

2020 Annual Impact Report



Dear Norwalk Community,

It has been a year of tremendous change for Norwalk ACTS amid a crippling global pandemic, polarizing political and social unrest, and the persistent, tragic reminders of how deep and devastating systemic racism continue to be in this country.

We began our fiscal year with organizational independence when we received our 501c3 status and then developed all the policies, structures, and systems necessary to thrive as a stand-alone non-profit organization. In the spring our founding leader, Anthony Allison, retired passing the torch of passion, commitment, and relational connectivity to all of us to continue to carry. He worked with so many of you to lay a solid foundation for us to build upon. We also participated in a rigorous annual assessment process by our national partner, StriveTogether. The outcome of this process was an advancement in our Collective Impact system designation from a "sustaining partnership gateway" into the "systems change gateway." To meet the rigorous requirements of the "systems change" milestone, we re-organized staff and added several new backbone positions, including a role focused on ensuring alignment with all the pieces of our work and the StriveTogether Theory of Action.

Despite the challenges of the last year, and given the important organizational steps we have taken, we have never been more energized and optimistic about the work we continue to build upon together. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than when I join a zoom call and see my screen filled with community members, parents, students, educators, community-based organizational staff & leaders, business owners, government & elected officials, healthcare workers, housing advocates, investors, faith leaders, and more coming together to proactively improve outcomes for the children and youth in our community. The foundation that we have built as a collective impact structure has never been more needed as we build systems characterized by equity and excellence, dismantle the vestiges of racism, and eliminate the opportunity gaps that exist for so many of our young people and their families.

We are grateful for this opportunity to share data and highlights from the past year as well as our aspirations moving forward. If you are not already an active member of Norwalk ACTS, we encourage you to join us. Because working together, everything is achievable!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Barahona".

Jennifer Barahona
CEO, Norwalk ACTS

/ Leadership

BACKBONE TEAM

Jennifer Barahona
CEO

Jesse Buccolo*
Manager of Policy, Strategy,
and Continuous Improvement

MJ Chironna*
Manager of Community Engagement

Ray Leslie*
Data Analyst

Anamilena Moreno*
Community Engagement Specialist

Paula Palermo
Data Director

Denique Weidema-Lewis*
Manager of Implementation
and Collaborative Action

*New staff members in FY2019-20

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2020)

Chair, Cathy DeCesare
Norwalk Resident and Norwalk Early Childhood
Council

Vice Chair, Erv Shames
Shames Family Foundation

Secretary, Linda Franciscovich
Community Advocate

Treasurer, Nancy Von Euler
Horizons at New Canaan Country School

Adam Bovilsky
Norwalk Housing Authority

Harry Carey
AT&T

Rob Cashel
Family & Children's Agency

Michael Chambers
Per and Astrid Heidenreich Family Foundation

Cheryl DeVonish
Norwalk Community College

Brian Griffin
Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce

Basil Kolani
Educator and Norwalk Resident

Betsy McNeil
Norwalk/Stamford Grassroots Tennis & Education

Dr. James K. Page
Educator and Norwalk Resident

Diana Revolus
Owner Ase Kreationz, Child Advocate,
and Community Activist

Kate Ritter
Ritter Family Foundation

Richard Wenning
BeFoundation

Ex-Officio

Jennifer Barahona
Norwalk ACTS

Dr. Alexandra Estrella
Superintendent, Norwalk Public Schools

Honorable Harry Rilling
Mayor, City of Norwalk

“

Norwalk ACTS is our critical partner in service to residents. They help bring different groups to the table with diverse backgrounds and perspectives which helps us better serve our community. Norwalk ACTS uses data to help drive decision making. The cradle-to-career network helps our children reach their greatest potential. I thank all who lend their time and expertise to this wonderful organization. On behalf of our entire community I thank Norwalk ACTS for all of their efforts.

– Honorable Harry Rilling

”

/ Membership

ORGANIZATIONS

All Our Kin
 Alliance for Community Empower
 Àsé Kreationz
 Bankwell
 BeFoundation
 Carver Foundation of Norwalk
 Center for Youth Leadership
 Character Under Construction
 Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield
 City of Norwalk
 City of Norwalk Community Services
 Department
 Corbett Education Consulting LLC
 Cornerstone Community Church
 Courage to Speak Foundation
 CT Parent Power
 Domestic Violence Crisis Center
 Family & Children's Agency
 Filling in the Blanks
 Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce
 Greater Norwalk Head Start
 Grossman Family Foundation
 Higher Education Literacy Professionals
 Horizons at New Canaan Country School

Horizons at Norwalk Community College
 Human Services Council
 INTEMPO
 Kids In Crisis
 Kumon Math and Reading Center
 of Norwalk
 Mentor Consulting Group
 Norwalk Community College
 Norwalk Community College Foundation
 Norwalk Community Health Center
 Norwalk Education Foundation
 Norwalk Federation of Teachers
 Norwalk Housing Authority
 Norwalk Mutual Aid
 Norwalk Public Library
 Norwalk Public Schools
 Norwalk Board of Education
 Norwalk River Rowing
 Norwalk River Watershed Association
 Norwalk/Stamford Grassroots
 Tennis & Education
 Odyssey Family Executive
 Center of South Norwalk, Inc.
 Open Doors

Opening Doors Fairfield County
 Partnership for Early Education
 Research (PEER)
 Per and Astrid Heidenreich
 Family Foundation
 Person to Person
 Positive Directions - The Center
 for Prevention and Counseling
 Race and Social Justice Coalition
 at St. Paul's on the Green
 REACH Prep
 Ritter Family Foundation
 Riverbrook Regional YMCA
 Serving All Vessels Equally, Inc.
 Silvermine Arts Center
 Stepping Stones Museum for Children
 The Maritime Aquarium
 The Maritime Odyssey Preschool
 Triangle Community Center
 Under One Roof, Inc.
 United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
 United Way of Connecticut, Inc.
 YWCA Darien/Norwalk

COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND *STAFF MEMBERS OF SIGNED ORGANIZATIONS

Charles Allred
 Heidia Alterman
 Orlando Aquino*
 Theresa Argondezzi*
 Lauriston Avery
 Gail Bindley-Taylor*
 Jennifer Barahona*
 Hollie Brandstatter
 Sandy Bria
 Jesse Buccolo*
 Greg Burnett
 Anna Burns*
 Chrissy Cacace*
 Susan Cardillo-Cunnigham
 Harry Carey
 Diana Carpio
 MJ Chironna*
 Debra D'Arinzo
 Cathy DeCesare
 Alexa Delfino
 Erica DePalma
 Angel Dorleans
 Carey Dougherty
 Stacey Dumas
 Lauren Dunne*
 Desiree Edwards*
 Rob Ellis

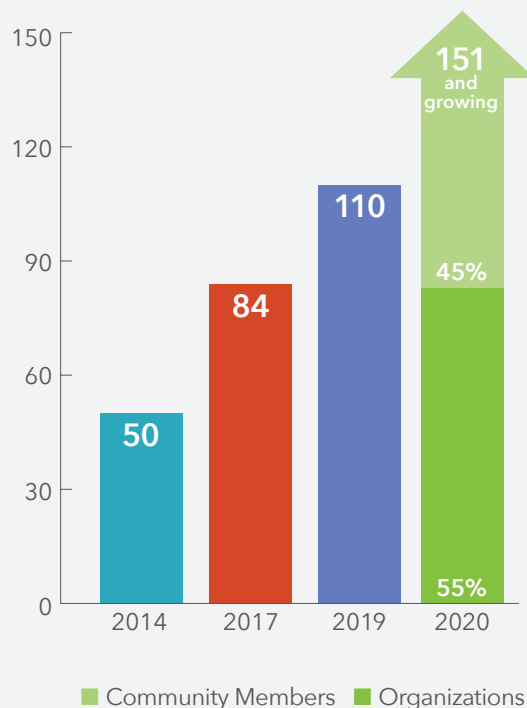
Paige Esposito Sinchak
 Brianne Faust
 Emily Fox*
 Mary Ann Genuario*
 Wendy Gerbier*
 Michael Hernandez
 David Heuvelman
 Amy Hodgins
 Rosemary Holomakoff
 Amy Jeffereis*
 Yuna Johnson
 Stephanie Kadam*
 Robert Killackey*
 Basil Kolani
 Ray Leslie*
 Donna Lewis
 Mary Kate Locke*
 Alex Lunding
 Marissa Mangone
 Roz McCarthy
 Barbara McLaughlin*
 Ari Meadows
 Nicole Merlo-White
 Matthew Merluzzi
 Joanna Meyer*
 Barbara Meyer-Mitchell
 Nehemie Moise*

Anamilena Moreno*
 Stacia Morris
 Bonnie Newman*
 James Page
 Paula Palermo*
 Erica Phillips*
 Yohana Ramirez*
 Sarah Rendon Garcia
 Harry Rilling
 Robin Risolo
 Bruce Ritter
 J. Lavone Roberson*
 Jacqueline Roberson*
 Tatiana Santiago
 Andrea Servan*
 Ervin Shames
 Barbara Smyth
 Jennifer Steiner
 Kerry Stevens
 Laurie Stiles
 Tory Sullivan
 Jodi Trice*
 Denique Weidema-Lewis*
 Norman Weinberger
 Dajuan Wiggins
 Jamie Zyla*

