate activities such as; boxing, yoga, STEM project-based learning, Google Design, Science Exploration, Game Design, and the Empathy Project. The Empathy Project, in partnership with Stamford Cradle to Career, is designed to spark conversation about the role that empathy plays in students’ lives: at school, at

home, in the community and world. Topics discussed include the definition of empathy, embracing others, managing emotions, modeling empathy and more.

- Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF) Mentoring Program: SPEF's Mentoring Program, which was on hold due to COVID, is currently planned to restart in fall of 2021 and serve 50 students in each middle school, providing middle school students the opportunity to meet with a mentor once a week, either one-on-one or in a group setting, to set goals, improve their academic standing, and become engaged in positive after-school activities. SPEF's flexible model allows students to meet with a mentor in school or outside of school according to their schedule. Their Mentoring Program also provides academic support from a trained academic support coach, connections to mental health resources, and financial assistance for afterschool activities, such as camps, sports, and enrichment. SPEF's Mentoring Program also directly links with its Here-to-Help network, connecting families to resources and services such as food, clothing, rent assistance, technology, and training programs.
- Summer School: Beginning in the summer of 2021, Stamford Public Schools (SPS) expanded its academic summer school programming to middle school students to help with academic recovery due to COVID. SPS plans to continue this provision going forward due to both the need for and success of the program the past two summers.

Proposed enhancements and additions:

Currently the number of students able to access after school enrichment, mentoring, and tutoring/academic support is limited and offerings are not available throughout the entire

school year. We plan to grow the number of students served by 60-100 students at each school over the five-year grant period.

ROSCCO is a longstanding community partner of Stamford Public Schools, providing before and after school programming for all Elementary Schools in Stamford. ROSCCO has also been contracted as a summer enrichment provider by Stamford Public Schools for the past two years. Additionally, ROSCCO currently runs middle school enrichment programming in one middle school. This project proposes to expand ROSCCO's middle school enrichment programming to both Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools growing the number of students able to access after school academic and enrichment programming and to allow students additional choice. Pending feedback from students and families, the programming could include: sports, coding, cooking, STEM, hands-on-projects, and drama/theatre. Programming also includes family engagement and enrichment events. ROSCCO will work closely with school staff to integrate the expansion of both offerings and students served, bringing in outside vendors and community programs based on the interests of students and families.

<u>Support for a child's transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school</u>

Existing services:

- Currently each fifth-grade student visits their districted middle school for a half day in the spring of their fifth-grade year. This half-day event brings together all incoming sixth graders districted for that school. Students hear from the principal

and admin staff through an assembly and sometimes get a tour by students. Eighth grade students visit their district high school for about two hours in the spring of their eighth-grade year with all students districted for that high school. Most students at both Dolan and Rippowam Middles Schools are districted for Stamford High School, although some are districted for Westhill High School, and some will choose to go into the magnet school lottery for AITE High School. Evening information sessions are also provided for parents and caregivers in the spring. These transition days and events are not currently done in a standardized way.

- Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF) Mentoring Program, which is outlined above, supports students' preparation and families for the transition from middle to high school.

Proposed enhancements and additions:

Through the Stamford Full-Service Community Schools Project, a peer mentoring program will be launched. This model relies on 6th grade student leaders having the opportunity to provide advice to incoming middle school students. This methodology also allows 9th grade student leaders to mentor incoming high school students. This project also budgets for an expansion of the number of students provided mentoring each school year. Year 1 of the grant 50 students will be mentored in each school. Through incremental growth, each program will serve 100 students by year 5 of the FSCS Grant. This project will also strategically shift school practices to pair students with one trusted adult in school to serve as a mentor.

<u>Family and community engagement supports</u>

Existing services:

- Each school employs a full time Family and Community Engagement Facilitator whose role is to support parents and caregivers with connections to community resources, communicating with the school and language interpretation, digital literacy and help completing school paperwork, as some examples.
- SPS Adult Education current offers a full suite of Adult education and enrichment opportunities. Rippowam Middle School serves as the hub for Adult and Continuing Education for Stamford Public Schools. The program offers Adult English as a Second Language, Citizenship courses, GED, National External Diploma and various workforce development certification programs. This in-kind support allows for the promotion of para-educator, Certified Nurses Assistant, Retail, Book-keeping and other self-directed certifications among the families and care-givers of Dolan and Rippowam students.
- Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF) currently runs one class per year of the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), serving 25 parents/caregivers. PLTI seeks to enable parents to become leading advocates for children. The cornerstones of the program are respect, validation, and a belief that when the tools of democracy are understood, the public will actively engage in civic life. Program participants receive 22 weeks of rigorous instruction on: communication, public speaking, and media advocacy skill; understanding government budgets, policy, and laws that effect children; how to work in political systems. PLTI graduates have gone on to serve in public offices, such as Stamford boards of education and representatives, and on various non-profit boards. PLTI follows a strict model which includes ensuring each class represents a diverse mix of

caregivers in Stamford. SPEF is able to reserve 3 slots for caregivers from Dolan and Rippowam Middle School.

