



North Hartford Ascend

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

Community Conversation

Wednesday, March 18, 2026



Por favor recuerde seleccionar su lenguaje en el globo de la parte inferior de su pantalla para interpretación Desde su celular, toque los 3 puntos y seleccione su lenguaje.

Please remember to select your language on the globe at the bottom of your screen for simultaneous interpretation. From your cell phone, click the 3 dots and select your language.

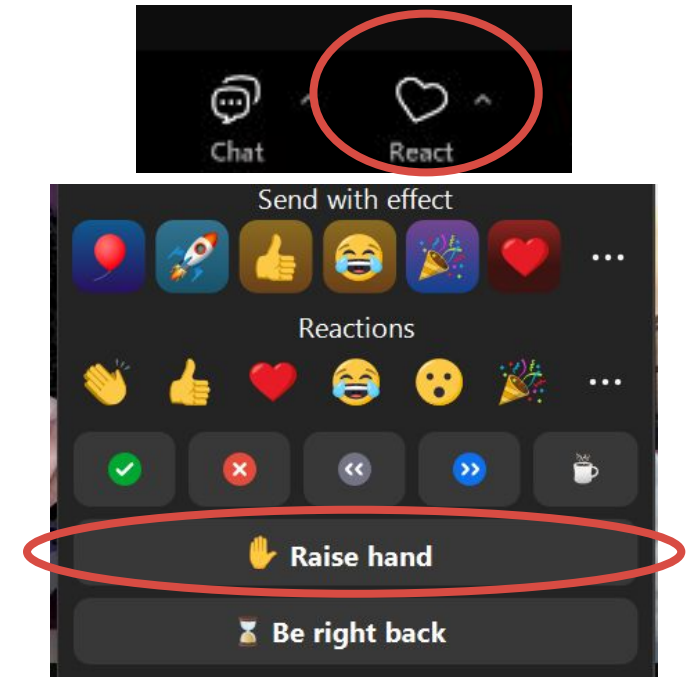
Agenda



- Welcome & Guidelines
- Featured Topic: New Ascend Affiliates
 - Building for Health
 - The Essence Behavioral Health
 - SPHERE Summer Program
 - UCONN Husky Nutrition & Sport
 - 2-4-1 Sports
- Next Steps and Closing Remarks
- **Next Meeting: April 22, 2026**

Discussion Guidelines

- Everyone deserves to be heard. Listen and respond respectfully.
 - Questions and comments should be added to the chat at any time.
 - Please use the Zoom “raise your hand” feature to speak.
- We are interested in hearing your authentic thoughts—please do not use AI or ChatGPT to respond to questions.
- Let’s stay on topic— time is limited, so let’s value each other’s time.
- Successful dialogue is the responsibility of all participants.



Incentive Available to Hartford Residents

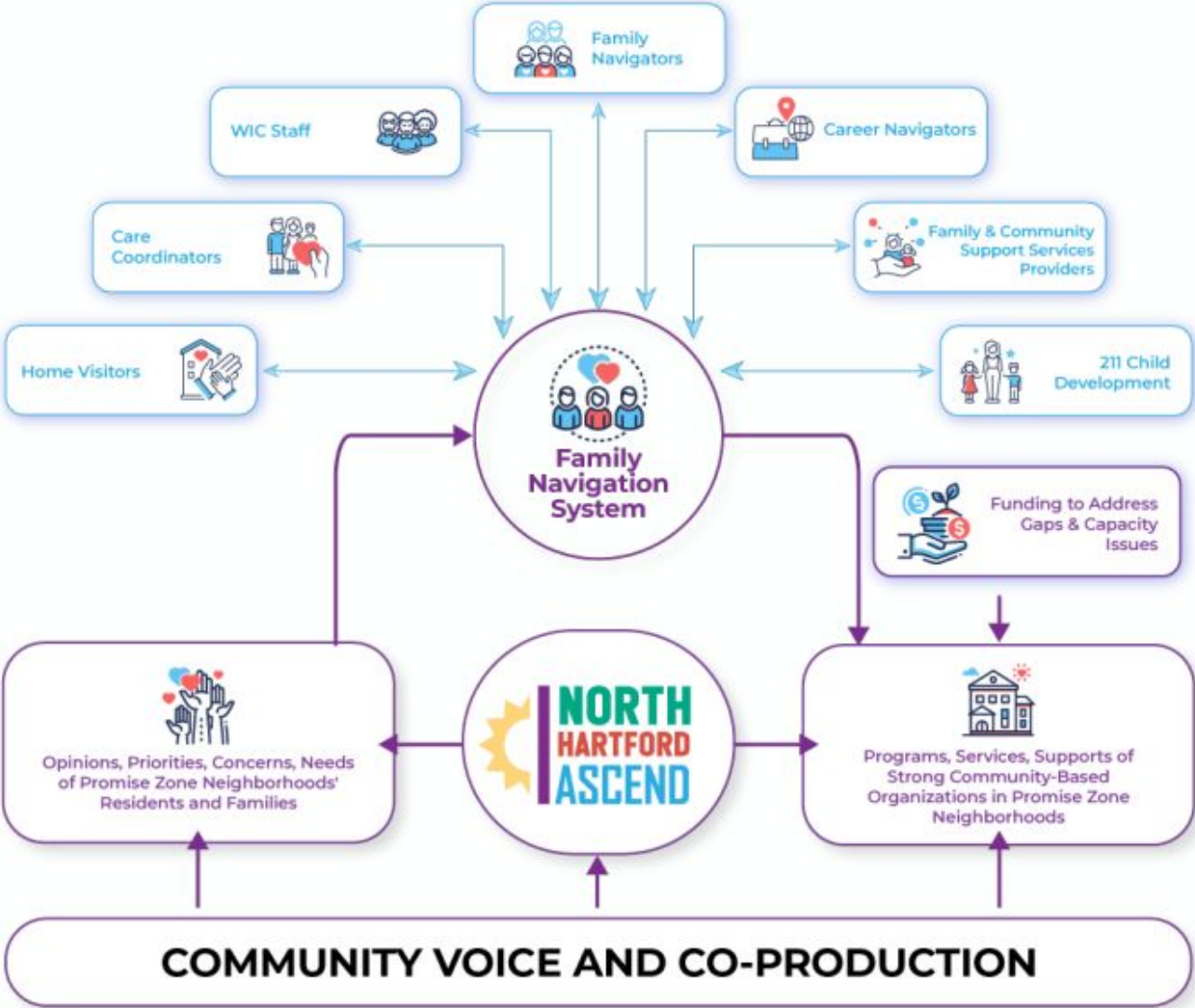
Survey available after the conversation. You may be contacted to verify your residency.