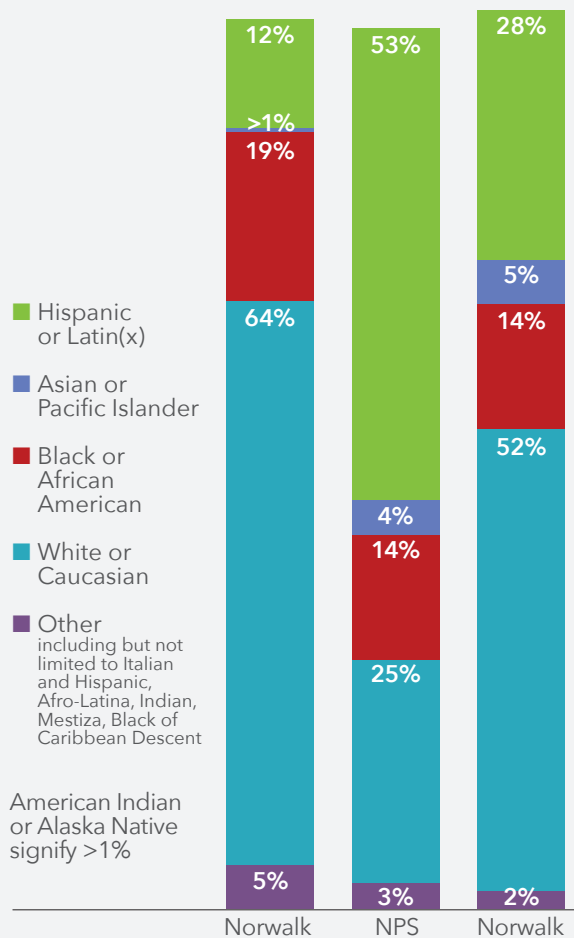
/ Understanding Our Membership

Norwalk ACTS Membership by the Numbers

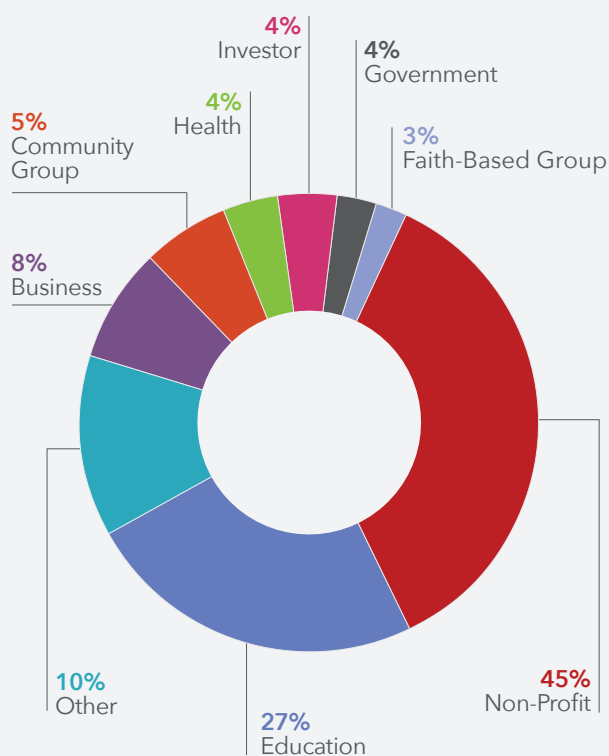
Based on MOA signing



Race/Ethnicity of Members Compared to Norwalk Public Schools and City of Norwalk



Sector Diversity of Member Organizations

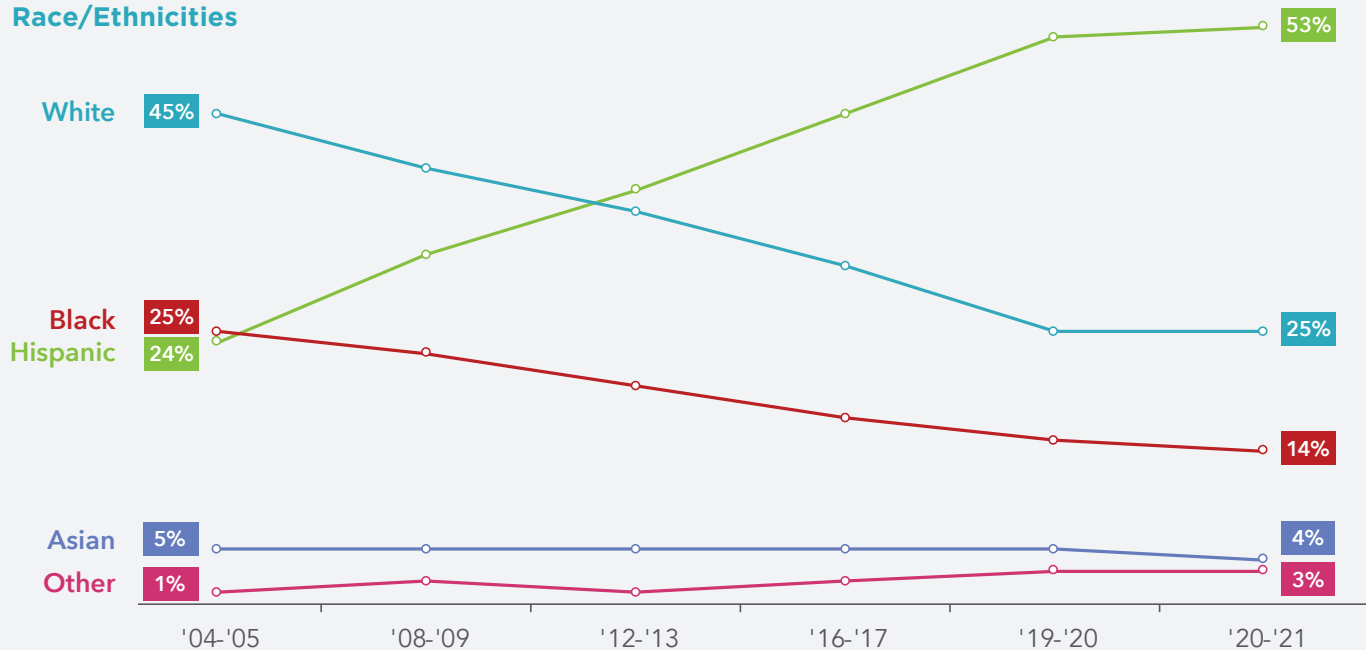


We are committed to diversifying our membership in all ways, including by sector as well as by race and ethnicity. We present this baseline data to hold ourselves accountable for creating a membership reflective of our community.

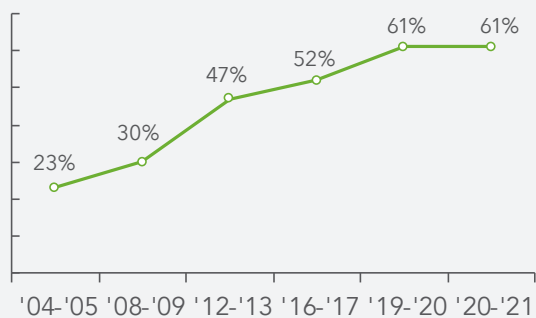


/ Norwalk Public Schools Student Demographic Trends

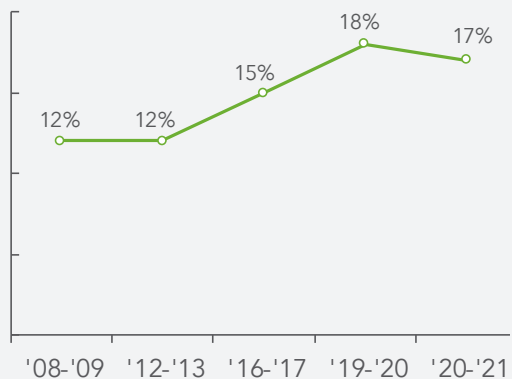
Race/Ethnicities



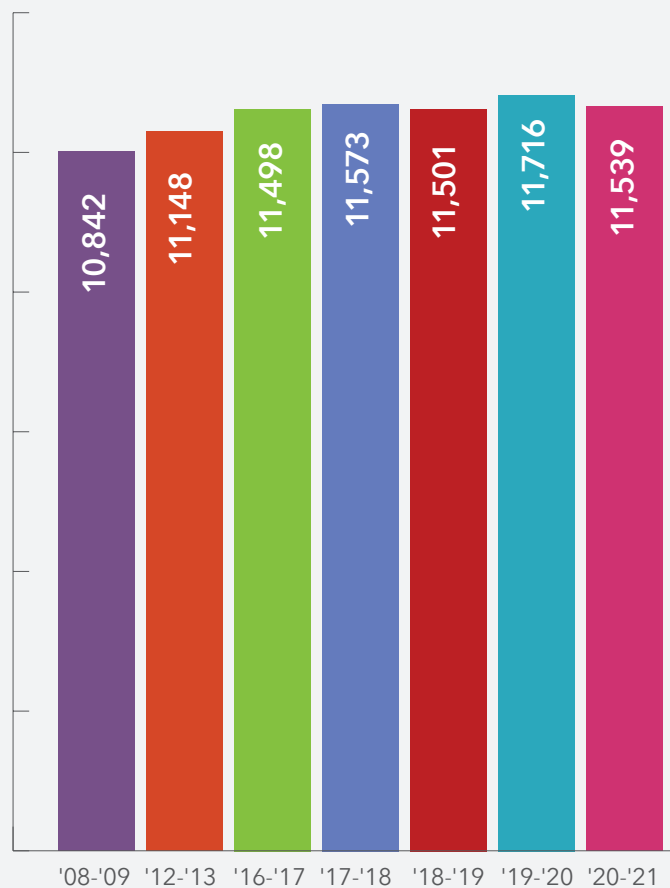
Free and Reduced Lunch



English Language Learners



Population



Disproportionality and Equity

The graphs on this page show the Relative Risk Ratio for three student indicators: Special Education, Discipline, and Academically Talented and Gifted. The Relative Risk Ratio is defined as a comparison of risk for one group in relation to risk for all other groups.

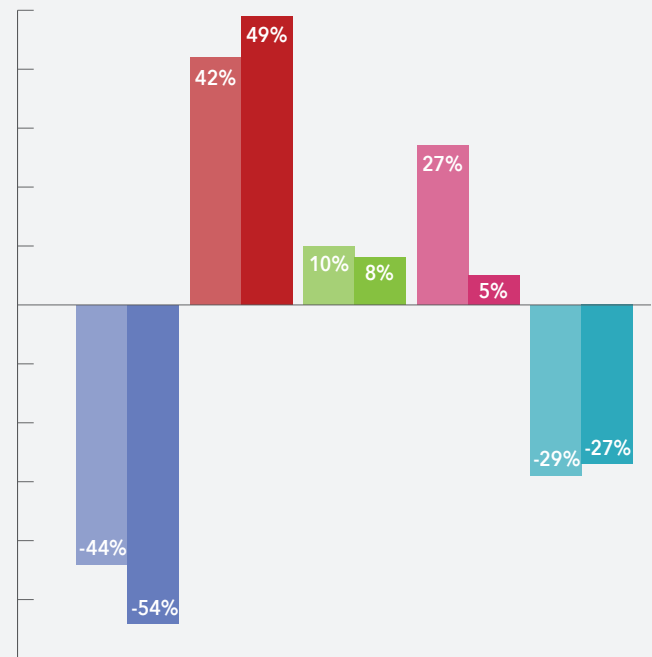
The graph shows the three types of designations, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, for the years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. Bars above the axis indicate that the group is over-represented (by x%) and the bars below the axis indicate under-representation.