- Stamford Public Education Foundation also runs two classes per year of People Empowering People (UCONN PEP), serving 25 people. The UConn PEP Program is a 10-week program offered in Spanish for adults and older teens. The program is designed to build on the unique strengths and life experiences of the participants and emphasizes the connection between the individual and community action. The curriculum focuses on values, communication, problem-solving, parenting, and developing leadership and life skills. SPEF is able to reserve 3 slots for caregivers from Dolan and Rippowam Middle School.
- Domus Kids, employs two bilingual Family Advocates that serve twenty-five students and their families at both Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools. The family advocate model is built on the foundation of face-to-face contact, positive connections with teachers, administration and school staff while advocating for the academic and social emotional needs of students and families. In these schools, the Domus Family Advocates are key partners in student planning and intervention support.

<u>Proposed enhancements and additions:</u>

- Create a centralized Parent Resource Center in each school. This includes both a physical and virtual space for families to access information and support. This will be led by the existing Family and Community Engagement Facilitator and supported by the Community Schools Coordinator, SC2C Project Director, and community partners. SC2C already maintains, shares, and connects resources in

the community, including a Community Calendar, which will be integrated into and accessible by these Centers.

- Additional parent education opportunities will be developed based on the Needs Assessment to educate and support parents on a variety of topics. Several topics in consideration based on preliminary needs assessment include: the importance and role of taking Algebra 1 in middle school; special education advocacy and support; health and wellness topics in alignment with workshops for students and school staff; and financial literacy (including preparing for post-secondary education).
    - Special Education Advocacy education and support is imperative to navigating individualized education. With access to specific information around best instructional practices, current Special Education regulations and developmental benchmarks parents can make more informed decisions. The Full-Service Community Schools Grant will provide the opportunity for families with special needs student to be apart of an ongoing affinity group. This structure will grant families and community members the opportunity to learn from educators and foster replication of effective learning strategies at home.
- Implement at least one session per year of Raising Highly Capable Kids at each school, which will be coordinated by the Community Schools Coordinator in partnership with the Family and Community Engagement Facilitator. The sessions will be co-led by parents. Raising Highly Capable Kids is a 13-week evidence-based parenting program developed to build stronger families by empowering

parents with the confidence, tools, and skills they need to raise healthy, caring, and responsible children. The program originated in Spanish and was translated into English, Chinese, and Arabic. The goal is to build the capacity of our community. With the assistance of existing grant funding in CT, the Coordinator, Facilitator and parent leaders will receive free training and facilitator and participant materials. Each participant receives a guide they can keep for life. The goal will be that parents who participate in the class may then move on to become facilitators for future sessions with new parents.

- Through the Needs Assessment, we will explore the need of adding an additional PLTI and/or UCONN PEP classes.
- Create and execute an ongoing and multi-method communications strategy to ensure all families are aware of what resources, supports, educational and enrichment opportunities are available and how to access them. This includes communications in multiple languages (English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole), through multiple methods (school website, school messenger emails, Remind app, social media, Parent Teacher Organizations, student and parent word of mouth informally, through SC2C's Parent Advisory, and each school's FSCS Advisory).

<u>Social, health, nutrition, and mental health services and supports</u>

Existing services:

- Family Centers Inc. operates School Based Health Centers (SBHCs), that deliver high-quality medical, dental, and mental health services to underserved students in Stamford Public Schools, at both Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools. SBHCs work improve children and adolescents' physical and social-emotional well-being

to maximize their educational experience and potential. The SBHC program uses a multi-disciplinary approach that delivers in-depth services, including treatment of acute injuries and illnesses; assistance with chronic diseases (e.g., asthma and diabetes); routine check-ups and physical examinations; immunizations; prescriptions and dispensing of medications; dental care (e.g., cleanings, x-rays, cavity fillings, and root canals); laboratory testing; reproductive health services (e.g., pregnancy testing, sexually-transmitted disease diagnosis and treatment, HIV testing and risk reduction counseling); crisis intervention; individual, group and family counseling; nutrition counseling and weight management; lastly, referral and follow-up specialty care. See Table 4 below for enrollment and service visits for the existing SBHCs.

- A full-service Dental Clinic, located at Rippowam Middle School, and accessible to students from Dolan and other schools in Stamford, is run by clinicians through Stamford Department of Health.
- To further support students' mental and physical health needs, Family Centers, Inc. also provides educational workshops for students and staff on various health related topics on a quarterly basis and will begin support groups for students in the fall of 2021 on topics such as bereavement, loss, and other family challenges.

Table 5: School Based Health Center Enrollment and Service Visits

	School Year	**21-22**		**20-21**		**19-20**	
	School	Dolan	Ripp	Dolan	Ripp	Dolan	Ripp
	3-yr total	**348**	**514**	**271**	**488**	**313**	**580**
Male	**517**	59	119	66	80	109	84

Female	**597**	81	115	85	89	108	119
Other	**4**	N/A	2	0	2	N/A	N/A
Total Gender	**1,118**	**140**	**236**	**151**	**171**	**217**	**203**
Medical Visits	**2,377**	535	541	213	340	438	310
Mental Health Visits	**3,698**	549	913	405	701	349	781
Psychiatry Visits	**169**	14	92	4	31	16	12

Proposed enhancements and additions:

Currently, SBHC access is restricted to school hours during the school year and to students enrolled at the schools. To support the Stamford Full-Service Community School initiative, Family Centers will continue operations at the Dolan and Rippowam sites, expanding reach to include siblings of students not enrolled in care and expanding medical hours during the summer to provide school physicals and vaccines for students in order to avoid exclusions from school. We intend to increase enrollment and clinic activity by 5% each consecutive funding year, and to enhance summer hours, capturing more medical visits. Stamford Department of Health will also extend hours to include summer hours for the Dental Clinic. We will explore additional expansion needs during the Needs Assessment, including: staffing a Social Worker during after school hours, expanding grief and other support groups to include family group, increasing the number of educational workshops for students and staff, and implementing educational workshops for families aligned to the topics of the student and staff workshops.