North Hartford Ascend: Overview



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.**

Ideal State-Ascend System Building



Ascend & Community Updates

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.

Workshops





Building for Health Partnership Info Session

Dionne K. Quenah
Building for Health Program Manager

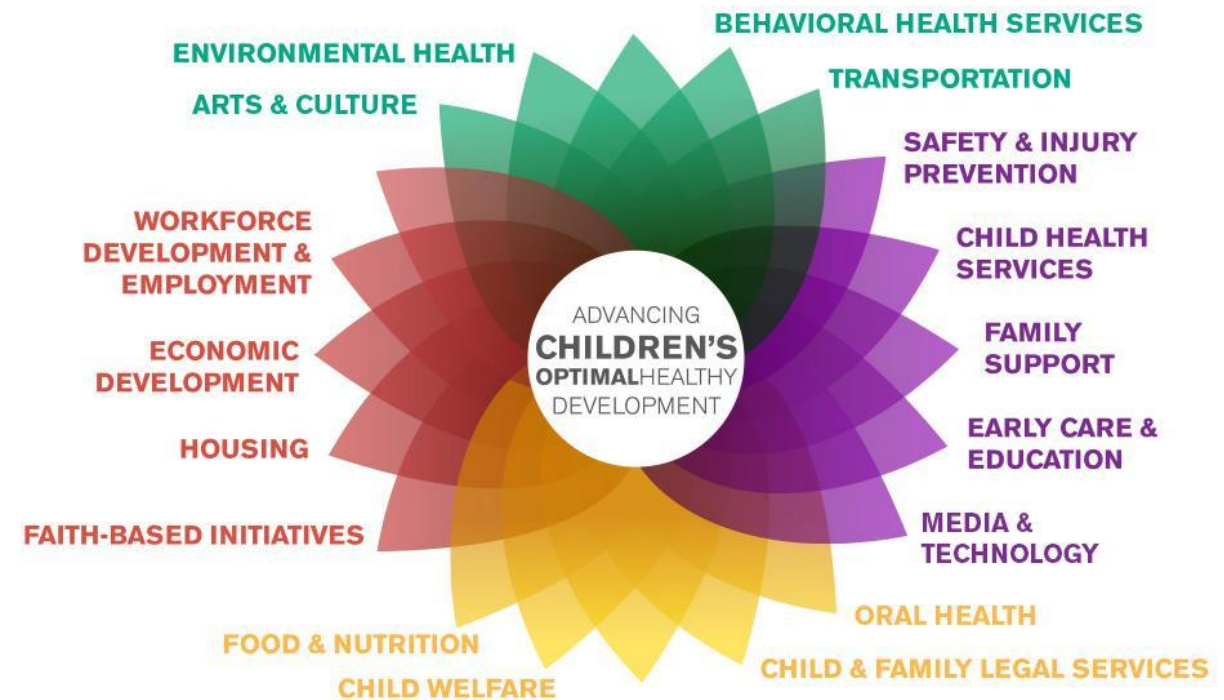


What if our goal for child health services is not 'merely' to treat or even prevent childhood diseases and disorders, but is also to promote children's optimal healthy development? - Paul Dworkin, MD



Office for Community Child Health

1. Strengthen community-oriented programs.
2. Facilitate synergies among community-oriented programs.
3. Serve as an innovation incubator and accelerator for promising and efficacious approaches that improve the short- and long-term outcomes for children and families.