Examples:

- White students are over-represented in Academically Talented and Gifted programs: 161% more likely in 2018-2019 and 90% more likely in 2019-2020
- Black students are under-represented in Academically Talented and Gifted programs: 52% less likely in 2018-2019 and 31% less likely in 2019-2020

*Data for 2019-20 may not be an accurate reflection due to COVID-19 and remote learning

Designated Special Education



Asian



Black



Hispanic



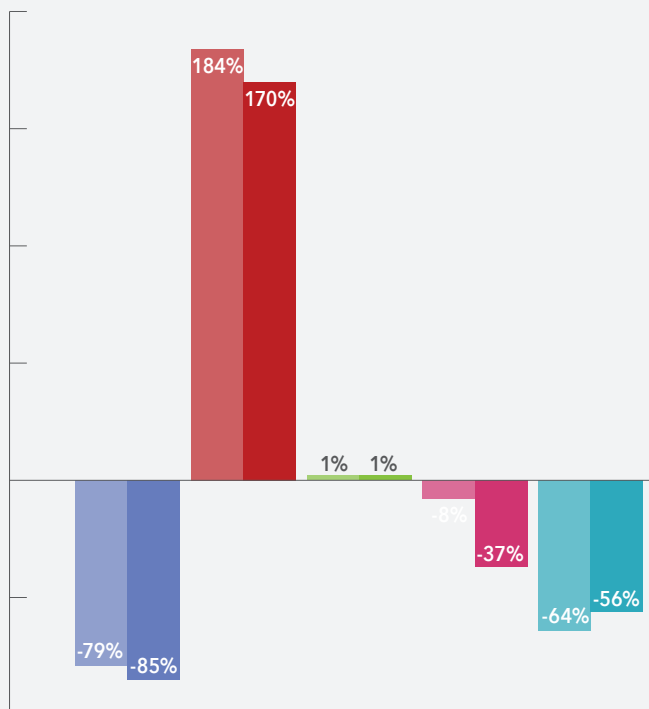
Other



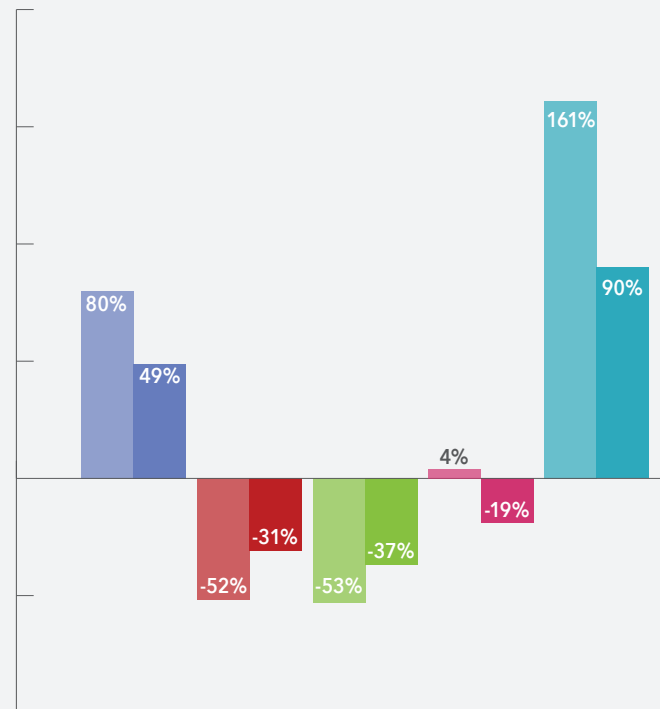
White



Discipline



Academically Talented and Gifted



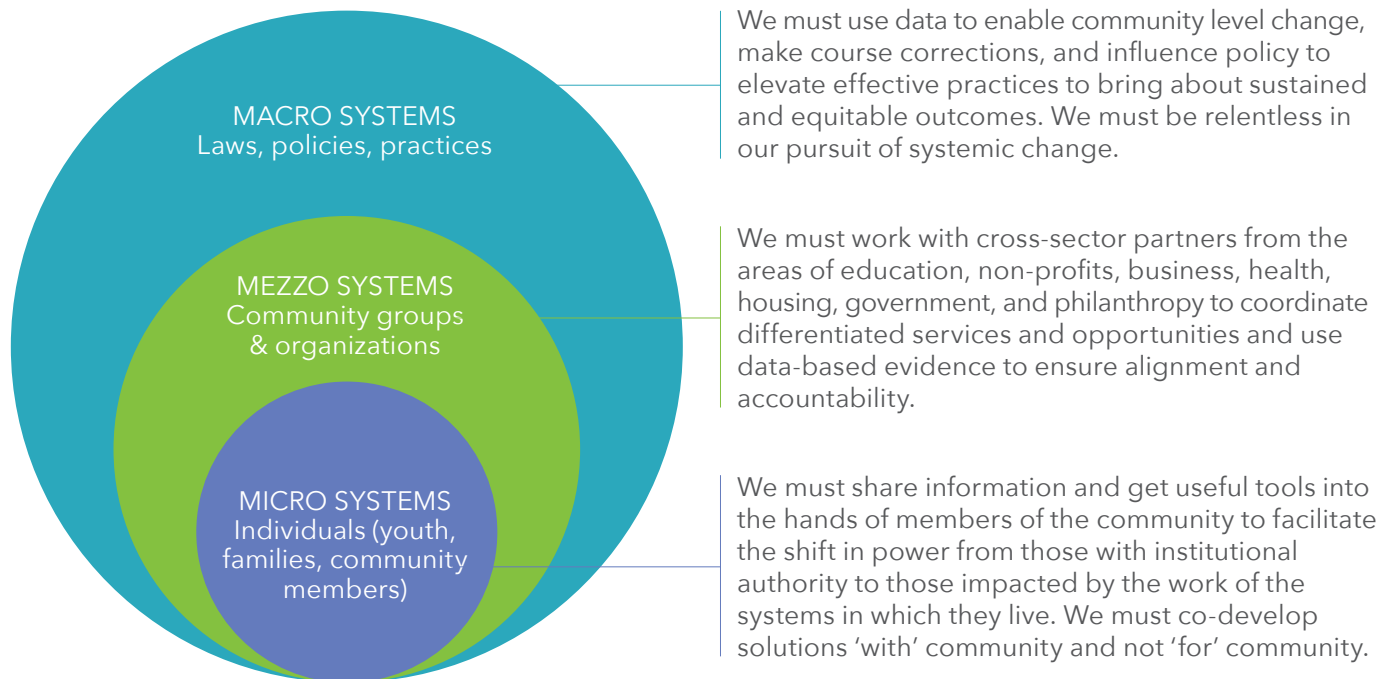
/ Systems Change & Strategy

Norwalk ACTS combats opportunity gaps for young people by fostering systems change. Like any system, the Norwalk community is made up of interrelated and interactive parts. The work of Norwalk ACTS is to take a bird's-eye view of the system, understand the various system components, align and strengthen the connections between system parts, analyze data to evaluate how the system is operating to achieve equitable outcomes, and work with all the members of the

system to operate more effectively and efficiently. The Collective Impact framework from which we operate is rooted in the belief that no single organization or entity alone can create large-scale, lasting social change on its own. It takes open and honest coordination of the parts of a system and the people involved to work together for something greater than each part and each person. Systems change is hard work and takes time but is worth it for true and lasting change to occur.

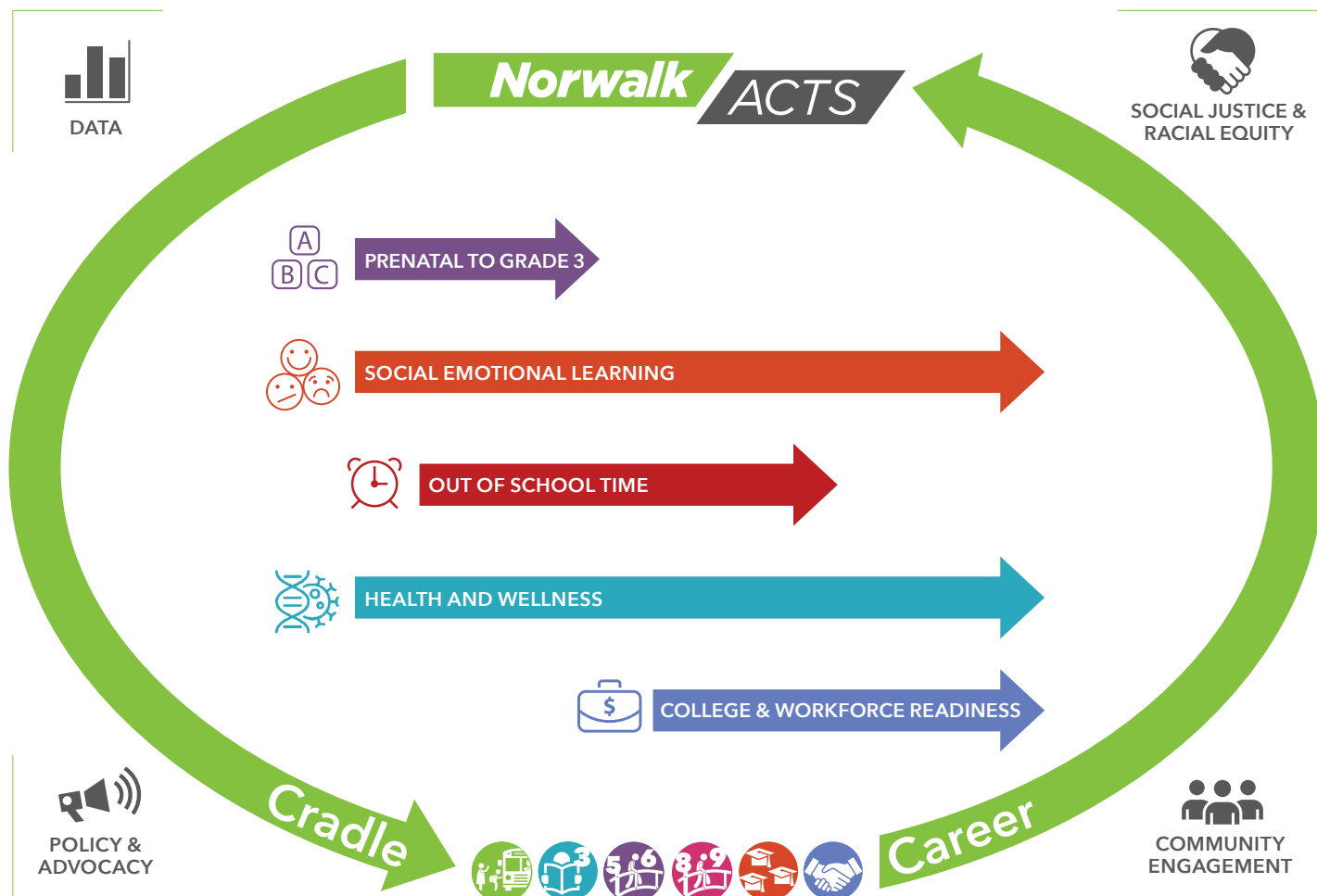
“*Systems change work is an intentional process designed to fundamentally alter the components and structures that cause the system to behave in a certain way.*”

