



# North Hartford Ascend

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Grant Program

## Community Conversation

Wednesday, January 28, 2026



**Por favor levante la mano si necesita  
interpretación al español**

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**Spanish interpretation services are available. Please  
see Alba for translation help.**

# Agenda

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- Welcome & Guidelines
- Featured Topic:
  - Our Results
  - Ascend Together
- Next Steps and Closing Remarks
- **Next Meeting: February 18, 2026**
  - **Topic: Summer Youth Employment**

# Discussion Guidelines

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- Everyone deserves to be heard. Listen and respond respectfully. Successful dialogue is the responsibility of all participants.
- Let's stay on topic– time is limited, so let's value each other's time.
  - Please use the index cards provided to submit questions at any time.
  - If you would like direct follow-up on your question, please include your name and email address as clearly as possible.
- We are interested in hearing your authentic thoughts- please do not use AI or ChatGPT to respond to questions.

# Incentive Available to Hartford Residents

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# North Hartford Ascend: Overview

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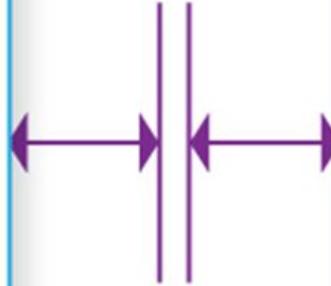


Connect children and families, prenatal through career, living in the **North Hartford Promise Zone** to the programs, services and other resources they need to **reach their full potential.**

# Current State

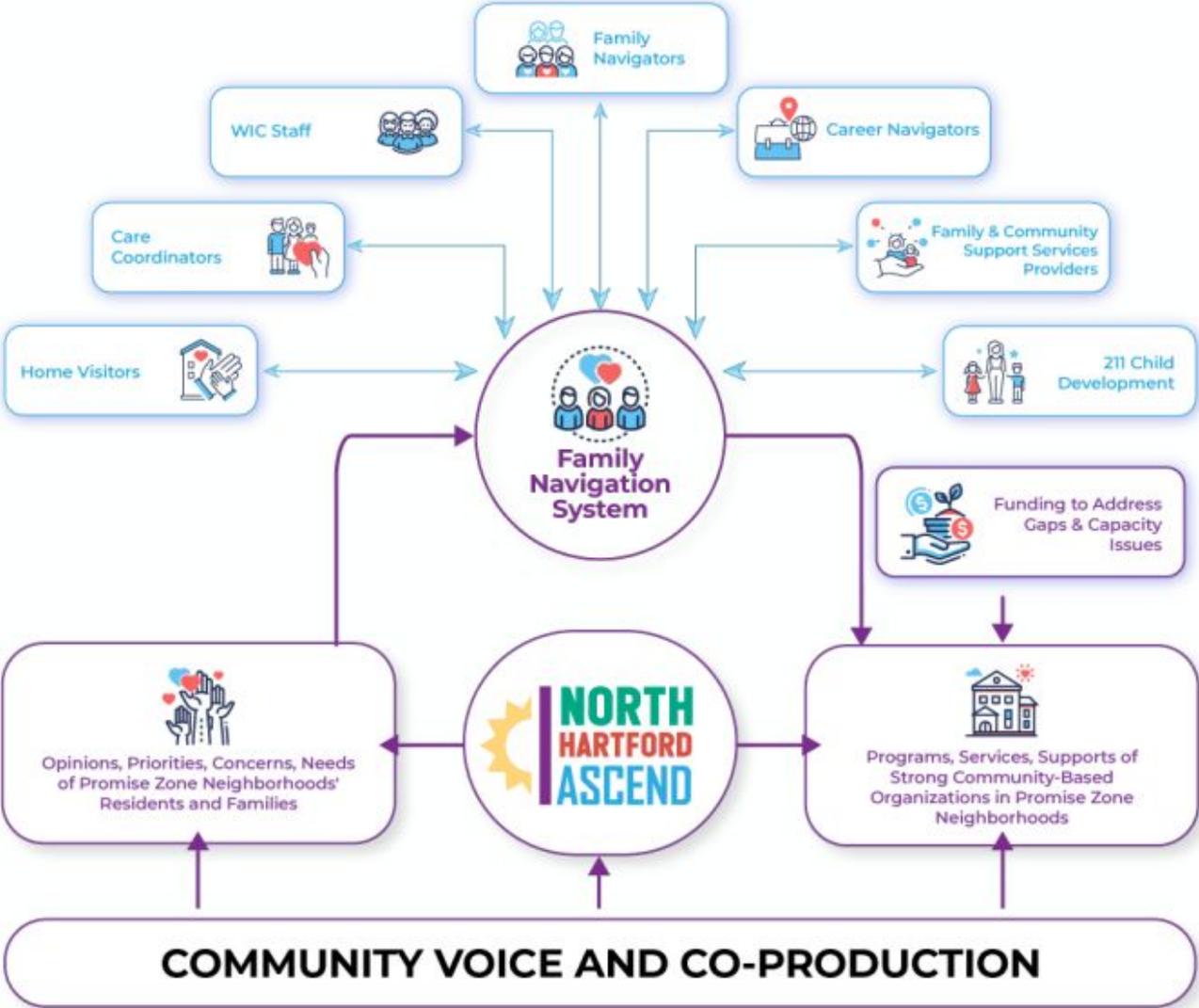


Opinions, Priorities,  
Concerns, Needs of Promise  
Zone Neighborhoods'  
Residents and Families