Creating a restorative school and community culture framework

Existing Services:

- Stamford Cradle to Career has partnered with Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools to offer ongoing Restorative Practice and School Climate training to teachers, Restorative Student Support Facilitators and School administrators. Trainings have included: Comprehensive 10-hour School Climate and Restorative Practices trainings, 15-hour Train the Trainer, 2.5-hour Restorative Practices introductory session, and regular Restorative Practices "Booster Sessions" for those who are already trained but need some extra support or new and innovative ways to continue to live restoratively.

Proposed enhancements and additions:

Currently, Restorative Practices is provided to certified school staff such as teachers and administrators. With the coordinated support provided by this Full-Service Community School Project, training can be expanded to students, families and other community caregivers. The plan will also encompass school-based training including para-educators, school security, as well as out-of-school time service providers.

Stamford Full-Service Community Schools partnership is fully committed to ensuring all students and families have equitable access to the programs and services outlined in this application as required by Section 427 of GEPA. We commit to the following actions and will adapt and add to the below based on our Needs Assessment and community feedback in our planning year.

- All communication materials for programs and services will be made available in both English and Spanish. We will aim to add additional languages if needed/requested.
- We will provide access to a staff person who speaks Spanish for questions and support during both school and after school time. This will be either the Family and Community Engagement Facilitator and/or the Community Schools Coordinator. If needed, we will partner with Here-to-Help or other partner staff to ensure accessibility. We also have access to on demand language line interpretation services for additional language needs beyond Spanish.
- After school enrichment will be designed and staffed appropriately to allow for access to all students in the schools, including those with special needs. This may include hiring additional staff / a paraeducator to meet the needs of any interested student. We will also include the specific invitation to enrichment activities to students with special needs in the schools to ensure they are aware of the opportunities.

4 Adequacy of Resources

Role of Full Time Coordinator at Each School

The Community Schools Coordinator (CS Coordinator) is a full-time position responsible for the facilitation, implementation, integration, coordination, and connectivity of the community school strategy at the site level. The CS Coordinator is responsible for aligning the process of coordinated support and works to ensure the core objectives of the project are maintained. Along with the school administrator, community focus groups and program advisory councils, this position partners with service providers and is responsive

to the needs assessment to coordinate the non-academic components of the program. The CS Coordinator is a position created to elevate the voices of teachers, school staff, parents, school-family council, community members, and students to design and implement programs and services at the school that meet the needs of students, their families, and the community. The primary responsibilities of these pivotal leadership roles are to ensure connectivity in planning, decision making and allocation of resources to meet the needs of our most deserving students. The successful candidates in the role of CS Coordinator will also understand the needs of urban, marginalized, low-income families and students.

The Stamford Full-Service Community School Project understands how important the sustainability of the CS Coordinator is to the overall success of this plan. Therefore, we will actively partner with the City of Stamford, Stamford Public Schools, as well as private funders to sustain these roles past the term of the grant. With proven effectiveness, municipal funds can be directly allocated to staffing this position long term.

Lead Applicant Capabilities and Commitments

United Way of Western CT (UWWC) and Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) are committed to routinely convening school staff, families, students and community partners to assess service coordination and effectiveness. Cross-site visitation is a capability of UWWC and SC2C to foster greater program alignment. As the lead applicant we exhibit the competency to facilitate an information sharing structure both in person and digitally to streamline collaboration efforts. Data analysis is a core competency of our organization. As the lead applicant we will provide oversight for the data processing.

With the support of our extensive Data Network, we will provide timely information to inform effective planning. The United Way of Western Connecticut will support this innovative family program with ALICE (Assest, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed) resources. ALICE resources include enrichment funds for extra-curricular activities, a financial literacy program, and a food savings program that encourages fresh food purchases.

Partnership Across Systems and Settings

A coordinated approach to systems integration is key to wrap around student support will foster greater fidelity to the plan, prevent duplication of services and allows partnership with existing experts in community-based practices.

Table 6: Partners

Organization	Service	Pillar	Setting(s)
Stamford Public Schools (SPS)	School District	1-4	Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School, Adult Education Buildings
Stamford Public Education Foundation	Here-to-Help (Outreach arm of SPS initiated through school referral or chronic absenteeism)	1-4	Stamford Public Schools, Chester Addison Community Center

Dolan Middle School	SPS Middle School	1-4	Stamford Public Schools
Rippowam Middle School	SPS Middle School	1-4	Stamford Public Schools
Stamford Public Education Foundation	Mentoring/ Community Based Center/(Algebra 1) Academic Tutoring/ PLTI-Parent Engagement	1-4	Stamford Public Schools, Chester Addison Community Center
Family Centers	Physical and Behavioral Health Provider	1-4	Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School, Community Based Centers
ROSCCO	After School/ Summer Enrichment/Convener of other enrichment services/ Family Resource Center	1,2,3,4	Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School, Community Enrichment Sites

City of Stamford Health Department	Pandemic Recovery/ Nursing support/ YMHA	1,3,4	Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School
Domus Kids	Family Advocacy	1,3,4	Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School, Domus Community Center
Ferguson Library	Local Public Library, Linked Libraries	1-4	Ferguson Library (Main, Harry Bennett, and Weed Memorial branches) Rippowam Middle School, Dolan Middle School

Key Leadership, Professional Development and School Resources

Key leadership roles in the development and execution of this project are as follows: CS Coordinators, School Administration, Stamford Cradle to Career Staff, and the Advisory Councils comprised of Students, Families, School Staff, Community Providers. As a collective we will strategically enhance our practices through continued professional development. Together we will develop our learning in Restorative Practice, effective mentoring models and relevant learning strategies to broaden student access to higher outcomes and high school readiness. The school resources to be assigned to this work include the eager participation of school administrators, and teachers as well as the support in use of the school building and infrastructure support at the program sites.