Our theory of action includes a three-tiered model for systems change because we believe that all interrelated systems must work in concert to achieve the outcomes we seek.



/ EcoSystem Map

Our cornerstones are embedded into each of our five Initiatives across the cradle-to-career continuum.



“

With its dedication to collective impact, Norwalk ACTS plays a vital role in helping Norwalk Public Schools connect with community partners in support of our children and youth. Their work in collecting and analyzing data has helped NPS and other Norwalk ACTS members dedicate resources, and initiate or expand programs that target critical needs in the community. Their strong emphasis on social justice, social-emotional learning and family engagement is well aligned with the district’s own priorities, making Norwalk ACTS a key partner in our work.

– Godfrey Azima, Norwalk Board of Education

”

CORNERSTONE 1: Data

Norwalk ACTS believes that ***Behind Every Data Point is a Child***. We owe it to our children to know their larger story by collecting, connecting, and analyzing multiple data points, over time, across the cradle-to-career roadmap.

By building the capacity of Norwalk ACTS Data Services, we ensure useful and equitable data access and engagement with insightful information about student outcomes—within and across schools, service providers, and Norwalk as a whole. This helps parents, community organizations, teachers and school leaders, employers, and investors collaborate using a reliable evidence base to improve community-level outcomes.

Our goal is to build a secure and reliable cradle-to-career data infrastructure that provides a trusted system for collecting, storing, and accessing data for measurement, analysis and visualization. This will enable access to information that empowers the community to better support all of our children. This work requires care, talent and skills within Norwalk ACTS and our members' organizations. The quality of the analyses depends on the quality of the data at its source, how data is processed, and its confidentiality protected.

Norwalk ACTS takes data privacy seriously. We have data-sharing and confidentiality agreements in place with Norwalk Public Schools (NPS), which define safe and responsible use of student data, adhering to all privacy requirements. We also obtain parent consent whenever appropriate before our members share data with Norwalk ACTS.

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Hired Ray Leslie as a full-time data analyst with an expertise in data visualization
- Developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) Dashboard to provide a one-stop resource for all assessment data used by NPS
- Created the disproportionality and equity dashboard highlighting under-and over-representation of subgroups in discipline, special education, and academically talented categories
- Created COVID-19 food distribution maps and a Social Services resource portal
- Provided incoming kindergarten student summaries for all elementary schools
- Created student level assessment data dashboards for Tracey Elementary School, Horizons, and Norwalk Housing Authority
- Since 2017, maintained the TEAM Summer program directory for Norwalk families

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Expand Data Services capabilities and staff to meet the growing needs of the community
- Integrate new assessment data into all of our dashboards
- Continue to connect the segments of the cradle-to-career roadmap with relevant indicators of student progress to better inform what it means to be "On Track"
- Advocate early childhood information system
- Continue our work on defining and clarifying common measures
- Improve the sustainability of our data products and continue to advance data literacy across our membership

THE DATA TOOLKIT ESSENTIALS

Data sharing and confidentiality agreements and parent consent	Tableau data visualization software	Data shaping and analysis tools such as Alteryx and Tableau Prep	Relationships and trust	Data literacy and awareness
--	-------------------------------------	--	-------------------------	-----------------------------

CORNERSTONE 2: Social Justice & Racial Equity

Norwalk ACTS was first founded to collaboratively address disproportionality in suspension rates within the district and the persistent opportunity & achievement gaps between low-income & minority students and their more affluent peers. While we initially addressed symptoms of systemic inequities, our efforts did not fundamentally change the root causes that exist. Therefore, in the past year, Norwalk ACTS has re-centered social justice and racial equity in our work because we recognize that without doing so, we cannot reach our mission of improving the lives of all children and youth in Norwalk.

We are in the process of building organizational accountability measures including developing anti-racist practices, policies, and actions necessary to disrupt and dismantle the elements of systemic racism that impact ourselves, our organizations, and our community. We recognize that this is part of the hard work of systems change.

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Re-launched our Social Justice & Racial Equity Task Force to work collectively to make important shifts internally as an organization, as well as through the work of our partners
- Engaged Thought Partner Solutions (TPS) in a yearlong consultative relationship to assess our readiness for change and to work with us to develop a long-term strategy based on the results of the organizational evaluation
- Increased diversity of backbone staff and leadership at the board and initiative levels
- Initiated a yearlong series of workshops, open to all members, to provide fundamental education about systemic racism and racial equity
- Created spaces to have on-going vulnerable, reflective conversations about race within our membership
- Held two community screenings of the documentary True Justice followed by panel discussions
- Highlighted inequities and disproportionality through data collection and analysis

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Participate in an assessment by our equity consultants to identify gaps in cultural inclusion, equitable practices, and diversity
- Develop an action, implementation, communication, and development plan based on report of findings from the organizational assessment
- Present monthly workshops for all members to engage in courageous conversations about race
- Develop a racial equity statement and common language to be adopted by membership
- Update organizational policies and practices with an equity lens
- Achieve annual diversity milestones for the Board of Directors and organizational leadership



True Justice film screening and panel discussion.
From left to right: Monisha Gibson, Rev. Dr. Thomas Nins, Trey Ellis, Harold Bailey, Jr., Jennifer Barahona

THE RACIAL EQUITY MINDSET



DISAGGREGATE
DATA BY RACE



INTERPRET DATA
WITH AN EQUITY EYE



BUILD COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS



ANALYZE POLICIES
AND PRACTICES



CREATE RESULTS BASED
ACCOUNTABILITY

CORNERSTONE 3: Community Engagement

When we began the work of Norwalk ACTS we started by engaging the middle or ‘mezzo’ tier. This tier consisted of the community systems and structures in place working with youth and their families. We recognize that community engagement needs to be at the center of our collective impact work. In the past year we have begun a bottom up approach to engage the community through building awareness, sharing information, working to co-develop solutions and strategies with community members, and involving and mobilizing the community towards improvement. Our goal is to ensure that community members most impacted by systems change work are placed in the leadership positions necessary to make decisions and stand ready to help transfer this shift in power.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM



/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Hired two community staff members, MJ Chironna and Anamilena Moreno, to focus exclusively on developing and implementing a community engagement strategy for Norwalk ACTS
- Created a shared graduate internship position in collaboration with Norwalk Public Schools to engage and work with newly arriving bi-lingual students and their families
- Partnered with Fairfield County’s Community Foundation to develop an immigrant community needs assessment
- Collaborated with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, local investors, and Norwalk ACTS members to distribute \$31,000 in emergency cash to families in need during the first six months of the COVID-19
- Through a grant from the Office of Early Childhood, provided services to help families support their child’s development in the home, during the pandemic
- In partnership with the City of Norwalk, developed and mailed a bi-lingual essential resource guide to every household in Norwalk
- Helped coordinate and staff outreach tents over the summer at mobile food distribution sites to provide information to families on critical issues such as kindergarten registration, census, voter registration, and early literacy
- Added communication and marketing capacity, significantly increasing our social media presence and email communication to members and the community at large

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

Sustainable community change only begins when community members are at the forefront, raising their voices, developing solutions, and making decisions. Our next level of engagement is shifting ownership to parents and youth by offering them opportunities and resources so they have decision-making power.