What is Building for Health (BfH)



- The Connecticut Children's Building for Health program is a cross-sector initiative designed to strengthen communication and coordination among various programs and services that aim to enhance the livability of homes and promote the well-being of residents. BfH serves as a centralized resource for partners, streamlining processes to effectively assess resident's needs and link them to the appropriate services.
- Elevator pitch*: BfH is an initiative that connects programs to keep Greater Hartford residents housed in safe, healthy, stable, and high-quality homes—while enhancing their overall well-being.



**Community
Conversation
Presentation by
THE ESSENCE
BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH, LLC.**

Hello
Community!



Mission



To heal and empower black, indigenous people of color (BIPOC) by eliminating the stigma of mental health care.

Vision

To make the disparities in mental health care more equitable for BIPOC.

The Essence Behavioral Health is here to support you.

If you or someone you know is struggling with anxiety, depression, grief or trauma, we offer a variety of therapeutic services and are committed to providing accessible, high-quality mental health care that respects and honors your lived experiences.



We focus on addressing, not only the individual symptoms of mental health, but also the deep-seated intergenerational trauma that disproportionately affects BIPOC populations.

Understanding that trauma can manifest in diverse and complex ways, our therapeutic approaches are tailored to address historical and racial trauma, offering healing that considers the whole person

mind, body, and spirit.



Treatment Options



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Tailored to help you identify negative thought patterns, enabling a healthier, more positive outlook and behavior.



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Effective for trauma recovery, EMDR therapy helps process distressing memories and restore mental harmony.



Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Focuses on providing skills to manage pain, regulate emotions, and improve relationships through mindfulness.



Motivational Interviewing

Enhances your motivation to change behaviors that interfere with achieving personal goals.



Grief Counseling

Provides support through the stages of grief, helping you find meaning and continue to cherish lost loved ones.



Coping Skills Training

Teaches effective techniques to manage everyday stressors and enhance your emotional and mental well-being.



Mindfulness Techniques

Employs mindfulness exercises to help you stay present, reducing anxiety and improving overall mood.



Educational Advocacy

Supporting parents and ensuring their children receive the accommodations they need to thrive in the education system by navigating the complexities of the system and negotiate on behalf of the children.



Solution Focused Therapy

Short-term therapy focusing on what clients want to achieve through therapy rather than past problems.



Christian Counseling

Integrates faith and spirituality with psychological principles to promote holistic healing and well-being.



Group Psychotherapy

A therapeutic approach where small groups address personal issues in a safe, supportive setting.



Trauma and Stress Management

Offers strategies for coping with acute stress and historical trauma, fostering resilience and recovery.



Programs and Groups

Therapeutic Groups

**ADOLESCENT YOUNG
WOMEN 13-17**

**ADOLESCENT YOUNG MEN
AGES 13-17**

.....
The Essence Behavioral Health
contact below to register!

"IN MY FEELS"

Thursdays | 4/30 - 5/28 | 6-7 PM

ARTISTS COLLECTIVE

1200 Albany Ave, Hartford, CT 06112

A space for young women ages 13-17,
to process stress, emotions and life,
led by a licensed social worker!



860-470-4722
essencebehavioralhealth.com

.....
The Essence Behavioral Health
contact below to register!

REAL TALK

Thursdays | 4/30 - 5/28 | 5-6 PM

ARTISTS COLLECTIVE

1200 Albany Ave, Hartford, CT 06112

Real Talky is a culturally responsive
group for young men: Real talk. Real
movement. Real growth.



860-470-4722

essencebehavioralhealth.com

DRAMA-CIZE

Infusing Wellness, Art and Education Program

EXPLORE. LEARN. GROW.

A unique experience to help youth to discover who they are, while providing tools to reduce their anxiety and stress.

- Rooted in creative expression and mindful practices
- Designed to build confidence, self-awareness, and guide participants to discover their authentic voice
- Aligned with social-emotional learning (SEL) principles

★ A training methodology developed through years of applied practice. ★

Program Overview



Facilitated with:

- Care
- Consent
- Trauma-informed practices

DRAMA-CIZE IN ACTION



Facilitated session modeling social-emotional learning, and confidence-building through wellness tools, creative expression, and reflection

[Click Image to watch Video](#)

PROGRAM FORMATS & FLEXIBILITY

DRAMA-cize can be delivered as:

- **Single Workshop**

Introductory or standalone experiences

- **Multi-Session Series**

Skill-building over time

- **One-on-One Coaching Session**

Personalized support aligned with program goals



Virtual or In-Person Sessions: Engaging in both formats



**DRAMA-
cize™**

**EMPOWERMENT
EXPERIENCE FOR
YOUTH**



A SUPPORTIVE SPACE WHERE YOUR VOICE MATTERS

CORE FOCUS AREAS

Confidence Building Techniques: Strengthen self-assurance & self-awareness

Effective Communication: Enhance Verbal, nonverbal, & written skills

Wellness Practices: Mindfulness & stress-busting techniques & build Self-Care.