Strong Array of Programs,  
Services, Supports of Community-  
Based Organizations in Promise  
Zone Neighborhoods

# Ideal State-Ascend System Building



# Ascend & Community Updates

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# Ascend & Community Updates



## Community Workshops: In-Person

### **Getting Ready to Talk – Preparing for Difficult Conversations**

[Thursday, November 20](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Learn how to recognize when a child is emotionally ready, create conditions that promote openness and trust, and identify age-appropriate ways to approach tough topics.

### **Understanding Conflict & Simple Tools for De-escalation**

[Tuesday, December 2](#) and [Monday, December 8](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Participants will learn what conflict really is, how anger escalates, and a simple three-step method for calming tense situations.

### **Advocacy in Action: The Label Conversation**

[Tuesday, December 10](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Equipping caregivers with the knowledge and skills to effectively advocate for their children within the educational system, transforming potentially challenging emotions into constructive action.

### **Talking Through the Tough Stuff with Your Child**

[Thursday, December 18](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Explore how to respond with honesty while helping your child feel secure, understood, and emotionally supported.

## Workshops



# Our Results

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# DOE Promise Neighborhoods Program Results



## Students . . . .

Enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school.

Are proficient in Math and English Language Arts.

Successfully transition from middle to high school.

Graduate from high school.

Obtain post-secondary degrees, certifications, or credentials.

Are supported by families and communities in their learning.

Are healthy.

Feel safe at school and in the community.

Live in stable communities.

Have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools.

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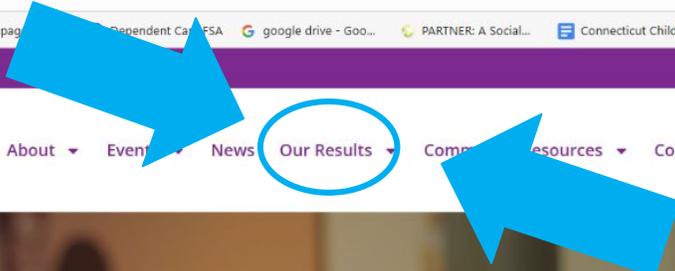
Are healthy.

Feel safe at school and in the community.

Live in stable communities.

Have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools.

“Data are just summaries of thousands of stories - tell a few of those stories to make the data meaningful.”  
- Chip and Dan Heath -



Partnering with the Community to  
**Unlock Children and Families' Full Potential**

We are dedicated to uplifting the community of North Hartford by providing access to resources, support, and opportunities for growth and success.

[Get Involved](#) [Community Resource Map](#)



What is  
**North Hartford Ascend?**

Facilitated by **Connecticut Children's**, Ascend is an initiative

# Our Results



## How We Are Measuring Results

- Types of data
- Data sources
- How data are used

## Ascend Program Level Results

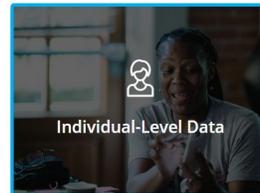
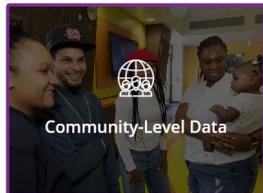
-2024 cumulative program data

## Student Level Results

-GPRA data graphs and narratives

Ascend is evaluated through 3 pillars of data:

(Click below to learn more about each data pillar)



North Hartford Ascend is a prenatal-to-career initiative connecting children and families living in the North Hartford Promise Zone – which includes the Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany neighborhoods – with the support they need to reach their full potential.

This report presents a series of data summaries that highlight both progress and opportunities for improvement across required outcome areas identified by the U.S. Department of Education, including kindergarten readiness; math and English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency; attendance and chronic absenteeism; graduation and post-secondary enrollment; healthy eating; perceptions of safety; student mobility; learning support from families and community; and access to 21st-century learning tools. These data summaries are condensed versions of more detailed reports, which will be available on the Ascend website in the future.

[View Summary](#)



## Outcome 1. Children Enter Kindergarten Ready to Succeed in School

Per U.S. Department of Education and Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) guidelines, kindergarten readiness is measured with the [Kindergarten Entrance Inventory](#) (KEI) assessment. In October of each school year, kindergarten teachers rate each student's skills and behaviors within six domains – language literacy, numeracy, physical/motor, creative/aesthetic, and personal/social skills – according to the following performance levels:

- A **Level 1** in any domain indicates that the student is still developing their skills and needs instructional support.
- A **Level 2** indicates that the student is inconsistently demonstrating the skills and needs some form of instructional support.
- A **Level 3** indicates the student is consistently demonstrating the skills for that domain and needs little to no instructional support.

