

Supporting Student Learning

How do we support student learning?

Supporting student learning outside of the classroom could look like providing a safe space for students to process their emotions, reading with them, helping them with school assignments,¹ or chatting with them about college or career topics. However, not all the pressure lies on families – school systems should also work with families to ensure that all parties involved have the resources they need to provide students with a proper environment to learn.

Why is measuring support for student learning important?

When parents, caregivers, educators, and other community partners work together to support students, they are able to thrive academically and emotionally.¹ While it is important to measure a student's success in the classroom, it is just as important for students to receive academic support outside of the classroom from families.

Studies show that parental involvement has an impact on students' educational outcomes.^{1,2} When parents or caregivers are naturally involved in a students' learning experience, they positively impact their academic achievement.^{2,3,4}

Who gets measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend tracks reading trends on an annual basis for families of students in prekindergarten through 8th grade at the four Promise Neighborhood schools serving these grades: S.A.N.D. and Wish elementary schools and Milner and M.L. King, Jr. middle schools. For college and career conversations, families of students in 9th through 12th grade in Weaver High School are measured.

How is support for student learning measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, family and community support for learning is measured by survey items of parents/caregivers indicating the degree to which they support their students' reading and planning for college and career. These survey items are on the Hartford Public School (HPS) School Climate and Culture Survey (SCCS).

At the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools, data on support for student learning is collected in two ways:

1. For students in prekindergarten through 8th grade: Independent reading and reading with family.
2. For students in 9th through 12th grade: Family conversations centered around college and career.

Reading with family is measured based on whether parents/caregivers strongly agree or agree with the following statements:

1. I read to or encourage my child to read three or more times a week.
2. My child reads to themselves three or more times a week.
3. Agreement to *either* statement.

Conversations about college and career are measured based on whether parents/caregivers strongly agree or agree with the following statements:

1. I talk with my child about the importance of college and career.
2. Together with my child, we plan for their college and career.
3. Agreement to *both* statements.

For both indicators, the percentage of parents/caregivers who agree or strongly agree with the statements is used as an indicator of families supporting student learning.

The percentage is calculated by:

1. Counting how many students agree or strongly agree with the statements.
2. Dividing that number by the total number of students who responded to the respective statement.
3. Multiplying by 100 to get a percentage.

Higher percentages are better, showing that more students are being supported in their learning.

Where does the data come from?

The information comes from the Hartford Public School (HPS) School Climate and Culture Survey (SCCS). The SCCS is administered in the spring to all students in 3rd – 12th grades enrolled in an HPS school. Depending on a student's grade level, different questions are shown.

How to Read the Graph

The graph for **support for reading** shows the percentage of families with students in prekindergarten through 8th grade who agree or strongly agree to either of the reading survey items from spring 2022 to spring 2024.

The graph for **support for college and career** shows the percentage of families with students in 9th through 12th grade who agree or strongly agree to both college/career survey items from spring 2022 to spring 2024.

The orange line in the graph shows the percentage of families with students at the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools who agree or strongly agree to the respective survey item from 2021-22 to 2023-24 and the blue line shows other Hartford Public Schools from 2021-22 to 2022-23. Data from 2023-24 for other Hartford Public Schools are missing due to limited access to the data. There are currently no established Ascend target values for this percentage.

For support for learning, higher numbers are better!

What do the results show?