Imaginative Exploration: Theater games, role play, & creative modalities for problem-solving, leadership & social-emotional learning.

SKILLS YOU'LL GAIN

- ✓ Communication & Relationship Building
- ✓ Conflict Resolution & Anxiety Reduction
- ✓ Confidence & Collaboration
- ✓ Critical Thinking & Dream Building

For More Info:

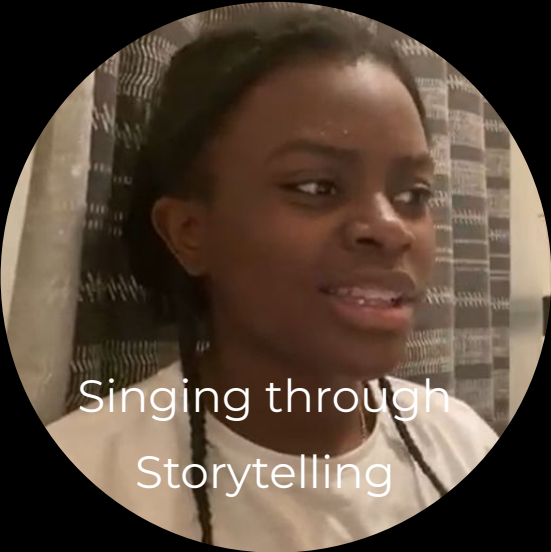
The Essence Behavioral Health
letyourlightshine@tebhcounseling.com or call 860-470-4722





Participant Outcomes

Voice & Confidence



Singing through
Storytelling

Reflection & Self-Awareness



Self Inquiry

Click Image for Sample

Visioning & Goal Setting



the power,
telligence,
nd the
bility to
any goal
Dream Building

“ YOUTH VOICES ”

“This class allowed me to value my own voice, my own achievements, and my own individuality.” --Angelin

e

“It challenged me to step out of my comfort zone, try new things, and build skills I didn’t realize I had.” --Nasean

“I learned how to really find the true value in myself.” --Evangeline

“The mix of self-reflection, collaboration, and storytelling gave me more confidence in my ability to set goals and follow through with them.” --Elijah

Let's *Connect*

Gwendolyn Williams Satchell, LCSW

(860) 470-4722

✉ LetYourLightShine@TEBHcounseling.com

🌐 essencebehavioralhealth.com



Combating Summer Learning Loss
through Academics, Enrichment, and
Community Co-Creation.
Over 50 Years of Service





OVERVIEW

STOPPING THE SUMMER SLIDE

Every summer, children face the risk of learning loss. For under-resourced students, this "summer slide" compounds year after year, widening achievement gaps.

The SPHERE Solution: A 5-week summer SPHERE is an academic enrichment program for 60-70 students entering grades 1-5.

We combine in-class instruction with educational field trips and recreational activities to stimulate students intellectually, socially, and athletically.

Accessibility First: SPHERE is tuition-free. Families pay only a small registration fee, ensuring access to a great summer doesn't depend on what a family can afford.