Plans for Sustaining Coordinator Role and Ongoing Collaboration

The recruitment and retention of the CS Coordinator is essential to the success of this project. Stamford Cradle to Career is committed to providing ongoing professional development to the professionals in this role. With our current infrastructure, partnerships and backbone support we have the capacity to offer relevant, in-kind trainings offered by the United Way of Western CT and United Way Worldwide, Stamford Public Schools, the City of Stamford, the Youth Mental Health Alliance, the Stamford Health Department, as well as the StriveTogether national network. Additionally, the budget is set to increase the salary of our CS Coordinator by three percent each year. The United Way of Western Connecticut also offers highly competitive benefits.

As evidence of effectiveness materializes, SC2C will absorb the backbone support. This will allow us access to local, state and private funding to continue this substantiated work. As a collective impact organization, we have varied supporters with targeted focus areas that are aligned with system change initiatives such as the Stamford Full-Service Community Schools Project. With this renewed strategy, we are well positioned to increase funding from donors such as Lone Pine Foundation, and early funder of Restorative Practices that is now general operating funds. Likewise, the Singer Foundation is a committed local funder who helped support the launch of Stamford Summer Literacy Initiative and is eager to continue contributing to the student and families of Stamford.

5 Quality of the Management Plan

United Way of Western CT (UWWC) and Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) have a strong track record in project management and the facilitation of collaborative initiatives. With this experience and the management plan outlined below we will ensure the project achieves its objectives on schedule and is managed on budget. SC2C will be responsible for the implementation of this education focused initiative in Stamford. This Full-Service Community Schools application is a key part of the growth of SC2C's education work in Stamford to meet the needs to align and support Middle School students and families.

History of Effectiveness

With SC2C's public launch in 2016 as the Stamford city-wide collective impact initiative, each year SC2C engages over 100 individuals representing over 50 community organizations and community members across nine different network groups that meet monthly. Over the past three years, SC2C has tripled its budget and staffing demonstrating the success and backing of both community organizations and funders on the importance and impact of SC2C's collective impact role on improving opportunities and outcomes for Stamford's children.

Three of SC2C's groups focus on the alignment and collaboration necessary to meet the needs at specific ages and stages of development:

1) 0-5 Early Childhood Community Action Network works to ensure all children are ready to learn when they reach Kindergarten. This group comprised of public school staff, early childhood professionals, parents, and health professionals work

to offer additional trainings to early childhood staff on child development best-practices, screen incoming kindergarteners for developmental delays, and creates opportunities for families to be active participants in ensuring their baby is meeting developmental milestones and connecting them to resources if they fall behind.

2) Early Grade Reading Community Action Network works to ensure all children are reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade. This group is comprised of partners from the school system, public library, and out-of-school-time organizations. Their work includes planning trainings for after-school program staff on how to use school-based assessment data to drive literacy support, implementing a summer literacy initiative at three city camps reaching hundreds of students with targeted small group literacy support while also creating a literacy rich environment to all campers throughout the day, as well as creating media for families on how they can be active supporters of their child's literacy development, no matter their literacy level.

3) Transition to Postsecondary, College and Career works to ensure all children graduate high school and are college and career ready. This group includes current college students, staff from a local community college, leadership from the Stamford Public Schools, and other youth-serving local organizations. This network works to plan workshops for families on important college-related topics such as applying for and demystifying FAFSA and a summer program (currently in its third year) targeting over 900 graduating seniors with ongoing messaging and access to college counselors who can ensure students meet important summer deadlines that increase the likelihood of students showing up for college in the fall.

Within SC2C's existing Community Action Network groups, we have an intentional leadership structure to include tri-chairs of each group, with one chair representing Stamford Public Schools, one chair representing a community organization, and one chair representing a caregiver, youth, or community member. SC2C additional has two advisory structures to bring family voice into the leadership of our work across our network groups. This includes our Parent Advisory, a group of 10 community members who meet monthly to learn about our network, share the work and resources of our network with their local networks, and to inform/guide the decision making and priorities of our work. The second group is our Youth Leadership Internship, which is a year-long internship for high school youth in Stamford who commit about 10 hours/month to learn about our network, participate in training and development activities to build their essential skills, and to identify and execute a project of their choosing to improve the educational access or opportunities for students in Stamford. Both of these groups will provide additional sounding boards for the planning and implementation of Full-Service Community Schools at Dolan and Rippowam Middle Schools.

SC2C also holds an annual Convening focused on sharing the impact of the network over the past year, bringing partners across the city together to network, and engaging in dialogue about the needs and opportunities to enhance educational opportunities for children and families in Stamford. These discussion forums help to guide the strategy and priorities of SC2C's overall goals and objectives. Feedback from our February 2022 Convening included a strong need for programming for Middle School students, which

has guided the focus of this Full-Service Community Schools application on middle school.