- Develop and expand our Youth Town Hall series to amplify the voices of high school students
- Provide community-wide trainings based on the needs of our parents, youth, and other community residents
- Map out and engage with grassroots organizations throughout the community
- Create a Community Outreach Advisory Council and Community Messengers to provide assistance with engagement and to elicit diverse participation in development of community actions



Community resources at summer mobile food distribution

CORNERSTONE 4: Policy and Advocacy

As we work to engage the community, advance racial equity, develop a culture of continuous improvement, and leverage existing resources, we know that we also have a responsibility to influence policies necessary to improving outcomes along the cradle-to-career spectrum. To transform systems, we need to accomplish the following:

- Inform and support community organizing for stakeholders most impacted by practices and policies (families, youth, community residents, etc.)
- Advocate for public and private funding to align with strategies that advance equitable outcomes
- Hold cross-sector partners and institutions accountable for adopting practices and policies that reduce disparities and advance equitable outcomes

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Organized and co-led a cradle-to-career collective impact forum at the state capitol in partnership with the CT General Assembly's Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity
- Hired Jesse Buccolo as our Manager of Policy, Strategy, and Continuous Improvement, providing staff capacity to engage with elected officials and work with the Norwalk ACTS ecosystem to identify areas for policy influence
- Worked with our sister StriveTogether partnerships to form a Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition to work together on a shared policy agenda with an emphasis on race equity, closing the opportunity gap, and trauma responsive communities

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Work with Norwalk ACTS members to develop and prioritize short- and long-term list of policy and other system change opportunities
- Build local policy infrastructure by training community members and leaders on advocacy strategies and providing action alerts on issues related to legislative priorities
- Serve as a link to promising local, state, and national policies and practices
- Develop relationships with elected officials and keep them regularly informed of the cradle-to-career data and community led strategies and action steps
- Host forums for community members for to share experiences with elected officials
- Engage and support youth efforts in the community around local and state policy changes

CT Cradle to Career Coalition



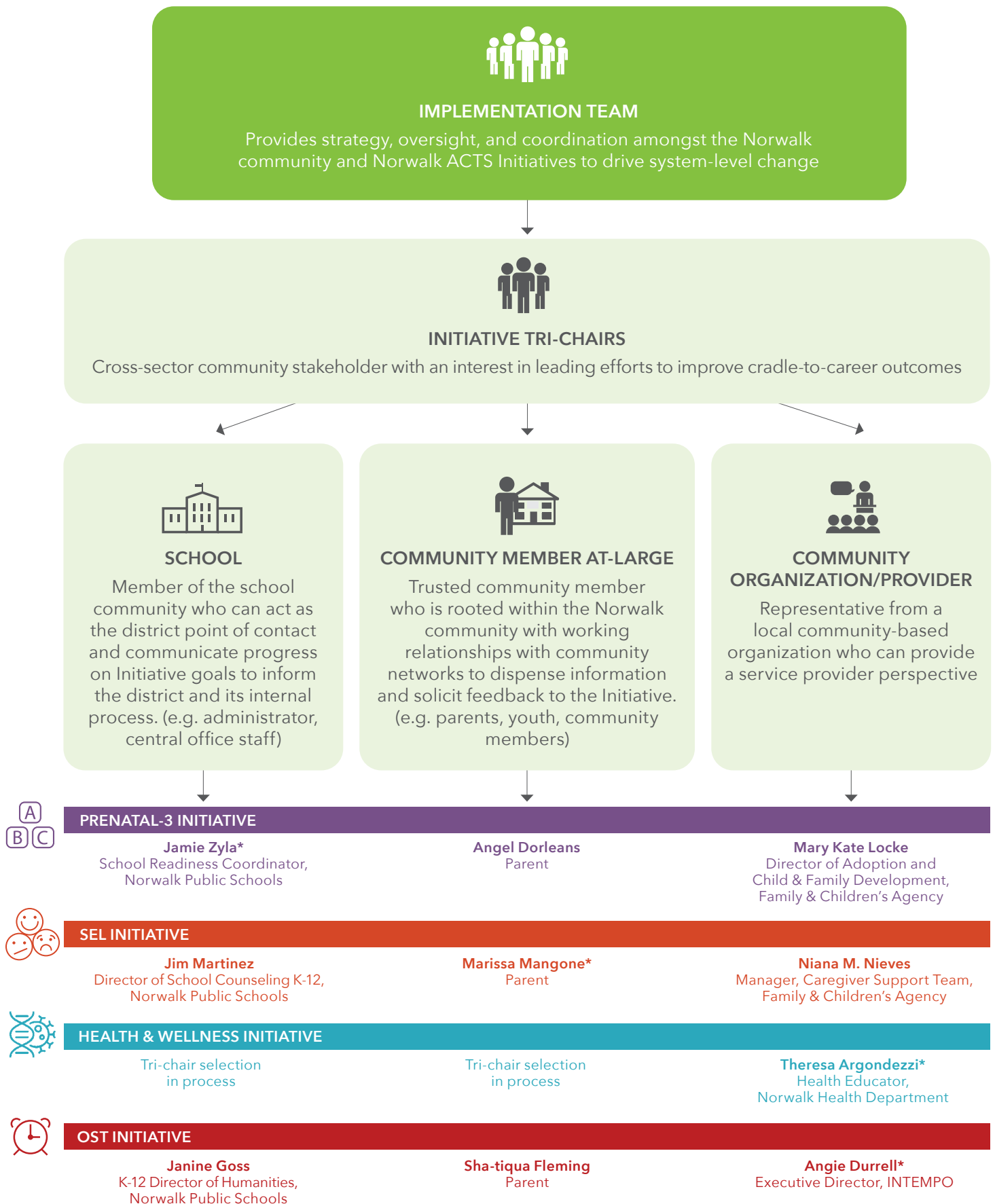
Thanks to support from our national network, StriveTogether, the four 'cradle-to-career' communities in Connecticut (BridgeportProspers, Norwalk ACTS, Stamford Cradle to Career, Waterbury Bridge to Success) hired David Radcliffe in September as the first ever State C2C Policy Director. David will work with each of the four cities to develop local community engagement and community mobilization capacity and align that capacity to influence state and local policies. To learn more visit www.ctc2c.org.

What do we mean by policy & advocacy work?

Activities that influence decision makers at the local, state, and federal level including;

- Providing a forum for community members to share their experiences and opinions with elected officials
- Communicating with elected officials about policies, practices, and resource flows that help or impede progress towards achieving community level outcomes
- Providing data and qualitative research to community members and policy makers to make informed decisions

/ Initiative Leadership Structure



/ 2020 Norwalk ACTS Implementation Team

The Implementation Team was redesigned in 2020 to increase the representation of diverse viewpoints. Each Implementation Team member is a **cross-sector liaison** working to improve cradle-to-career outcomes.



Prenatal to 3rd Grade Initiative



The first two goals in the cradle-to-career continuum are:

- Norwalk children are ready to learn in Kindergarten
- Norwalk students meet goal level in 3rd grade reading

The Initiative consists of four working groups (Home Visiting, Language & Literacy, Pre-K to K Transition, Early Childhood Health & Development) that are combining the efforts of the early childhood community, using data to promote the value of early interventions, and changing programmatic strategies to address identified needs.

Meeting these two goals requires that the work that supports kindergarten readiness and strong readers begins long before 3rd grade.

/ THE PROBLEM

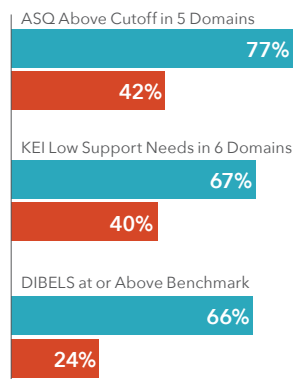
115 of 836 (14%) incoming kindergartners in 2019-2020 had no preschool experience.

Children with no preschool experience did not perform as well as their peers in three measures of kindergarten readiness.

2,222 out of 6,218 (36%) children under the age of six are living at or below the federal poverty level or at low income.

Preschool vs. No Preschool

■ Preschool ■ No Preschool



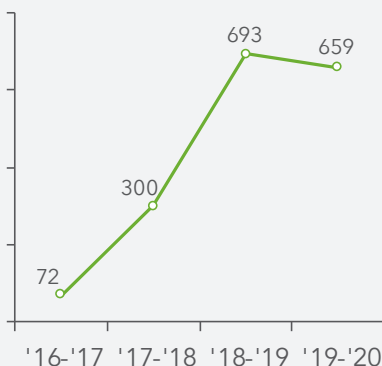
/ WHY IT MATTERS

80% of brain development happens before age three.

Kindergarten readiness refers to the development of the cognitive, behavioral, and social skills that help a child to make a smooth transition into formal schooling and to perform at the appropriate level. Kindergarten readiness is a strong predictor of long-term achievement.

The National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs has found that high-quality early childhood programs can yield a \$4 to \$9 dollar return per \$1 invested.

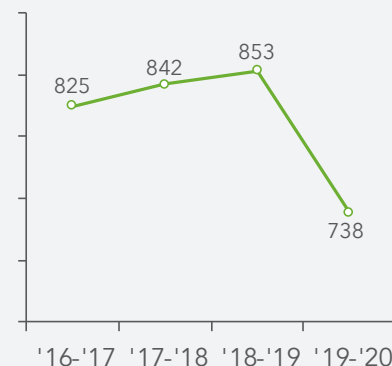
Number of Children in Funded Preschools Who Have Been Assessed Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Developmental Screening Tool



Source: Brooks Publishing/ASQonline.com

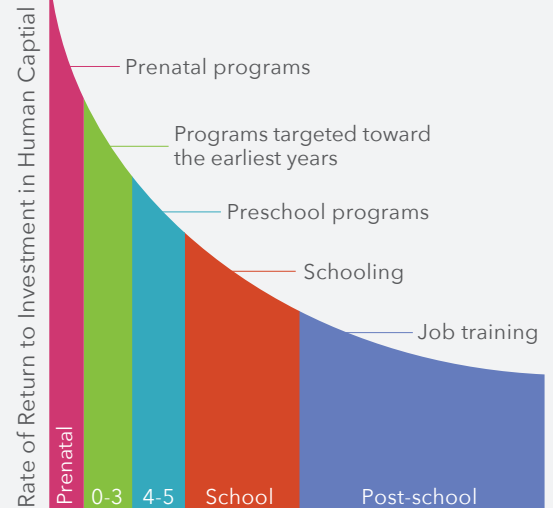
Trend in Kindergarten Population

Is COVID-19 keeping parents from enrolling kindergartners?