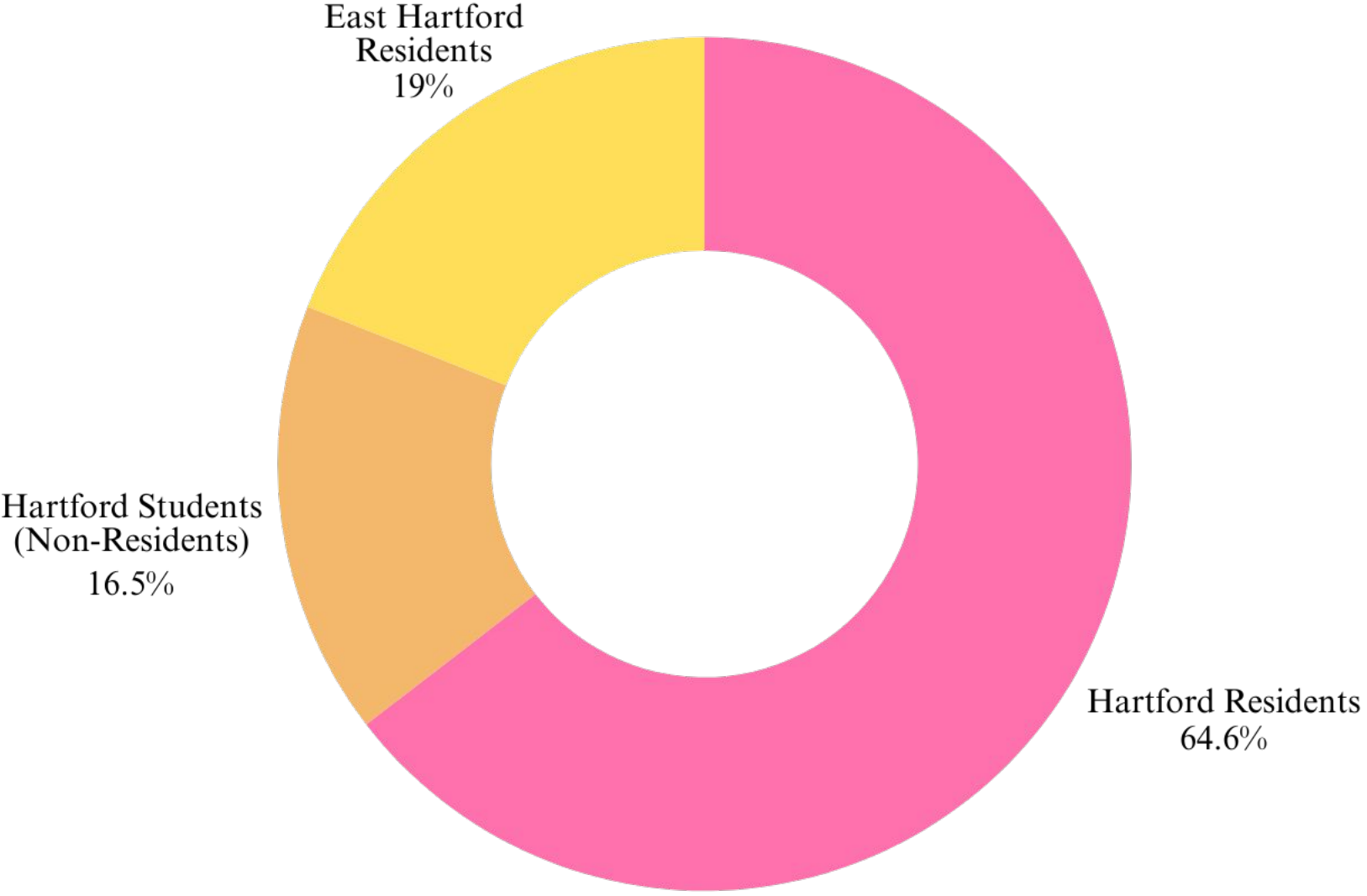
We maintain a small group setting to give participants highly personalized attention to boost their self-confidence.



SPHERE Summer Program

AT WATKINSON SCHOOL

OVERVIEW





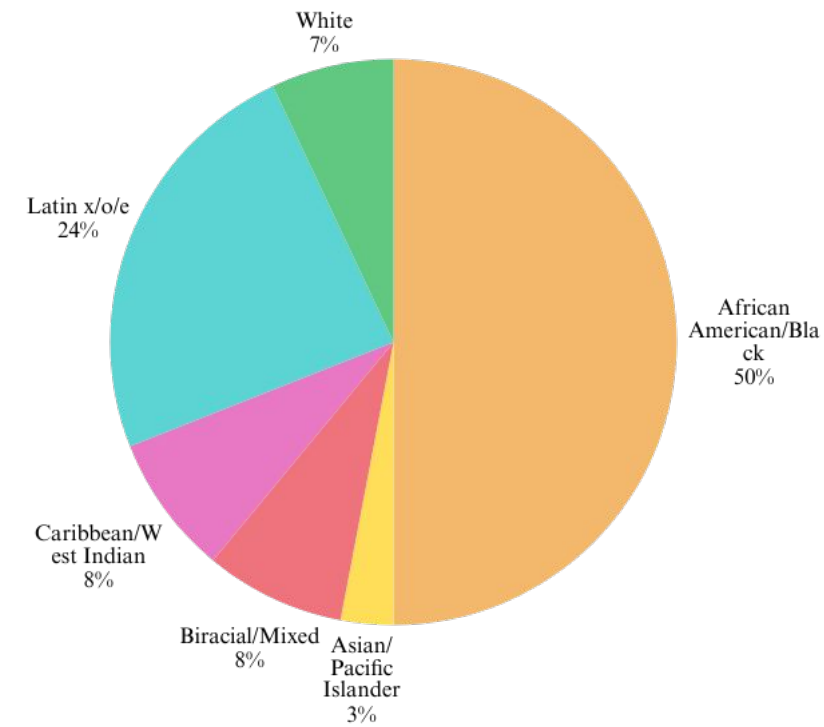
SPHERE Summer Program AT WATKINSON SCHOOL

2025 DATA

We served 69 students across 5 grade-level groups last summer.