Students with a Level 3 rating are considered “kindergarten ready.”

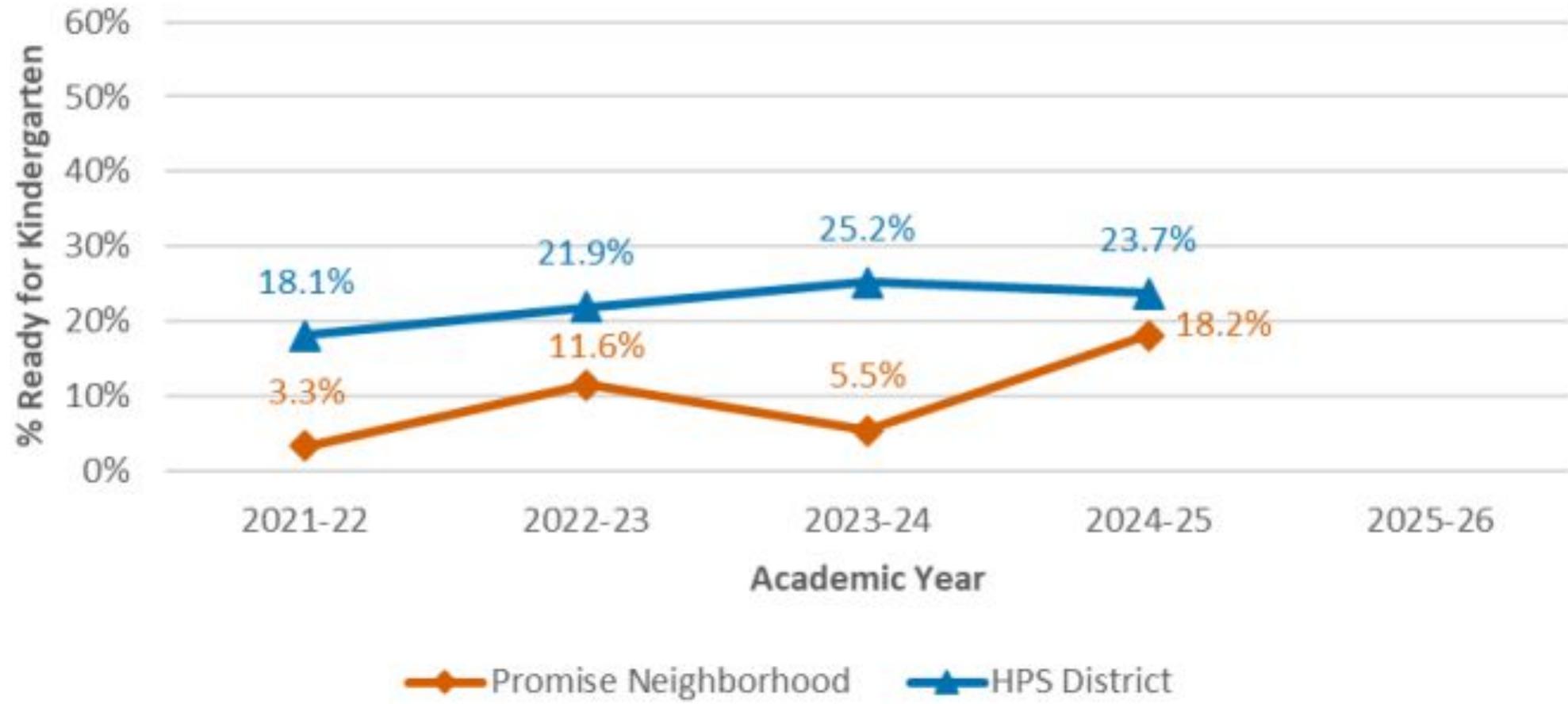
## How to Read the Graphs

The graphs below show the percentage of kindergarteners who were “ready for kindergarten” based on the KEI for each skill domain and then for all six domains combined from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

The orange line with the diamond marker in the graph shows the percentage of kindergarteners attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood elementary schools who were “ready for kindergarten”, the blue line with the triangle marker shows the percentages for kindergartners attending other Hartford Public Schools, and the pink line with the square marker shows the percentages for kindergartners attending other Connecticut public schools. The dashed green line represents the Ascend target value set for this indicator for the years covered by the Promise Neighborhood grant.