Source: Brooks Publishing/ASQonline.com and NPS PowerSchool

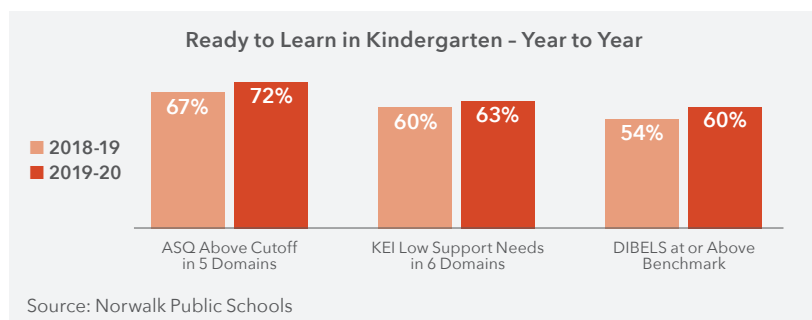
Returns Per Annum to a Unit Dollar Invested



Source: James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics
heckmanequation.org

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Secured grant funding to hire a part-time early childhood engagement specialist who, during the early months of the pandemic, provided virtual ASQ parent groups, increased ASQ enrollment, facilitated preschool enrollment, assisted with kindergarten registration, and provided referrals for services and supports
- Helped support preschool and infant/toddler programs to continue to provide onsite support and operations during COVID-19
- Worked with the Norwalk Community Health Center to establish an ASQ system for screening and follow up interventions for families with young children
- Provided multiple presentations throughout the state on Norwalk's early childhood system to share the success of the model and foster collaborative learning
- Participated in the Prenatal to 3rd Grade Impact and Improvement Network through our national partner, StriveTogether, and had Norwalk's early childhood system work and shared ASQ data system lifted up as a model
- Launched the Basics and trained 100 home visitors and teachers
- Created Step Into Kindergarten website for parents to have access to kindergarten readiness information and resources
- Created a comprehensive Pre-K to K data dashboard showing kindergarten readiness indicators for internal use by providers



/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Increase community engagement efforts to connect families of color and other underserved families to available early childhood resources
- Develop an inventory of all Norwalk prenatal services available with a concentration on equitable access for all pregnant mothers
- Advocate for a single point of entry for early identification and support of families
- Replicate successful developmental screens, tools, and programs in smaller early learning centers
- Increase professional development opportunities within the early childhood community, including trauma informed care, restorative practices, and race equity
- Embed virtual supports in the work of developmental screenings, virtual support groups, and home visiting programming post-COVID-19

PRENATAL TO 3RD GRADE TOOLKIT

AGES AND STAGES QUESTIONNAIRE (ASQ)

Screens the development of children in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving, and personal-social skills.

THE BASICS

Five clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors that highlight the importance of boosting cognitive and social emotional development of children from birth to age three.

PRESCHOOL EARLY LITERACY INDICATORS (PELI)

An assessment for 3- to 5-year-olds designed to measure pre-literacy and oral language skills.

KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE INVENTORY

Provides a statewide snapshot of the skills students demonstrate at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

DIBELS

A set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of a set of K-6 literacy skills.



Social Emotional Learning Initiative



The work of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Initiative is to organize and provide resources to develop the social emotional skills essential for lifelong success of Norwalk's children and families. As a team of service providers, practitioners, parents, students and leaders from the district and community-based organizations, we strive to create a continuum of enrichment and intervention services, cradle to career. Our goal is to create alignment between community- and school-based programs/services in order to maximize available resources.

Goals:

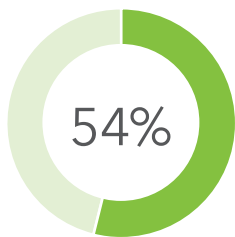
- Increase the number of high quality adult relationships with children and youth
- Increase parent engagement opportunities and supports
- Increase the number of youth engaging in community activities

/ THE PROBLEM

Nationally, 1 in 3 children have experienced one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and 20% of children have experienced more than two ACEs.

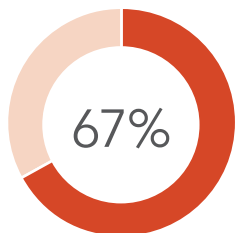
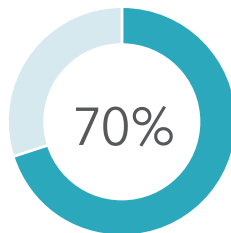


Based on a 2018 Search Institute Developmental Assets: Attitudes and Behaviors survey of all Norwalk Public School Students in grades 7, 9, and 11.



54% of our youth do not receive support from three or more non-parent adults

70% of our children and youth do not feel school provides a caring, encouraging environment



67% of youth do not feel they are given useful roles in the community

/ WHY IT MATTERS

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) can have lasting, negative effects on health and well-being. The most impactful ways to promote healthy child development and reduce the effects of ACES is to proactively provide nurturing relationships, create environments where children feel emotionally and physically safe at home, in school and in neighborhoods, and teach children how to be resilient.

Youth with high numbers of developmental assets are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors (such as substance abuse and self-harming behaviors) and more likely to engage in thriving behaviors (such as doing well in school and helping others).

Per LinkedIn in 2020, the top five interpersonal skills employers are looking for in workers are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.

We need our leaders and administrators to understand the importance of student voice in decision making. We need to be part of the conversation because our outlook is so different than that of an adult. Does anyone pay attention to what we say?

– Student Panelist, September Youth Town Hall

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Created an easily accessible resource portal of community partners who provide resources and services to the Norwalk community around social-emotional, mental health, and trauma support
- Secured grant funding to organize trainings to certify 50 adults in school climate, 55 adults in restorative practices, and 10 adults as train-the-trainers. Norwalk Public Schools trained an additional 100 teachers over the summer in school climate and restorative practices



- Mid-Fairfield County Child Guidance Center provided initial and booster sessions on Trauma Informed Care for all school staff ahead of the start of the 2020-2021 academic year



Train-the-trainer school climate & restorative practices participants, January 2020

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Continue to partner with Stamford Cradle to Career to offer monthly restorative practices convenings to grow the learning community across Fairfield County and beyond
- Partner with The Norwalk Partnership and Positive Directions – The Center for Prevention and Counseling, to implement the Developmental Relationships Survey, a measurement of developmental relationships, social emotional learning, and equity of Norwalk's youth in grades 6-12
- Develop and monitor community wide strategies based on the results of the survey to help young people become their best selves
- Continue building the inventory of school and community social emotional supports and available resources to provide a better system of service delivery and identify resource gaps

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOLKIT

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS SURVEY

A Search Institute survey which measures developmental relationships, social emotional learning and equity.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

Serious childhood traumas that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain and affect overall health. ACES can include: emotional/physical/sexual abuse and neglect, domestic violence, household substance abuse and mental illness, separation or divorce, incarcerated household members, homelessness, natural disasters, war, and witnessing violence.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Based on principles that emphasize the importance of positive relationships as central to building community and involves processes that restore relationships when harm has occurred.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

This strength-based framework is based on knowledge of the impact of trauma, aimed at ensuring environments and services are welcoming and engaging for service recipients and staff.



Health and Wellness Initiative



This Initiative works to foster a culture of health, provide access to resources, and advocate for policies that sustain the health and wellness of the children and families of Norwalk. This Initiative serves as an umbrella that encompasses the work of several other community coalitions and committees, each with their own areas of focus.

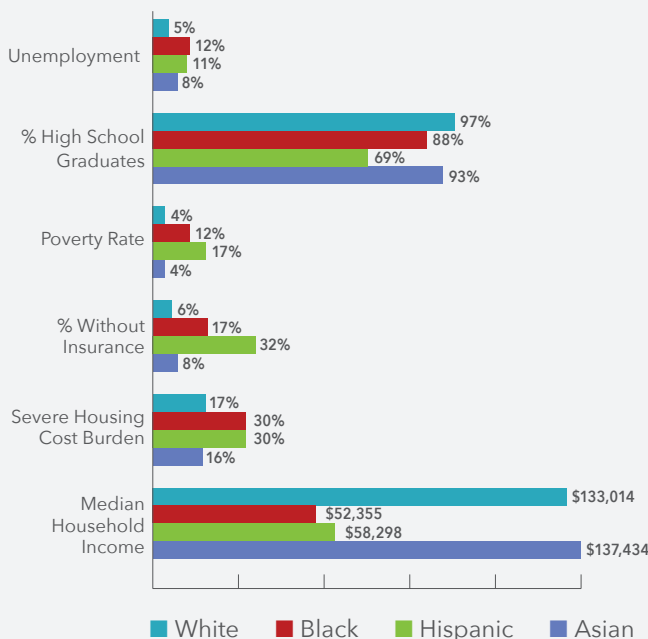
Goals:

- Expand and coordinate the local accessible food system to support increased healthy eating
- Influence policies, systems, and environmental changes that support; physical activity during the school, safe routes to school, community-wide bike and walkability, free and affordable programs during out-of-school time that meet national recommendations
- Ensure all Norwalk residents have a medical home and are connected with appropriate cultural and linguistic health care services, including well-child visits and preventative care for the early detection and treatment of issues

/ THE PROBLEM

Across the nation, gaps in health are large, persistent and increasing—many of them caused by barriers set up at all levels of our society. Differences in these conditions lead to health inequities predominately in people of color and other underserved communities. Health disparities start from the very beginning of a child's life.

Community Indicators, Fairfield County Communities of Norwalk, Westport, and Darien



Source: DataHaven Health Equity Connecticut 2020

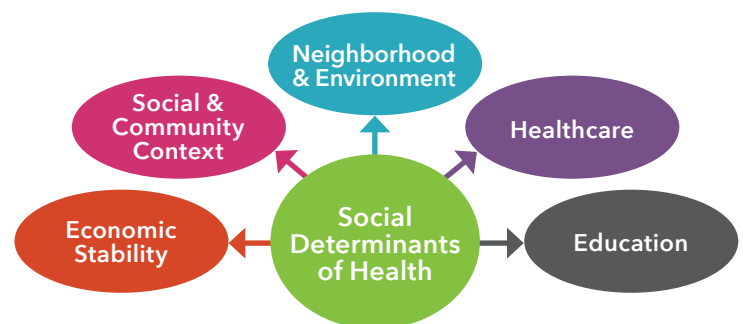
/ WHY IT MATTERS

Norwalk ACTS believes in a holistic approach to helping children thrive from cradle to career, including essential aspects of their physical health and wellness. Through an education lens, healthy students perform better academically, are better able to concentrate and focus, have fewer absences, and less behavior problems. Higher achievement levels are seen in students who are active, well-nourished, and connected to physical, mental, and oral health care.

Health equity means increasing opportunities for everyone to live the healthiest life possible, no matter who they are, where they live, or their income.