Thanks to strict adherence to our attendance policy, our average daily attendance remained above 90% for the entire five weeks.

93% of our students are youth of color, and we are proud that 41% of our staff are also people of color, providing positive role models and "mirrors" for our campers.





SPHERE Summer Program
AT WATKINSON SCHOOL

ACADEMIC IMPACT ON STUDENTS





ACADEMIC STRATEGY & READING SUCCESS

Last summer, we intentionally shifted our literacy instruction to target reading fluency (decoding, reading speed, and expression) to help students bridge the gap between word recognition and full comprehension.

Every single SPHERE class made noticeable progress in their reading fluency.

75% of our students increased their overall reading comprehension scores by the end of the summer. Additionally, 3 out of our 5 classes increased their total number of proficient, grade-level readers.

MATHEMATICS GROWTH

71% of all SPHERE students increased their overall math score by the end of the program.

4 out of our 5 classes improved their average benchmark assessment score by 10% or more.

All three classes that conducted basic math facts assessments (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) increased their average scores by 10% or more.



FOSTERING JOY AND CONFIDENCE

We ensure students arrive back to school in the Fall ready, not just academically, but as whole kids excited to try new things.



- Student-led Spirit Week
- Camp-wide Field Trips
- Interest-based Discovery Clubs
- Mystery Science Programs
- Bike Program



BIKE PROGRAM

What started as a pilot in 2023 rolled out to the entire camp in 2024, teaching grades 1-5 everything from helmet safety to advanced pedaling.

The percentage of students reporting they felt "scared, nervous, or sad" about riding decreased by 11%, while those feeling "happy, good, or excited" jumped by 25%.

The number of students who could balance and ride a bike completely independently increased by 26%. Furthermore, 100% of the kids successfully learned to stop their bike using its brakes.





BEYOND THE CLASSROOM THE CAMP EXPERIENCE

Campers participated in hands-on "Mystery Science" experiments, a field trips, and reading blocks featuring surprise guest readers (often SPHERE parents and community partners!).

97% of students reported having fun at SPHERE, and 97% reported learning new things.

98% of parents agreed that their child gained confidence as a learner at SPHERE.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"My child gained confidence, grew socially, and is reading regularly and SO MUCH MORE!" - Red Group Parent

"They are happy. They gained confidence. Their grades improved."
- Blue Group Parent

"SPHERE definitely helped prevent the summer slide. It helped my son work on the skills he is still learning."
- Blue Group Parent