*For kindergarten readiness, higher numbers are better!*

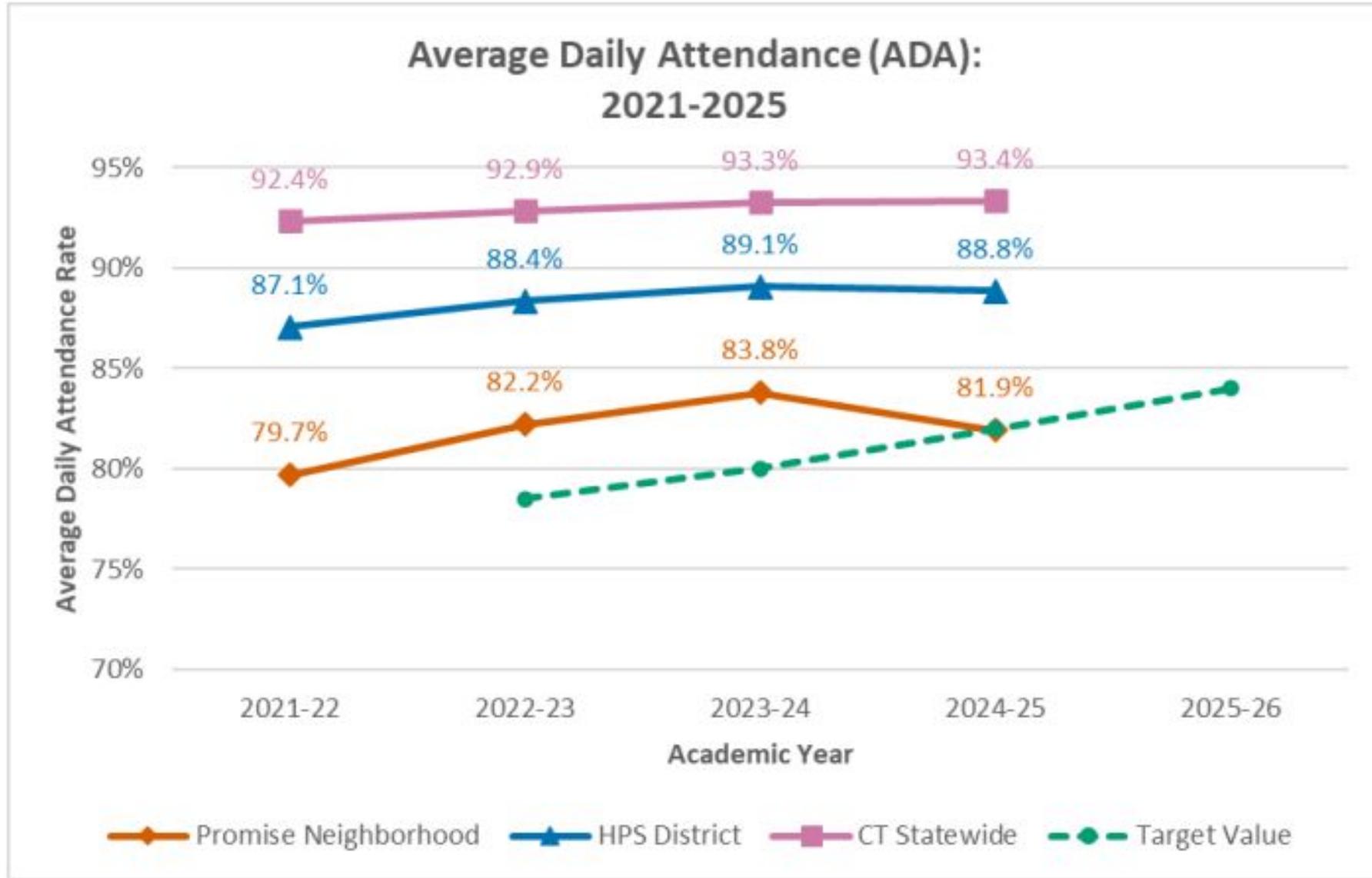
## Percentage of Students Ready for Kindergarten: All Domains, 2021-2025