Support for Reading

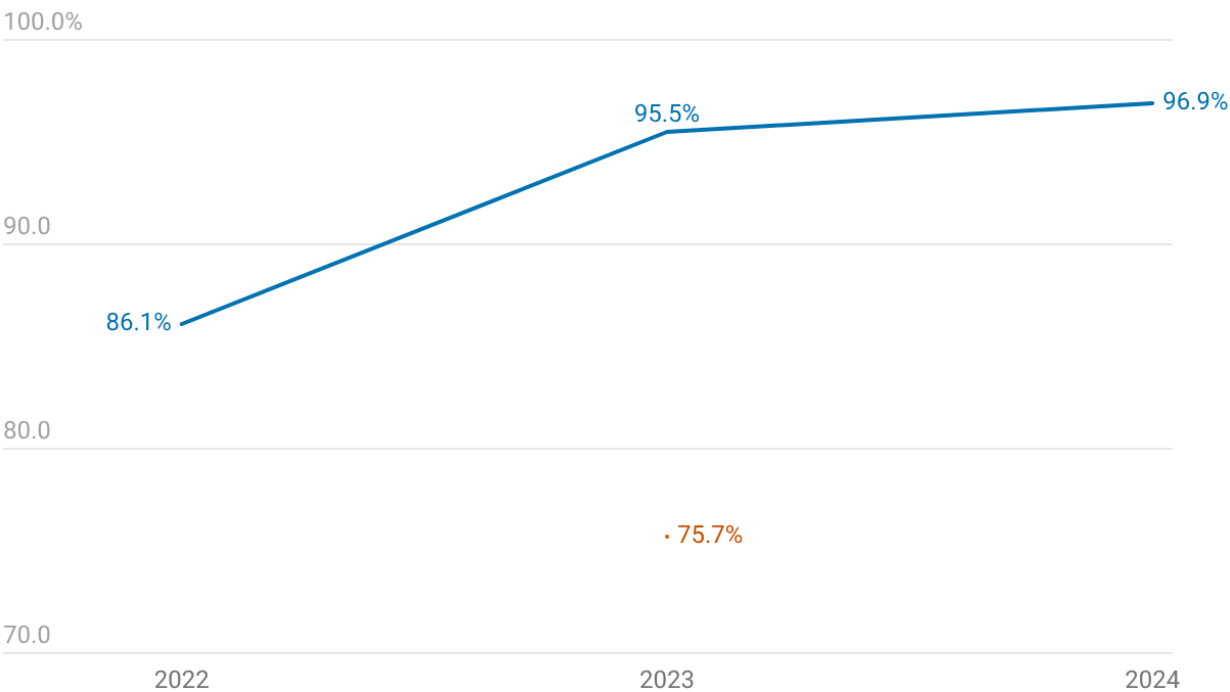
Support for Learning

Percentage of Families Who **Encourage Reading** or **Report Their Children Read to Themselves***

Select a category below to view support by topic area:

Reading College and Career

— Promise Neighborhood — HPS District



Years refer to the year it was collected. For example, 2024 refers to results from the spring 2024 survey. Data are not available in 2025 to calculate this percentage as the items used to calculate this indicator were not included in the spring 2025 survey.

*Survey results are from families with students in prekindergarten through 8th grade.

Chart: Connecticut Data Collaborative • Source: Hartford Public School District Climate and Culture Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Note: Because the items that are used to calculate this indicator were not included in the spring 2025 survey, data are not available to calculate the percentage agreeing with both statements for 2025. Because these items were not collected prior to the Ascend Promise Neighborhood grant, target values have not been established for this result yet.

- In spring 2024, 96.9% of families of Pre-K – 8th grade students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools reported supporting their child’s reading.
- Compared to the spring of 2023, families’ support for reading increased by 1.4 percentage points for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools in the spring of 2024.
- The Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools have increased in the rate of agreement with these statements every academic year since spring 2022, and support for reading has increased 10.8 points since the baseline.
- Families of students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools report that they support their child’s reading at higher rates than families of their peers at other schools in the district.