“Health equity requires removing obstacles to health, such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”

— Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



/ WHAT WE ARE DOING

Since Fall 2019, Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center, Inc. in partnership with the Norwalk Health Department have been leading the Greater Norwalk Health Enhancement Community (HEC) Initiative which will support long-term, collaborative, and cross-sector efforts that improve community health through broad, systemic change. The HEC will work to address the social, economic, and physical needs of community members and empower people to achieve their health and well-being goals. The two health priorities include:

- Improving healthy weight and physical fitness for all Connecticut (CT) residents; and
- Improving well-being for CT children ages birth-8

/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Collaborated to produce and publish *Community Profile on Norwalk, CT's Young Children: Poverty Rates, Well-being, and School Readiness*
- The *Healthy For Life Project: Eat Well Project* launched in 13 Norwalk locations to encourage healthy menu choices at local restaurants
- With help from the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department and Norwalk Planning and Zoning Department, the Norwalk Health Department redesigned 16 maps, developed one new map and five translated maps to encourage Norwalk residents to walk through the NorWALKer program as well as distributed to *Move More* materials to principals and afterschool providers
- Food Access: Convened community partners and held five planning meetings to analyze the emergency food system, set priorities for improvement, created action plans and began implementation ahead of COVID-19
- Planning process implemented for 2020 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Work with the Norwalk Public School (NPS) District Wellness Committee to provide continuous improvement to health practices and policies
- Continue the work of the Health Enhancement Communities to prioritize and act on identified strategies



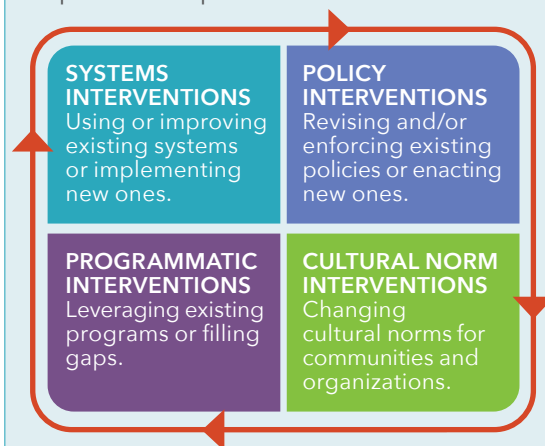
HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOOLKIT

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT (CHA)

Identifies key health needs and issues through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis on the community's current health status.

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CHIP)

A long-term, systematic effort to address public health problems based on the results of community health assessment activities and the community health improvement process.



BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

The Norwalk Health Department works with key partners to gather to gather and study BMI data from NPS's students. This collaboration helps measure and monitor the health of Norwalk children, identify trends in obesity, and communicate these findings to the community.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

Serious childhood traumas that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain and affect overall health. ACES can include: emotional/physical/sexual abuse and neglect, domestic violence, household substance abuse and mental illness, separation or divorce, incarcerated household members, homelessness, natural disasters, war, and witnessing violence.

COMMUNITY FOOD REPORT

The Healthy for Life Project worked with community partners and researchers at Fairfield University to analyze food insecurity and related factors in our community. The Norwalk Community Food Report guides that work.

Out of School Time Initiative



Formerly called Team Summer, the goal of the Out of School Time (OST) Initiative is to develop and sustain a system that ensures our city's children and youth are provided with high-quality, affordable learning opportunities that meet academic, social-emotional, and health and wellness needs.

Goals:

- Increase the number of children connected to meaningful out-of-school experiences
- Establish a learning community where providers and stakeholders can share data and best practices
- Define, align, and advance common measurements of quality experience, identify and address gaps
- Define and decrease "summer slide" for Norwalk students
- Increase community awareness about the importance of summer and out-of-school time (OST) learning experiences
- Leverage and help to expand financial resources and investments in out-of-school time

/ THE PROBLEM

School-aged children spend nearly 85% of their time outside of school. Ongoing learning needs to happen outside of school walls yet only a fraction of students are in out-of-school time programs. Family income, access to, and availability of programs are some factors that determine if young people have continued learning and skill building opportunities. Without OST programs, many youth would not be provided with safety and supervision after school. Keeping kids engaged outside of school is important to their health, their future, and to our community.

/ WHY IT MATTERS

OST activities (e.g., academic support, arts, sports, music, theater) help build human and cultural capital, increase academic achievement, and develop and define children's interests and skills. As noted in the Foundations of Young Adult Success framework, high-quality interactions or "developmental relationships" with peers and adults allow youth to foster skills and develop self-management strategies, including self-regulation.

By participating in academic or enrichment activities, youth have access to new and educational experiences in safe spaces with caring adults which provides lasting developmental benefits. Research shows that some OST programs can support student academic achievement and may play a role in reducing health disparities.

K-12 Students in CT

109,150

are alone and unsupervised afterschool

99,710

are enrolled in afterschool programs

213,766

are waiting for an available program

Source: afterschoolalliance.org



/ OUR WORK IN 2019-2020

- Developed the OST resources page in response to COVID-19 to provide information and materials to continue to support families in instructional and social emotional support
- During the early months of COVID-19, regularly convened OST providers to continue an open dialogue between Norwalk Public Schools and providers on the changing needs of families, create a learning community to share resources, collaboratively problem solve, and provide ongoing group support and coordination
- Conducted a Summer Planning Roundtable in partnership with the Connecticut After School Network
- Released the 3rd edition of the summer program portal. Although some programs were cancelled due to COVID-19, many OST Initiative members adjusted their programming to provide a combination of onsite and/or virtual programming to continue to support and learn during the summer months

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

- Moving into the 2020-2021 school year, we are moving beyond just summer opportunities to encompass all OST opportunities throughout the year for youth in grades Pre-K to 12
- In partnership with Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center, Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Trainings will be hosted to promote a stronger understanding of trauma, how it affects a child's behavior and ability to learn in school, and helps build a system more responsive to the needs of Norwalk's children. TIC strives to shift the underlying question from "What is wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" The TIC training series includes five sessions covering Trauma Basics, Trauma In-Depth, Trauma & Relationships, TIC Responses & Interventions, and Vicarious Trauma & Self-Care

OUT OF SCHOOL TOOLKIT

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Based on principles that emphasize the importance of positive relationships as central to building community and involves processes that restore relationships when harm has occurred.

THE CONNECTICUT AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

The premier provider of professional development for those who work in the after school and summer programs in Connecticut.

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM PORTAL

(formerly known as TEAM Summer Program Portal)

The summer portal provides parents and guardians a single place to search for and filter all of the opportunities available to youth in the community.

“

My son has been part of ASPIRE (Family & Children Agency) since the 6th grade and as he gets ready to graduate from high school I am so very grateful to ASPIRE. Over the YEARS they provided me with a ton of helpful info with his PPT's as well as ALWAYS being present at his meetings. My son was able to experience a lot of different things that would otherwise be unaffordable by me. Like outings, movie theatre, trips to NYC to see plays, college trips etc. I am really, really thankful as a parent because a lot of times I would be lost without the help and support of ASPIRE.

— High School Parent

”

College & Workforce Readiness Initiative



Our newest Initiative will seek to innovate multiple pathways for college and workforce readiness in order to close the opportunity gap that is reflected in the deep disparities of post-secondary completion and workforce readiness among students of color and those from low-income families.

Our vision is for all young people in Norwalk to graduate high school prepared for post-secondary education and/or a career. To achieve this, our students must:

- Demonstrate a high level of problem-solving, critical thinking, social-emotional, and collaborative skills
- Successfully complete rigorous, college-in-high school programs
- Engage in work-based learning experiences
- Earn industry-specific credentials and certifications that will lead to employability and/or successful navigation of post-secondary education

/ THE PROBLEM

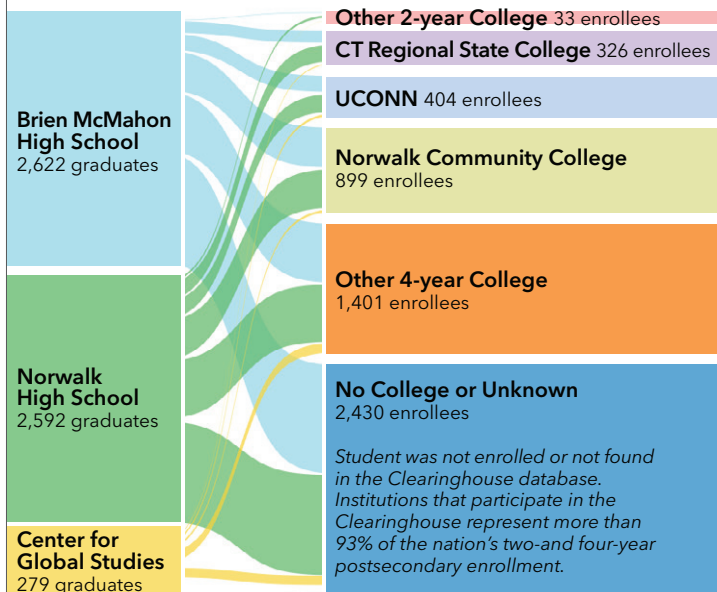
A majority of Norwalk Public School students over the last six years have not enrolled in post-secondary education immediately following high school graduation. For the students who do enroll, there are deep disparities in post-secondary persistence and completion among students from low-income families and students of color.

/ WHY IT MATTERS

The majority of jobs in Connecticut require more than a high school diploma. We need to ensure our students are prepared for post-secondary education and career opportunities that reflect the future of jobs in Norwalk and its surrounding areas. Moreover, young people need to be able to earn a living wage that can support a family in order to build economic mobility.

Norwalk College Enrollment Pathways

College enrollment results for Norwalk students who graduated high school during 2014-2019 school years.

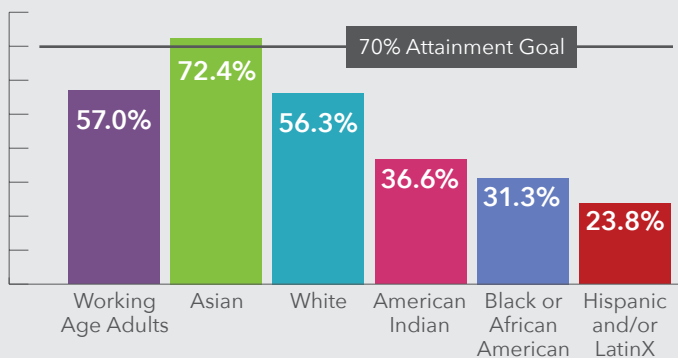


Data Note: Data from National Student Clearinghouse, due to differences in data reporting structures, we could only use data from the following years: BMHS: 2014-2019 (all years), NHS: 2014-2019 (all years), and CGS: 2017-2019

Research shows that 70% of Connecticut's working-age adults should have some form of post-secondary work credential by 2025 if we are to meet the needs of our modernizing economy.