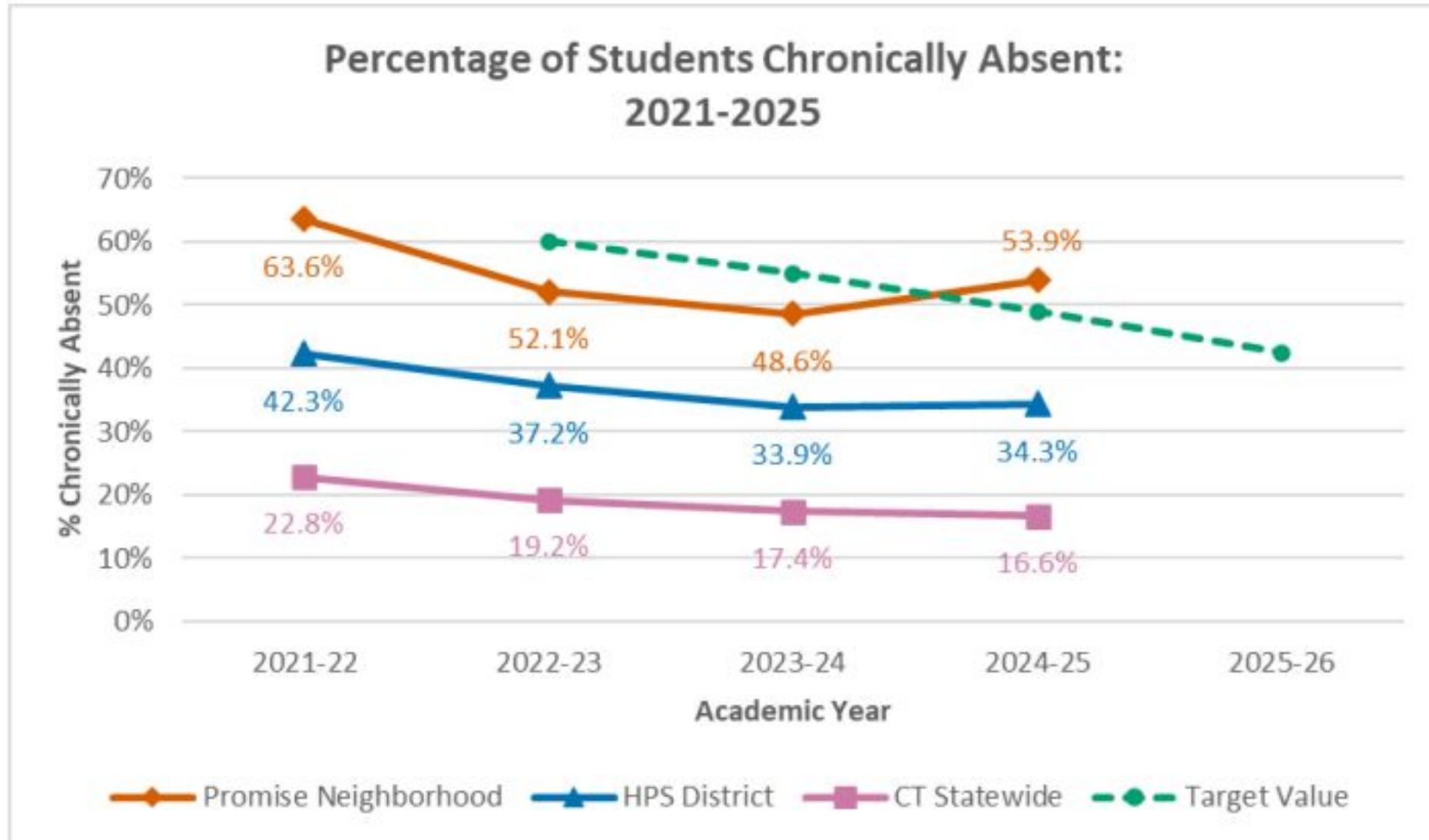
## What Do the Data Show?

- In 2024-25, 18.2% of students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools were “ready for kindergarten” in all six domains.
- Compared to 2023-24, readiness across all six domains has increased by 12.7 percentage points for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools. This is the highest percentage of kindergarten readiness Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools have achieved so far.
  - Further inspection of the results by domains indicates that the greatest improvements have been achieved in the physical/motor and creative/aesthetic domains, followed by literacy, numeracy, personal/social and language skills.
- Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools have achieved a net improvement over baseline in each of the six domains. They are meeting or exceeding targets on all but the language domain (which is just 1.2 points below the target).
- While students attending Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools are less likely to be ready for kindergarten than those attending other schools in the district, the gap in kindergarten readiness has narrowed substantially since the start of Ascend.