Support for College and Career

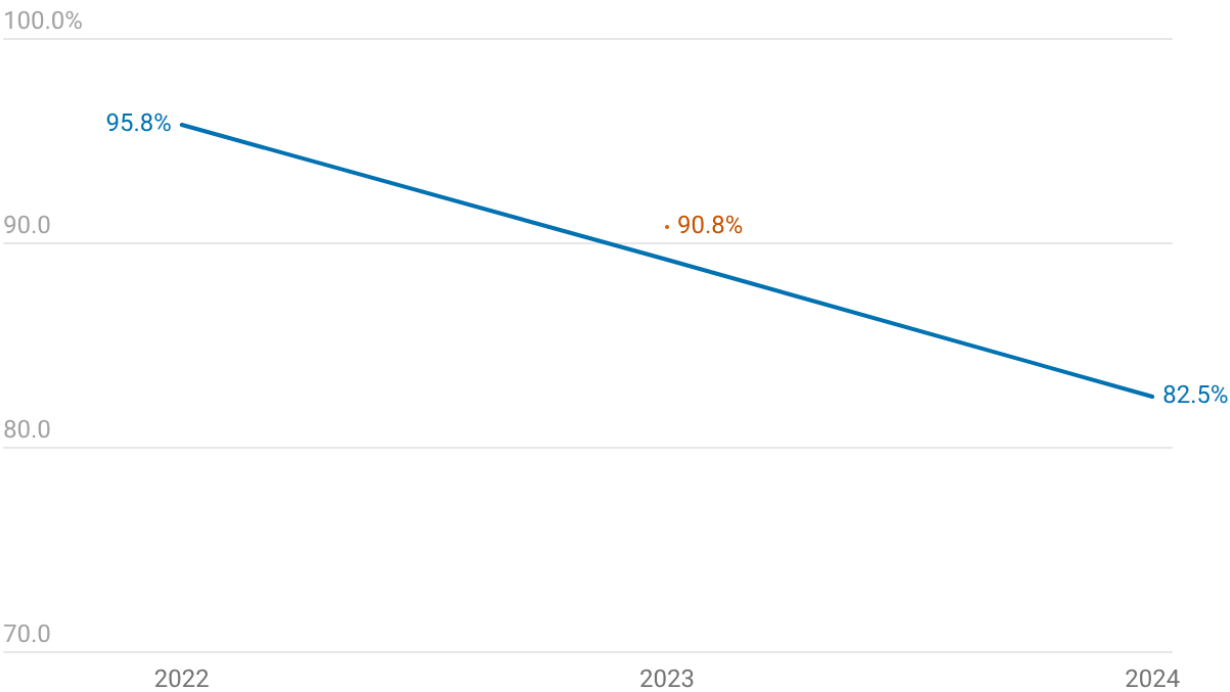
Support for Learning

Percentage of Families Who **Talk and Plan with Their Child about Their College and Career***

Select a category below to view support by topic area:

Reading College and Career

Promise Neighborhood HPS District



Years refer to the year it was collected. For example, 2024 refers to results from the spring 2024 survey. Data are not available in 2025 to calculate this percentage as the items used to calculate this indicator were not included in the spring 2025 survey.

*Survey results are from families with students in 9th through 12th grade.

Chart: Connecticut Data Collaborative • Source: Hartford Public School District Climate and Culture Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Note: Because the items that are used to calculate this indicator were not included in the spring 2025 survey, data are not available to calculate the percentage agreeing with both statements for 2025. Because these items were not collected prior to the Ascend Promise Neighborhood grant, target values have not been established for this result yet.

- In spring 2024, 82.5% of families of 9th – 12th grade students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school reported both talking and planning with their child for college and career.

- Compared to spring of 2023, families' support for college and career decreased by 6.7 points for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school in the spring of 2024.
- The rate of agreement with both statements has decreased every year for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school since spring 2022, and support for college and career has decreased 13.3 points since baseline.
- Families of students attending the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools report supporting college and career at similar rates to the families of students at other schools in the district.

Why is this happening?

Factors that may impact a families' ability to engage with their students' academics include time constraints, lack of resources, or limited knowledge about available school resources or the curriculum.^{5,6}

Parents and caregivers in the community shared that single-parent households, in particular, may struggle with reading to their children due to time constraints. Parents and caregivers also expressed their concerns for teachers who have to balance teaching their students but also supporting students with behavioral needs. When supporting students' learning, it should be a collaborative effort involving both teachers and parents/caregivers.

However, they have also shared that the current strategies being used by schools and parents/caregivers to encourage students to read are effective, such as:

- Reading incentives created by the school. An example was when the principal and assistant principal at S.A.N.D. Elementary School dyed their hair when students collectively read 1,000 books.
- Using sight words and pointing a finger while reading with children.
- Having a consistent reading schedule with their children to foster their skills and curiosity.

These are just a few things that parents or caregivers face when considering their engagement with their student's academics and may not capture all of the possible barriers.

While a substantial percentage of families reported talking with and planning together with their high schoolers for college and career, sustained progress requires ongoing support from existing initiatives.