Feedback from Participants in SC2C's 2022 Convening

- "I really enjoyed the breakout groups. This allowed me to feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions with a small group rather than in a larger setting. I think the Jamboard worked well for those who didn't feel comfortable sharing but were still able to have their voice heard." - Family Convening participant feedback
- "I loved the fact that there was an interpretation service. I liked that we were placed in breakout rooms with no more than 10 people so we had enough time to answer the questions that were asked." – Family Convening participant feedback
- "Excellent convening! The addition of the music breaks from youth in the community was AMAZING. It really made a difference, reminding us why we are all here. Also loved having so many people involved in leading/facilitating the event...you made me feel like I belonged and you motivated and energized me to be more intentional in connecting deeper into the community to better support our youth, families, S2C2 and the larger community." – Community Convening (Out-of-School Time Provider)

<u>Broadly Representative Consortium</u>

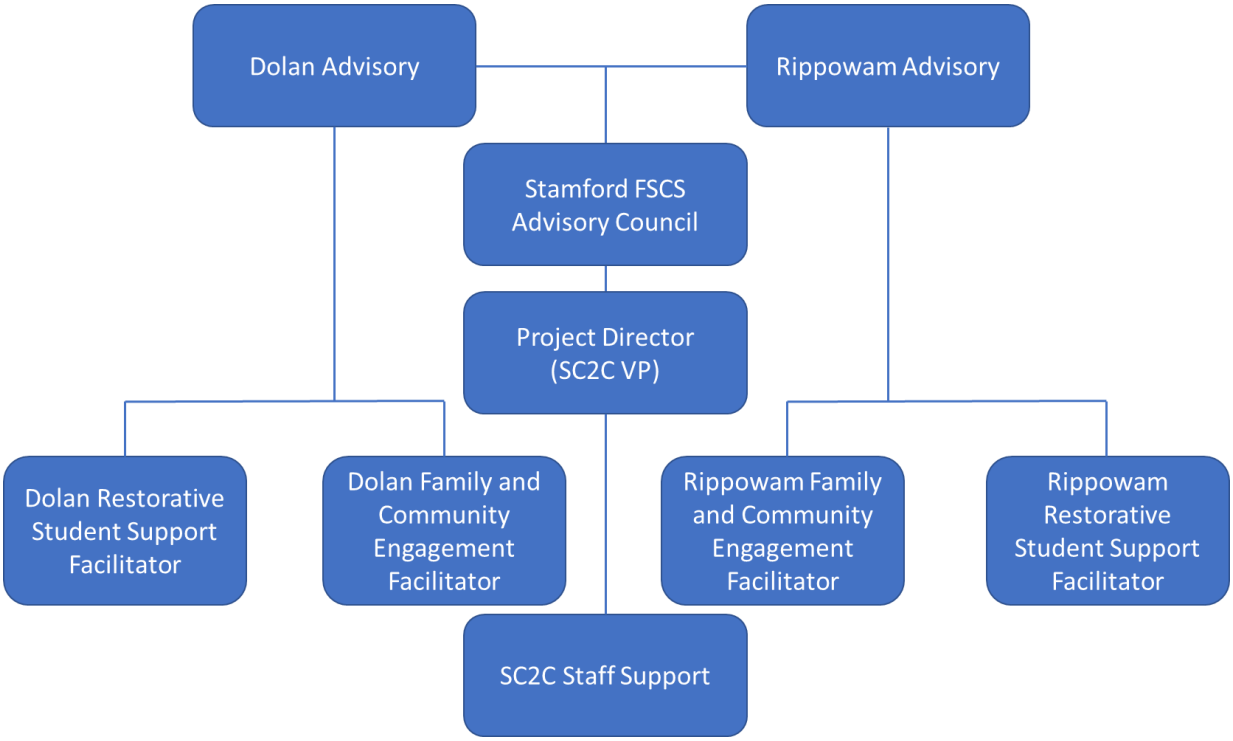
Our Stamford Full-Service Community Schools partnership includes a broadly representative group that supports and surrounds the students, families, and community members in the two middle schools in this application. Building off the strength of SC2C's relationships and engagement with partners in Stamford due to our collective impact model, this partnership includes school, non-profit, city government, and community

members. The Preliminary MOU outlines the initial partners and commitments to this project, and we anticipate adding additional partners as needed based on the Needs Assessment.

As outlined above, SC2C already has existing Parent Advisory and Youth Leadership Interns, who will be sounding boards for the Needs Assessment, planning and implementation of Stamford's Full-Service Community Schools. This will occur through their monthly meetings as well as inviting members to the FSCS Advisory meeting where appropriate. SC2C's annual convening will provide an additional opportunity to share ideas and incorporate broader community input.

Management Plan (Roles, Responsibilities, Timelines and Milestones):

The management structure of this project is outlined in the following staffing chart:



Overall leadership and management of this project will be provided by the Stamford FSCS Project Director. This role will be played by [redacted], Vice President of Strategy & Operations of Stamford Cradle to Career as 25% of her full-time position. Supporting this role in implementation will be several other SC2C staff members in the key areas of data and evaluation ([redacted], SC2C Data Manager), communications ([redacted], SC2C Communications Manager), family engagement ([redacted], SC2C Family and Community Engagement Manager), and restorative practices ([redacted], Director of Equity Initiatives).