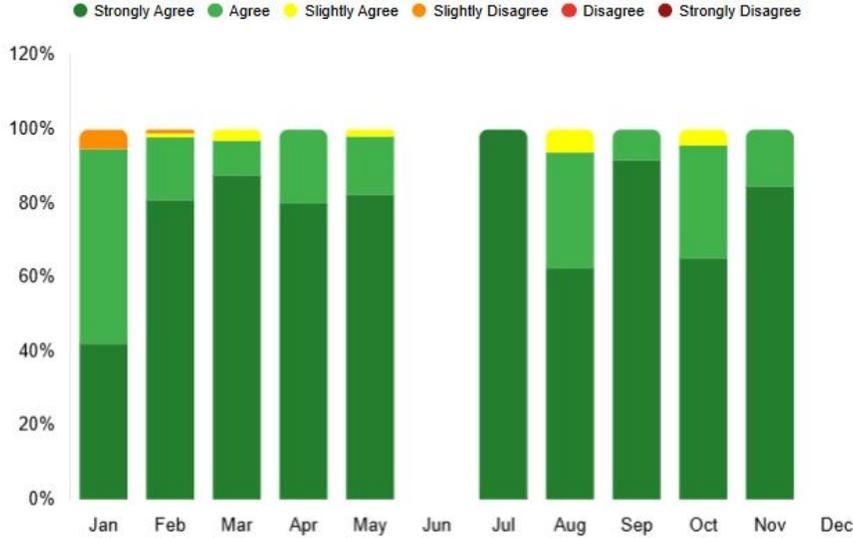
**For ADA, higher numbers are better!**



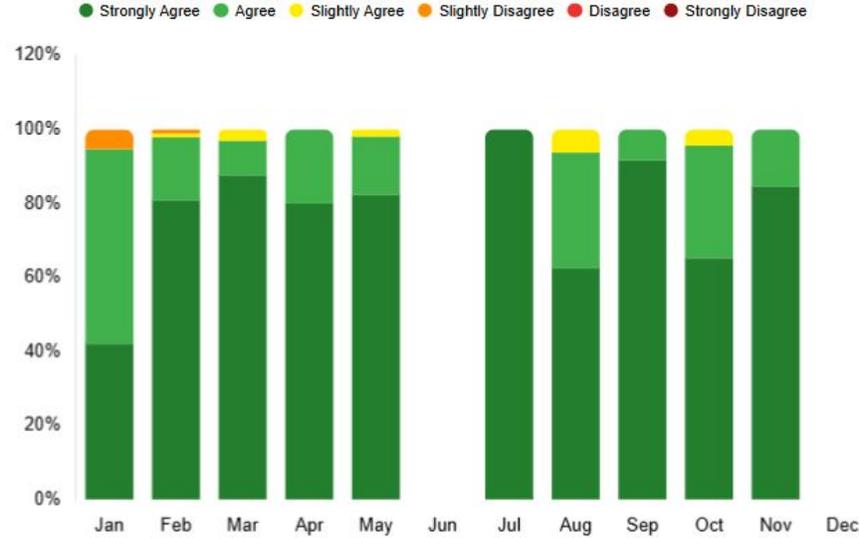
***For CA, lower numbers are better!***



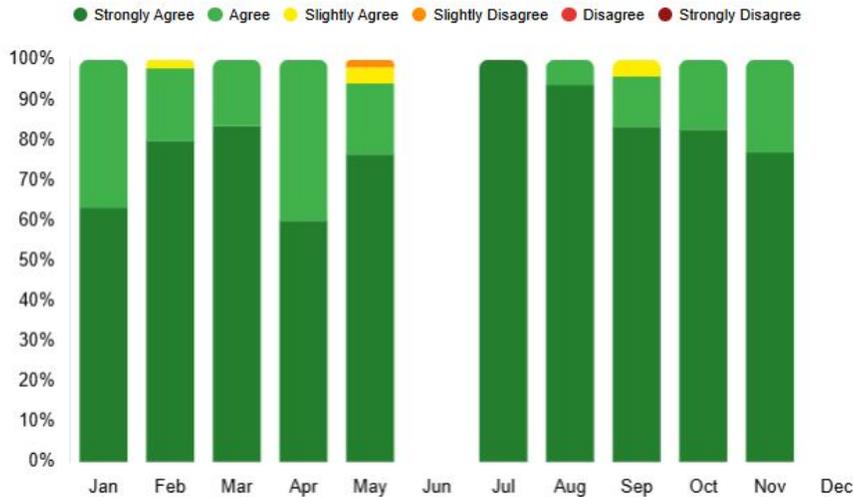
I am satisfied with the community conversation.



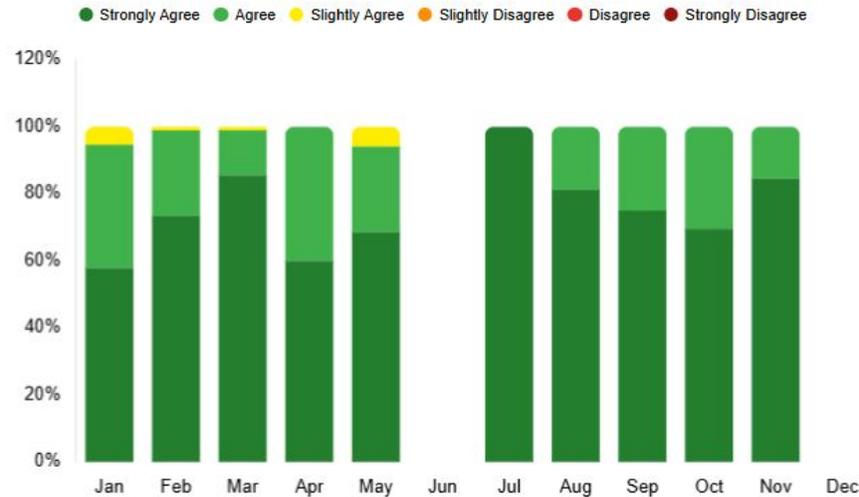
I learned about the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline and/or programs and services available to the community during the community conversation.



I'll encourage my friend, neighbors, and others to participate in community conversations.



Connecticut Children's and the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline value community voice, input, engagement, and leadership.



# 43 Community Conversations



# 65 Community Workshops



## 2025 Feedback

- **97%** strongly agree or agree they understood the information presented in the workshop.
- **99%** strongly agree or agree they will attend a future workshop.
- **99%** strongly agree or agree they will encourage my friends, neighbors, and others to participate in a future workshop.
- **98%** strongly agree or agree they are knowledgeable on how to use my voice to empower my community.
- **94%** strongly agree or agree they were connected with future opportunities to be involved in my community.