One of those initiatives is Level Up, a transition support for graduating seniors without post-secondary plans. This initiative is supported by the HPS Office of Strategic Partnerships and Fund Development and the City of Hartford Department of Families, Children, and Youth and has so far been implemented at Weaver High School in spring 2025. Seniors in this program get the opportunity to connect with local and regional organizations about potential post-secondary options they can pursue and develop step-by-step plans for next steps.

In addition, Ascend hosted a “Raise the Bar: Goals After High School” event during the November Community Conversation in 2025. The goal of this event was to bring together youth, parents, and community partners to help families start planning life after high school. Various organizations from the community volunteered to be a part of the event, including Charter Oak Health Center, Urban League, Access Health CT, and the Hartford Police Department.

A future session with parents and caregivers on college and career initiatives would be helpful to get feedback on this particular topic.

How can Ascend help improve support for student learning?

Several programs within Ascend support student learning:

The [Arts Enrichment and Empowerment Program](#) within the Artists Collective focuses on after-school dance, music, and rites of passage curriculum targeted for youth aged 6-18.

[Ascend Family Navigators](#), from The Village for Families and Children, provide additional supports for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools. They:

- Hold regular hours within each school to work with students and families
- Collaborate with Family & Community Service Support Providers (FCSSPs) and other school-based staff to identify barriers to attendance and to support families with basic needs
- Connect students and their families to services and resources within the community

The [Families Learn Together \(FLT\) Program](#) at The Children’s Museum brings communities together through partnering with community-based organizations. The

program gets youth and families excited, comfortable, and engaged in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics (STEAM) activities, providing a variety of experiential learning programs.

Hartford Public Schools offers multiple programs, services, and supports to students and their families as part of the Full-Service Community School model implemented at each of the Promise Neighborhood schools. These services may be provided by either school staff (e.g., FCSSPs, School Social Workers) or community-based organization partner(s), or both working in conjunction with each other. They provide the following types of support to students and to other members of their families:

- Integrated Student Supports (at all schools) promote students' academic success by developing and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement, including providing resources and supports to meet basic needs.
- Family Engagement services (at all schools) involve outreach and engagement with family members, including providing direct assistance to family members of the student. A few examples include Parent Engagement Groups, home visits, back-to-school events, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Referrals to outside organizations (at all schools) address needs that require a higher level of care or access to resources available outside of the school, such as housing, employment, food, and energy assistance.
- Family Resource Centers (at S.A.N.D. and Wish elementary schools) provide access to a continuum of services that foster the optimal development and education of children beginning at birth. They provide early childhood education, child care, and family support services to meet the specific needs that are presented when engaging with families.
- Career and Workforce Development (at MLK and Milner middle schools and Weaver High School) includes programs and services that support post-secondary education and career development, in-school or out-of-school, such as those that link students to higher education, vocational training, or work-based learning opportunities, or connect classroom learning to career pathways. This area also includes efforts to engage parents and provide financial resources for continued learning and/or student transition assistance.

North Hartford Community Health and Wellness Fairs hosted by the City of Hartford educate families on nutrition, give away food bags and gift cards, provide COVID-19 testing, administer vaccinations, provide medical screenings, offer education on common health conditions, offer classes, and give away books to promote family literacy.

[United Way Readers](#) within United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut provides literacy support to Hartford students grades K–3 by working with children identified by the school district as reading below grade level on literacy skills for 1 hour per week.

The [Urban Ecology Program](#) at Keney Park educates students and community members about environmental challenges and opportunities in urban settings.

The [Youth Play Institute](#) at Hartbeat Ensemble is a professional workforce internship that allows students to engage in community research, acting technique, original playwriting, and sound and light design to connect the community beyond traditional barriers of race, gender, class, and geography.

The data reveals an opportunity to further engage these programs to support student learning outside of the classroom.

Resources

Supporting Your Student at Home: Tips for Families with Students in Elementary Grades. Institute of Education Sciences. Published February 2024. Accessed August 11, 2025. <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/resource/fact-sheetinfographicfaq/supporting-your-student-home-tips-families-students-elementary-grades>

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