SPHERE Summer Program
AT WATKINSON SCHOOL



SPHERE Summer Program
AT WATKINSON SCHOOL



CONTACT

860-236-5618

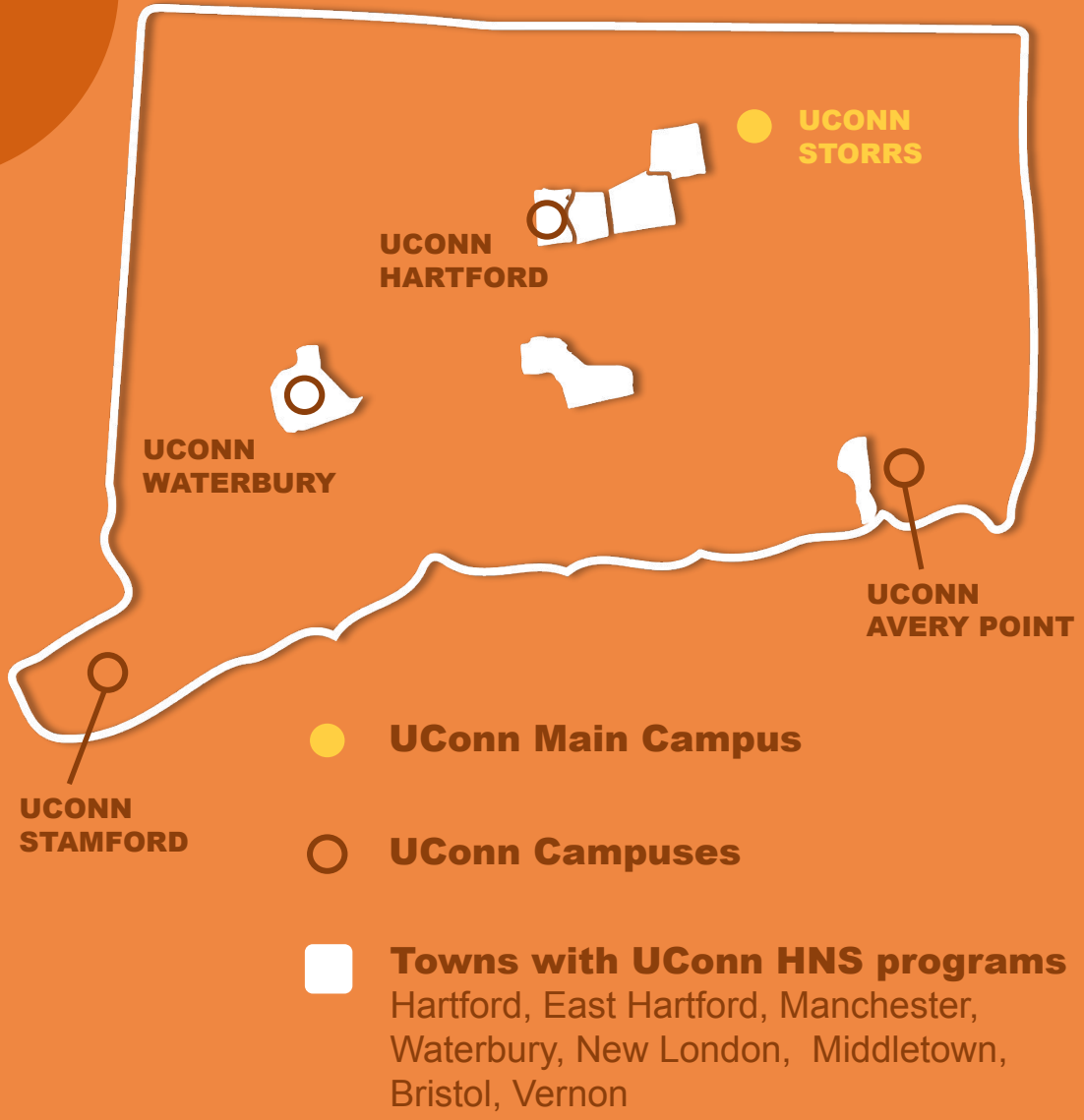
watkinson.org/sphere

sphere@watkinson.org

UConn

HUSKY NUTRITION & SPORT





UConn HNS is a Community-Campus Partnership

For more than 30 years, UConn Husky Nutrition & Sport has worked alongside children, families, educators, and students to advance health equity through nutrition education, sport, and place-based partnership. Our work bridges community engagement, applied learning, and research to create lasting impact in Hartford and across Connecticut.

Our Team



Patricia Bellamy-Mathis, M.S.W.
patricia.bellamy@uconn.edu



Veronica Jacobs, M.Ed.
veronica.jacobs@uconn.edu



Sarah Larocque, M.S., R.D.
scb05001@uconn.edu



Joe Condren, M.S.
joseph.condren@uconn.edu

30 Years In the North End



Kelvin D. Anderson Center



John C. Clark School



The Green House

Early Childhood Education Centers

Affordable Childcare Learning Center; Boys & Girls Club ELC at Asylum Hill; Capitol Child Development Center; Richard A. Battles Daycare; Women's League Child Development Center; and more

Hartford Public Schools

Clark (PreK-8), Wish (PreK-5), MLK (PreK-5), SAND (PreK-5), Simpson-Waverly (PreK-5), Milner (PreK-5), Rawson (PreK-5), Community First School (K-5), Capital Prep (6-12), Weaver (9-12)

Community Partnerships

North End Salvation Army; Community Renewal Team Generations; Village for Children & Families; Keney Park Sustainability Project; North End Senior Center; and more