There will be three Advisory groups that will provide ongoing input into the planning, implementation, and improvement to the project. Each middle school will have its own Advisory, the Dolan Advisory and Rippowam Advisory, to be comprised of representative students, caregivers, and school staff. The School Advisories will have a minimum of 9 members, at least 3 each of students, caregivers, and staff. These Advisories will be formed during the Needs Assessment process in early 2023, coming out of the initial feedback focus groups. The Stamford FSCS Advisory Council will be comprised of staff from key partners for the project, including but not limited to: the Principal (or designee) of each school (currently [redacted], Dolan Principal, and [redacted], Rippowam Assistant Principal); at least two Stamford Public Schools central office staff members, one of whom must be Cabinet level (currently [redacted], Associate Superintendent, Teaching and Learning, and [redacted], Director of Family and Community Engagement); an SC2C Executive Team representative; SC2C's President ([redacted]); UWWC representative; and a representative of each official Partner (see

Preliminary Partner Memorandum of Understanding). The Advisories will meet monthly during the planning year and first implementation year and at least quarterly thereafter. Additional opportunities for broader community feedback on the work will be planned for at least two times per year. This may include incorporation into SC2C's annual Convening, planning a Community Conversation in partnership with Stamford Public Schools, and/or participating in existing community group meetings or events such as the PT Council of Stamford (the governing body of all the parent-teacher organizations in Stamford), Boys and Girls Club of Stamford, Ferguson Library, and Mayor's Youth Leadership Council.

The implementation of pipeline services at each school will be led by the dual leadership of the CS Coordinator (positions to be hired) and the Restorative Student Support Facilitator (RSSF), which is an existing administrative role at each school that oversees the coordination, training and support for students and staff related to school climate and restorative justice. This RSSF role is currently filled by [redacted] at Dolan Middle School and [redacted] at Rippowam Middle School. The CS Coordinator will facilitate weekly meetings to coordinate pipeline services on site with partners and school staff. These meetings will include logistics, problem solving, data collection/review as needed, and continuous feedback and improvement.

Resumes of key individuals identified above and job descriptions for roles to be filled are included in the attached Appendix B.

The below table includes an outline of the key activities and responsible parties.

Table 7: Key Partners and Meetings

Role	Weekly Dolan FSCSG	Weekly Rippowam FSCSG	Bi Weekly Dolan/ Rippowam	Monthly Data Meeting	Quarterly Advisory Council Convening
Dolan CS Coordinator	X		X	X	X
Dolan Domus Family Advocate	X		X	X	X
Dolan Parent Facilitator	X		X	X	X
Dolan Restorative Student Support Facilitator	X		X	X	X
Dolan Family Centers Clinicians	X		X	X	X
Dolan School Administration	X			X	X
SC2C President	X	X	X	X	X
SC2C Vice President	X	X	X	X	X

SC2C Director of Equity Initiatives			X	X	X
SC2C Executive Assistant	X	X	X	X	X
SC2C Communications Manager				X	X
SC2C Community Engagement Manager	X	X	X	X	X
SPS Superintendent of Schools					X
SPS Director of Innovative Programs				X	X
SPS Associate Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement				X	X

Special Assistant to the Mayor for Community Engagement				X	X
Roscco, Enrichment Program Director			X	X	X
Chief Health Officer, Family Centers			X	X	X
Chief Executive Officer, Stamford Education Foundation			X	X	X
Director of Public Health, City of Stamford				X	X
Chief Executive Officer, United					X

Way of Western Connecticut					
Independent Grant Evaluator, Via			X	X	X
Chief Executive Officer, Ferguson Library				X	X
Rippowam CS Coordinator		X	X	X	X
Rippowam Domus Family Advocate		X	X	X	X
Rippowam Parent Facilitator		X	X	X	X
Rippowam Restorative Student Support Facilitator		X	X	X	X

Rippowam Family Centers Clinicians		X	X	X	X
Rippowam School Administration				X	X

In addition to ongoing these ongoing convenings, the design team will define program needs following the following project periods:

- Planning/Needs Assessment (Jan 2023-Dec 2023)
- Initial Implementation (August 2023-July 2024)
- Growth Implementation (August 2024-Decemeber 2027)

6 Quality of the Project Evaluation

<u>Evaluation methods are thorough, feasible and appropriate</u>

The United Way of Western CT, through the Stamford Full-Service Community Partnership, will partner with Via Evaluation (VIA) to conduct the external evaluation for this project. VIA has been evaluating federal, state, and other education grants with school districts and community-based organizations since 1998. The firm has evaluated multiple federal Full-Service Community Schools projects, in addition to other Department of Education grants such as Promise Neighborhoods and School Climate Transformation Grants, as well as similar state-level grants. VIA staff has participated in national Community Schools and School Mental Health conferences. The resume of [redacted], PhD is attached. [redacted] is currently the lead evaluator for multiple state-

wide and federally funded initiatives, and she would serve as lead evaluation partner on this project.

Upon award of the FSCS grant, VIA will support the United Way of Western CT and Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of the Stamford Public Schools (SPS) community. VIA's role in the needs assessment will be to make suggestions about the types of data that would inform UWWCT and SC2C about the most pressing needs related to student academics, mental wellness, family support, and out-of-school-time offerings; with an emphasis on how those needs are experienced by and impact different groups in the community. VIA will be responsible for the analysis and interpretation of data collected by the UWWNT's information gathering activities.