November				
11/6	Lifetime Center	6p-7:30pm	Bennett	Breaking Down the Basics
11/12	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Send it Right! Writing Professional Emails That Get Noticed
11/13	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Staying True to Your Caregiver Values in Tough Moments
11/18	Lifetime Center	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	The Label Conversation
11/20	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Getting Ready to Talk – Preparing for Difficult Conversations with Your Child
December				
12/2	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Understanding Conflict & Simple Tools for De-escalation
12/4	URISE	6p-7:30pm	Bennett	Intellectual Property
12/8	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Understanding Conflict & Simple Tools for De-escalation
12/10	Lifetime Center	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Advocacy in Action
12/11	KJR/YL	5:30p-7:30p	Parker Memorial	Young Adults: Network Like a Pro
12/16	URISE	6p-7:30pm	Bennett	Small Business Showcase
12/18	KJR	6p-7:30pm	Parker Memorial	Talking Through the Tough Stuff With Your Child

# Strengthening Families Community of Practice (CoP)



## Immediate Feedback

- **97%** agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the importance and role of using strength-based approaches in North Hartford Ascend
- **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the importance of culture in strengthening families' protective factors
- **98%** agree or strongly agree that they can make small yet significant changes to strengthen families' protective factors in their role.



## 6-Month Follow-Up Feedback

- **93%** of participants indicated that they apply the framework to their work “always” or “very often”.
- **93%** agreed or strongly agreed that they have an increased capacity to support child and family health as a result of what they had learned.

“This training was a necessary and revelatory experience. I am thankful for the community built and the knowledge gained.”  
- Participant, 6-month follow up

# Strengthening Partnerships



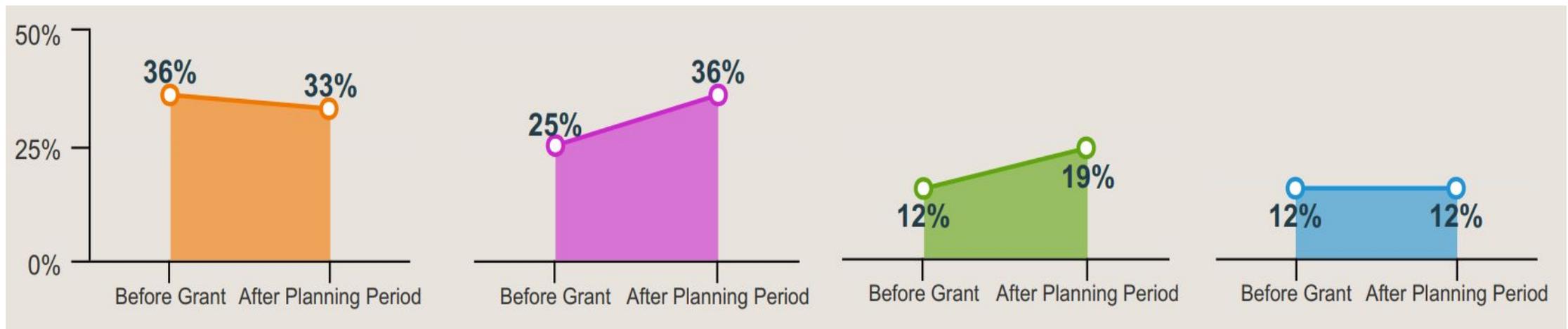
## Social Network Analysis

Awareness

Cooperative Activities

Coordinated Activities

Integrated Activities





# ASCEND TOGETHER

## *Sustainability Strategy & Implementation Plan*

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Community Conversation | January 28, 2026

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# WHAT IS YOUR “WHY”?

**Pair up with someone at your table. Take 2 minutes each to share:**

- Why did you come tonight?
- Why does Ascend matter to you?
- Who do you keep in mind when you think about this work?

***Listen for what matters most.***

***We'll invite a few people to share a word, phrase, or short story with the room.***

# WHY 2026 MATTERS

**The Bridge Year:** *From Promise Neighborhoods → Permanent P2C System*

**We must:**

- **Sustain** momentum as federal funding sunsets
- **Strengthen** trust, alignment, and shared practices
- **Establish** the long-term infrastructure Hartford's children & families deserve

## Promise Neighborhoods Developmental Pathway



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# MOMENTUM TO BUILD ON

## Why Now and Why Us

- **We have built** real, measurable progress.
- **We have built** real system infrastructure.
- **We have built** real collective will.
- *And we have built it **together**.*

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# COMMUNITY & PARTNER VOICES

“This is the first time in a long time when it feels like **all of us** are moving in the same direction—and that the community has a real seat at the table.”

— Resident leader at the November 3, 2025 Ascend Sustainability Co-Creation Session

“What’s changing is that we actually know each other now. When people **trust** each other, everything else gets easier.”