Educational Programs



Husky Reads



Husky Sport @ Wish



Clinics & Workshops



Workforce Development



77 Degrees funded within Neag

24 AmeriCorps Public Allies

14 Doctorates

29 Teacher Education Master's

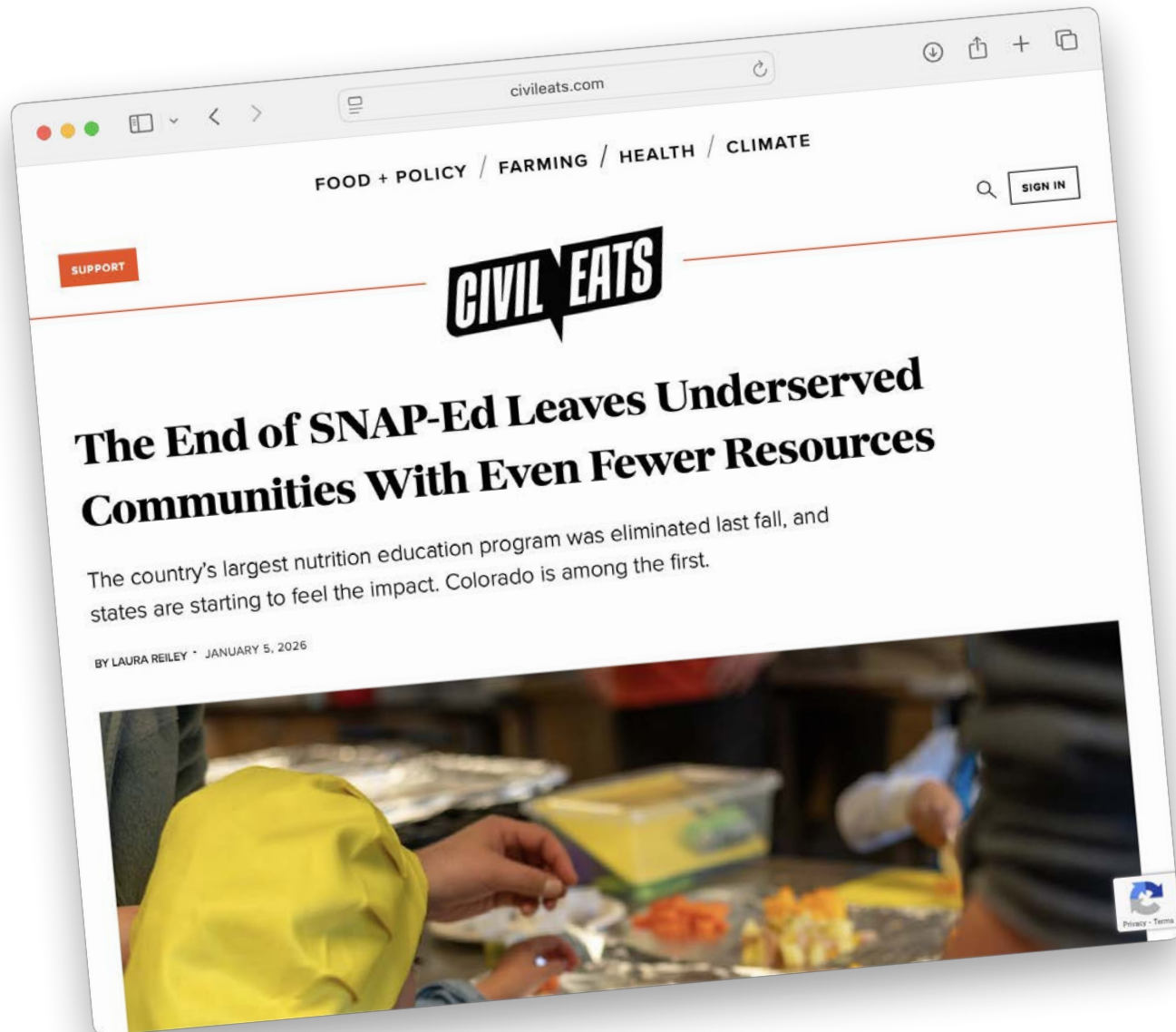
32 Sport Management Master's

20 Degrees funded across other UConn colleges

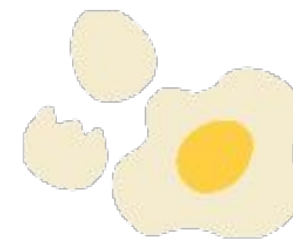
- 8 Social Work
- 6 Kinesiology
- 5 Public Health

"I don't end up in a PhD program—let alone finish one—without UConn Husky Nutrition & Sport. As a firstgen college student from a working-class immigrant family, I didn't see people like me in academic spaces. What changed that was being part of a program rooted in community, grounded in equity, and committed to young people. These programs don't just change individual lives—they shift systems."

Dr. Michael Corral (2019 Ph.D., Educational Leadership, University of Connecticut - Research Scientist, UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools)



10/1/2025





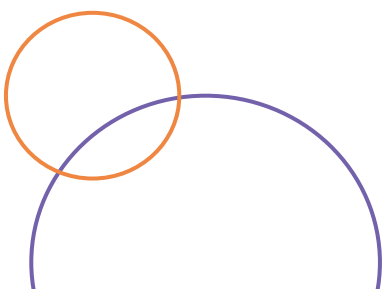
UConn HNS Priorities



1. Maintain Longstanding Programs & Partnerships

2. Explore New Ways to Co-Create Health & Wellness

3. Participatory, Community Centered Research





**Stay
Connected**



2-4-1 CARE, INC

Website: 241play.org

Steve Boyle, Co-founder Executive Director
Steve@241play.org

Kerry Boyle, Co-founder Director of Operations
Kerry@241play.org



2-4-1 CARE, INC

2-4-1 Featured on NBC CT

Click [HERE](#) to view





Life's 2 Short 4 Just 1 Sport™



Discussion Questions



- Did you know these programs and resources existed?
- How can we increase awareness of these services within the community?
- What additional programs and services should be affiliated with Ascend?

Stay Connected

- Follow us on social media to stay connected!

Instagram



Facebook



Thank You!



- **Next Conversations:**

- **Wednesday, April 22nd, 2026**

- 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 with any questions.

Feedback & Incentive



Community Workshops