Following this needs assessment, VIA will work with UWWCT to complete a program logic model that is responsive to the community's prioritized needs and aligned to activities within the 4 key pillars. This logic model will identify outputs (i.e., intended amount of services and supports that can be used to evaluate fidelity of implementation) and short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, each with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) performance objectives that will be used to evaluate the project's effectiveness.

Based on the logic model, VIA will design a comprehensive evaluation plan that will include: delineating specific measurement tools and data sources for each project

objective/performance indicator; baseline and annual targets for the Government Performance Reporting Act (GPRA) and project objectives; data collection plans and timelines; person(s) responsible for overseeing data collection; data analysis plans; and reporting approaches. The evaluation plan will address all requirements from USDOE and comply with the GPRA, using an evaluation approach informed by the principles of Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE) (Patton, 2008) and Community Based Participatory Evaluation (CBPE). Both UFE and CBPE emphasize strong stakeholder involvement at each stage and phase of the evaluation process, ensuring that all evaluation activities are designed to gather valid data within context, and prioritize the sharing of all results in a manner that stakeholders can understand and use to make decisions.

VIA's evaluation will use valid and reliable performance data that is directly related to the program goals, objectives, and outcomes. The targets are rigorous, aligned to the grant and district goals, and measurable. In addition, review of tools, evaluation methods, and data by both local partners and School Advisory will enhance the validity of information collected, helping to ensure the tools are collecting the intended information. VIA will bring a third party, objective but informed perspective to the project. In addition to collecting quantitative data directly aligned to each objective, the evaluation team will gather qualitative feedback from parents, students, and community members through both traditional methods (e.g., surveys, focus groups, interviews) and participatory evaluation methods (e.g., Community Cafes, Ripple Effects Mapping).

VIA will use reliable and valid tools and approaches to collect data aligned to each objective. Where possible, a mix of quantitative and qualitative data will be used, gathered through both traditional methods (e.g., administrative data sources, surveys) and innovative, participatory evaluation methods (e.g., Community Cafes, Ripple Effects Mapping). This mixed method, multi-faceted evaluation represents a thorough, feasible, and appropriate evaluation approach for a FSCS project, centered on bringing schools and communities together in support of students and families. These evaluation methods will result in a comprehensive picture of program implementation, outcomes, and impact on students, schools, and the communities, with a large emphasis on the community's perspective. Prioritizing community voice in the evaluation process can bring new and under-represented perspectives as it engages the community throughout the process as equal partners in evaluation and program design. Additionally, principles of both UFE and CBPE include continuous feedback to inform action planning, stimulate new program ideas, and prompt discussions about program quality and success – each critical elements in long-term effectiveness and sustainability of this community schools project.

Objectives and measures aligned to the four goals detailed in the Quality of Project Design section were selected for their quantifiable nature and the validity and reliability of data. A detailed list of these outcomes and measures can be found under the Quality of Project Design section in the Annual Measurable Performance Objectives and Outcomes table. Additionally, the Annual Measurable Objectives and Outcomes table presents the project goals, objectives, and outcomes for each pipeline service. Project activities are directly linked to time-sensitive objectives and performance indicators. Activities are

aligned to the goals of enhancing out-of-school-time learning opportunities and educational and non-academic enrichments for students; increasing integrated student supports at the district's three identified school sites to ensure each student is healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenges; and increasing community and family engagement opportunities.

Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be collected to inform program development, and data regarding direct participant input and feedback will also be collected, analyzed, and reported. Data collection tools will include program attendance records, referrals to services, engagement with community partners, surveys, academic indicators such state ELA and Math proficiency scores, mentoring opportunities, attendance at planned events, trainings, or mentorship opportunities. These tools will include perspectives and other information from students, parents, staff, and community members.

The Community Schools Coordinators and the Project Director, with assistance from SC2C's Data Manager will be responsible for ensuring partners provide required data within established timelines. The obligation of schools and community partners to share data will be included in contracts and MOUs. This will ensure that all data will be collected and analyzed in a timely manner to best allow for sharing, synthesis, and action planning by the Community School Coalition on at least a quarterly basis.

Evaluation Methods Will Provide Performance Feedback and Progress Assessment

VIA will regularly collect quantitative and qualitative data throughout the project period, providing results within 2 weeks of data collection and progress reports the School Advisories, the School Coordinators, and Project Director at least quarterly. VIA specializes in data visualizations and user-friendly reporting, such as slide decks and data placemats, that make data digestible and usable. Following the principles of UFE and CBPE, VIA and UWWCT will share data with stakeholders and facilitate participatory synthesis and decision-making, using methods including Data Walks, data placemats, and Community Cafes. These activities will engage stakeholders, including those who have contributed data (e.g., by participating in interviews or completing surveys) in reviewing, analyzing, synthesizing, and developing action plans and recommendations based on results. Following these activities, VIA will provide summary reports, made publicly available by UWWCT.

VIA will also complete a comprehensive annual evaluation report. This report will include progress toward GPRA and project performance measures, and all data needed to complete Section A of the 524b. The report will also include findings from participatory and community engaged evaluation methods, and recommendations developed by these processes, and by the evaluator. VIA will produce a summary version of this report (e.g., a PowerPoint slide deck) for sharing broadly with the community advisory board and community at large. This will be presented and discussed at a Community Advisory Board meeting to gather additional feedback, perspective, and context, and used to inform action planning.