— Governor's Workforce Council:
Workforce Strategic Plan 2020

Connecticut's 2018 Postsecondary Credential Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

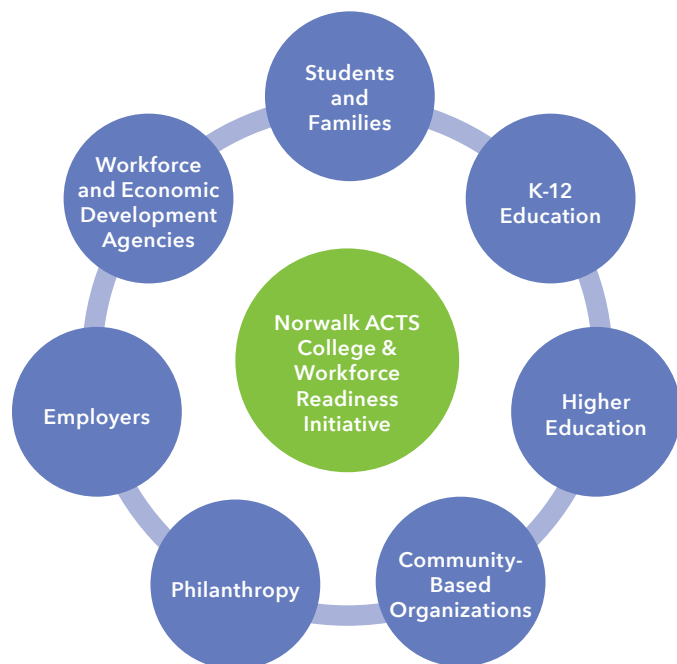


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

/ OUR WORK IN 2020-2021 AND GOING FORWARD

Working with our cross-sector partners and the community, Norwalk ACTS is identifying, strengthening, and innovating the partnerships necessary to achieve this outcome. We will continue to explore solutions that increase resource flows, access, and opportunities and improve systems that support all of our students' needs and interests in navigating to-and-through their pathway.

We are in the process of mapping out Norwalk's ecosystem for this initiative, which will lay the foundation for our collective impact work moving forward.



“

As a business organization, workforce development and education are of vital importance to our mission and work. Moreover, as a community organization, we know that working together to solve issues and accomplish goals is imperative. And with Norwalk ACTS operating as a collective impact organization, it is best equipped to ensure that we all provide successful and healthy outcomes for all of Norwalk's youth.

– Brian Griffin, President Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce

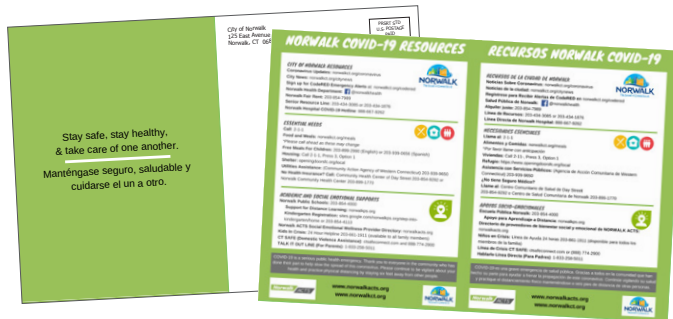
”

/ COVID-19 Response

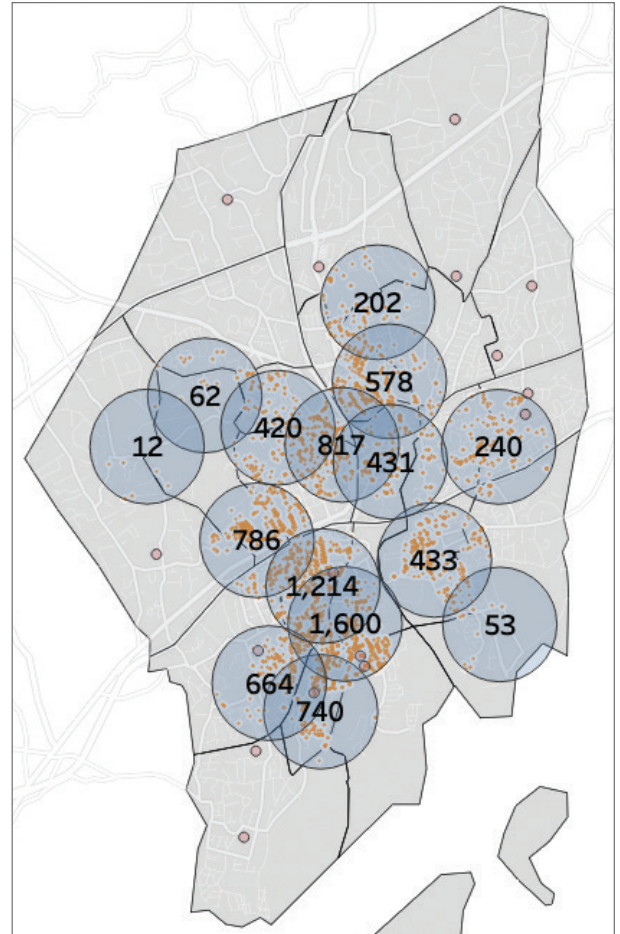
The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critically important role of collective impact work for communities. Having a pre-existing structure in place to convene cross-sector partners was vital in improving social services coordination and connecting resources with needs during the early phase of the crisis. Our collection and analysis of student level data allowed for better informed decision making by community leaders.

/ COVID-19 RELATED WORK

- Developed and mailed a COVID-19 resource flyer in Spanish and English to every household in Norwalk



- Optimized the distribution of free and reduced-cost lunches to students by analyzing location data to ensure a limited number of delivery sites were within easy walking distance for most of the students they serve
- Obtained grant to provide support to local food pantries and early childhood programs by purchasing harder to get essential items such as diapers, personal hygiene items, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and shelf-stable food
- Created the Norwalk COVID-19 Immediate Needs Fund with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County and other philanthropic partners to provide immediate cash assistance to meet the critical needs of individuals and managed the distribution of over \$31,000 in gift cards to more than 155 families



This image shows the location of each food distribution site and the number of free/reduced lunch eligible students who live within a 1/2 mile radius of the site.

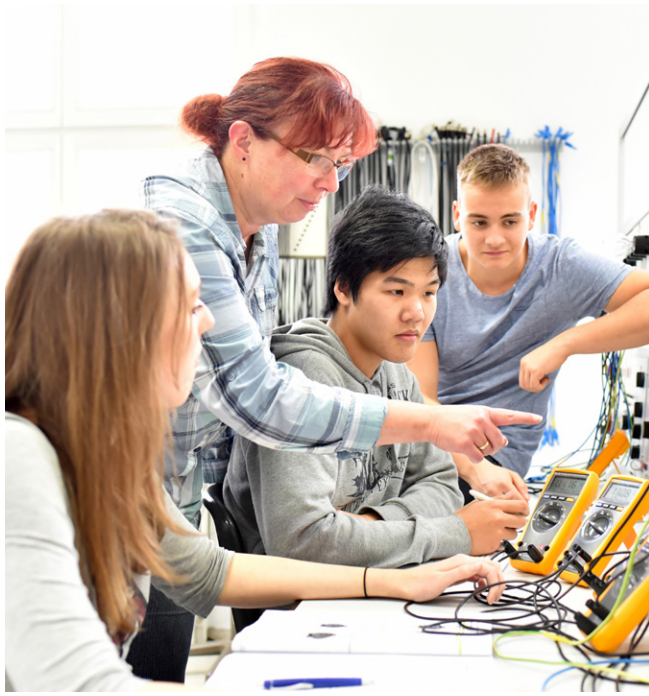
“

La tarjeta de regalo me ayudó mucho durante esta pandemia. No he trabajado mucho y esto me ayudó a conseguir comida para mis hijos. Dios te bendiga.

— Norwalk Community Member

”

Translation: “The gift card helped me a lot during this pandemic. I have not worked much and this helped me get food for my children. God bless you.”



/ TRANSFORMING HOW COMMUNITY WORKS

Norwalk ACTS is determined to break down barriers, change or rebuild systems, and improve outcomes for all Norwalk's children and families regardless of race, neighborhood, or by the conditions in which they are born.



/ How Can I Engage?

1/ Join Us

Become a member of Norwalk ACTS! We ask individuals and organizations joining the partnership to sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA serves as an articulation of the shared intention of the Norwalk ACTS membership to implement the mission and outlines the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved. Sign up for our newsletters or join an Initiative or Working Group. Visit us online at www.norwalkacts.org or email us at info@norwalkacts.org to learn more.

2/ Explore

In order to break down barriers and change systems, every one of us must explore and confront our own implicit bias and understand how it impacts our work. Commit to courageous conversations as we engage with our difficult history of inequality in order to develop a more just and equitable future.

3/ Act

Collective Impact relies on everyone doing their part. Commit to learning what you can do to support young people in Norwalk by visiting www.norwalkacts.org/SEL.

4/ Advocate

Become a voice for change in our community by challenging systems and structures that perpetuate the opportunity gap. Speak out at Board of Education and other community meetings where policies are being decided.

5/ Invest

Ensuring successful outcomes for all of Norwalk's children requires investments of time, talent, and treasure. Volunteer and/or make a donation to Norwalk ACTS or to any of our member non-profit organizations by visiting www.norwalkacts.org/membership.

6/ Share

Help spread the word about our work by sharing our newsletters and following us on social media. Talk with friends, family, and other members of the community about our work and become part of the movement that is changing outcomes for all of Norwalk's children, cradle to career.

Working Together, Everything Is Achievable.

Norwalk ACTS

/ 9 Mott Ave, Norwalk CT 06850 / 203.956.0700 / NorwalkACTS.org



NorwalkACTS.CT



@NorwalkACTS1