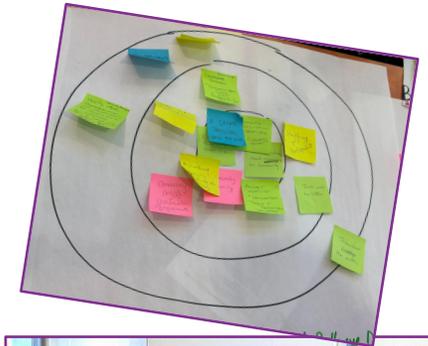
— Ascend Leadership Team member during sustainability plan interviews, September 2025

“We’ve had short-term initiatives before. What makes Ascend different is the **commitment** to stay—and to stay with the community.”

— Resident leader at the November 3, 2025 Ascend Sustainability Co-Creation Session

# CO-CREATING OUR PATH FORWARD

~100 people, 30+ meetings, cross-stakeholder, six months



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# ASCEND TOGETHER PLAN

## Four Strategic Priorities

**1. Shared Outcomes**

**2. Shared Infrastructure**

**3. Shared Investment**

**4. Shared Commitment**

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# 1. SHARED OUTCOMES

## A Unified Direction for Hartford

### 2026 Goals

- A. Finalize **citywide prenatal-to-career (P2C) outcomes**.
- B. Strengthen coordinated action to **improve the outcomes**.
- C. Communicate progress through **community-centered reporting**.
- D. Integrate **ROI and value storytelling** into decision-making.

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## 2. SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

### The Backbone of a Coordinated System

#### 2026 Goals

- A. Improve cross-partner **infrastructure** (navigation, data, learning, community relationships, and coordinated operations).
- B. Increase **community stewardship** to ensure Ascend stays locally guided.
- C. Select a **long-term “backbone”** through a cross-stakeholder process.
- D. Lay the groundwork for **responsible scaling** across neighborhoods.

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## 3. SHARED INVESTMENT

### Short-term Bridge Funding & Diversified Long-term Investment

#### 2026 Goals

- A. Secure initial **2026–2029 bridge financing** to maintain core functions.
- B. Develop the foundation for diversified **long-term investment (2030+)**.
- C. Complete **ROI, business case, and fiscal tools** needed to demonstrate system value and drive investment.
- D. Prepare Hartford for **outcomes-based financing pilots**.
- E. Develop a Technical Assistance & Learning Network strategy to **generate earned revenue**.

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## 4. SHARED COMMITMENT

### Agreements, Work Groups, and Cadence Needed for Success

#### 2026 Goals

- A. Establish **2026–2030 partnership commitments** that formalize shared responsibility for the P2C system.
- B. Ensure cross-partner **project management** to coordinate day-to-day implementation.
- C. Build a **culture of transparency**, learning, and shared narrative across all partners and communities.
- D. Develop the 2026 **implementation budget** needed to activate the plan.

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# IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

## Activating the cross-stakeholder coalition

- Leadership Team
- Work Groups
- Additional resources and partners

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# THE CALL TO ACTION

## Your role in the cross-stakeholder coalition

- Engage your community representatives and RCAG members (see next slide)
- Participate in monthly Community Conversations
- Share stories through the Ascend "person on the street" interviews and other communications

**Other ideas on how to stay involved?**

**How should we communicate with you (methods, frequency)?**

# Community Leaders



## **Resident & Community Advisory Group:**

- Charles Teale - NENRZ
- Delicia Arnold - CANRZ
- Helen Nixon - NENRZ
- Lai Ping Wong - Hartford PTO & FACES
- Lawrence Williams - UANRZ
- Laquanna Riggs - HPS Parent
- Nija Saunders - HPS Parent
- Ralph Knighton - North Hartford Activist
- T'Challa Williams - FACES Rep
- Tanisha Stewart - HPS Parent
- Samariya Smith - HPS Sports Chair
- Sarah Sutherland - HPS Parent

## **Community Representatives 2026:**

- Evelyn Hannah - Community & Family
- Joanna Iovino - Community & Family
- Roshelle Gordon - Community & Family
- Mason Jimmy - Family Navigation
- Beverley Hines - Family Navigation
- Sandra Brown - Leadership
- Emily Hillary- Partner Engagement
- Erica "Cash" Perez - Partner Engagement
- Kerron Vernon - Partner Engagement

# Stay Connected

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- Follow us on social media to stay connected!

Instagram



Facebook



# Thank You!



- **Next Conversations:**

- **Wednesday, February 18, 2026**
  - **Topic: Summer Youth Employment Fair**

- Please take the [Post Meeting Feedback & Incentive Survey](#) to share your thoughts and feedback and access the incentive for Hartford residents. Use the QR code, or visit the link sent out via email following the meeting.

- Contact [nhap@connecticutchildrens.org](mailto:nhap@connecticutchildrens.org) with any questions.

## Feedback & Incentive



## Community Workshops