Evaluation Provides Valid and Reliable Performance Data Towards Outcomes

VIA's evaluation will use objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the FSCS project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible. Based on preliminary objectives and plans, some specific data points to be tracked will include:

- Connecticut ELA and Math Proficiency Assessments measured through the state mandated Smarter Balanced Achievement Connecticut test (Annually)
    - This assessment is conducted annually by the state of Connecticut for students in grades, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11
- School Climate Survey
    - Stamford Public Schools (SPS) contracts with Panorama to conduct an annual school climate survey for all students in grades 3-12 as well as with all SPS families and school-based staff. Panorama is a nationally utilized company that has created valid and reliable tools to measure school climate and links these results to actionable steps schools can take to improve results. Results can also be compared to national outcomes collected from other schools using Panorama's tool.
- Tracking of professional development opportunities, hours, and attendance.
    - This information is tracked by SPS who will be the party responsible for providing this information as needed during the evaluation and subsequent check-ins about progress towards milestones.
- Student-level behavioral and disciplinary data (quarterly)

- The current system for behavior and disciplinary tracking is somewhat unclear and is an area we hope to learn more about during the needs assessment phase. We believe there are opportunities to refine tracking and practices around behavior and discipline that is linked to the goals in our proposal. Knowing the impact that improved school climate and academic and social outcomes can have on student behavior this is a key area of interest.

- Human Resources records:
  - SPS maintains detailed staffing records that will be used to report on the number, qualifications, and retention of school staff. These data are available at the individual level, to allow disaggregation by race and ethnicity, and teacher experience.
- Project Meeting Agendas, Minutes, Attendance (after each meeting):
  - The Community Schools Coordinator will collect all meeting agendas, minutes, and attendance to allow evaluation of community/partner engagement and effectiveness and efficiency of meetings to address specific issues and develop strategies for improvement.
- Input from key stakeholders
  - Project Director, Community School Coordinator, Principals, and Partner staff, through key informant interviews. These results will be included in the 4th quarter evaluation report during each year of the grant (annually)
- Student attendance records during regular school day, i.e. absences and tardiness (Quarterly

    - SPS uses PowerSchool to track student attendance. Data will be used to assess student attendance (an indicator of school climate and culture) and chronic absenteeism.
- Progress towards sustainability (bi-annually)
- Progress towards program outputs including number of students and families served, expansion of key FSCS infrastructure and activities
- GPRA data: Number of students and adult family members served by program (weekly)
- Additional qualitative feedback data from participatory methods (Quarterly)
    - VIA, in conjunction with the Community School Advisory, Community School Coordinators, and Project Director, will facilitate additional data collection on specific topics identified through the planning period, needs assessment, and predetermined evaluation activities (e.g., quarterly progress reports, annual reports). These approaches will be responsive to community need and data situation, and may include additional surveys and participatory methods, such as Ripple Effects Mapping, to increase understanding about particular performance indicators or project performance measures, such as quality of collaborative efforts, effectiveness of action teams, and satisfaction with services and supports.

7 Priorities Addressed

Absolute Priorities One and Three

United Way of Western CT and Stamford Cradle to Career are applying under Absolute Priorities 1 (Title IA Schoolwide Program Eligibility) and 3 (Capacity Building and

Development). We propose to serve two full-service community schools at Dolan Middle School and Rippowam Middle School within Stamford Public Schools in Stamford, Connecticut.

Competitive Priorities

CCP#1 – Meeting Social, Emotional and Academic Needs

United Way of Western CT and Stamford Cradle to Career are applying for Competitive Preference Priority 1 – Meeting Social Emotional and Academic Needs.

As outlined in the above narrative, Stamford Full-Service Community Schools is proposing a project to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of Middle School Transition in Stamford Public Schools. The project will offer both school and community-based options for students and families to be supported. The United Way of Western Connecticut and Stamford Cradle to Career will coordinate with identified partners to provide aligned out of school enrichment, academic support, parent institutes, mentoring, financial literacy, as well as mental health and physical health supports. Surrounding these programs and services, we plan to create a restorative and inclusive school culture and community through increased preventive mental wellness, added mental health supports, and comprehensive training and education for staff, students and families in restorative practices, mental health first aid, and trauma informed practices. Restorative practices and positive school culture and climate are cornerstones to systemic change providing a social emotional framework to support students through strong relationships.

CCP #2 – Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change

United Way of Western CT and Stamford Cradle to Career are applying for Competitive Preference Priority 2 – Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change.

Stamford Cradle to Career is committed to elevating the voice of traditionally underrepresented members of the Stamford community. We value the perspective, ideas and lived experiences of our families. The Stamford Full-Service Community Schools Project will develop resources for and with families to better navigate social systems such as health services, food support, and opportunities to engage in the civic process. We will link existing community engagement structures – such as our SC2C Parent Advisory and Youth Leadership Interns – with the Dolan Advisory, Rippowam Advisory and FSCS Advisory Council to ensure a representative diversity of voices. In collaboration with Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Waterbury the StriveTogether network has formed a state-wide Cradle to Career policy agenda for Connecticut. Stamford Cradle to Career meets bi-weekly with the CT Cradle to Career Collaborative to align and strengthen efforts. With this support and partnership, families, students and community partners can leverage effective change strategies at a state and national level.

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