

HARTFORD DISTRICT-CHARTER COLLABORATION COMPACT

Date Signed: December 2010

Number of All Public School Students: 22,873 (2012-2013) NAPCS

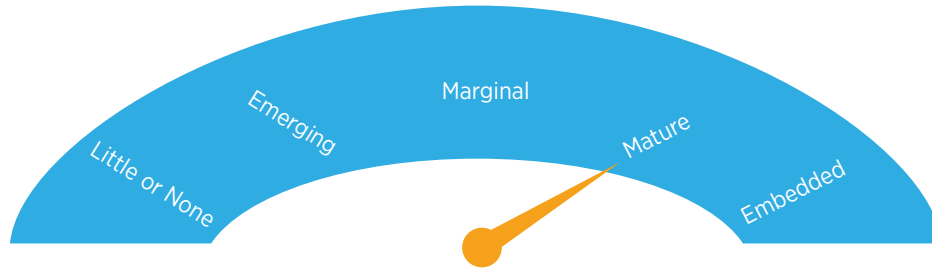
Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 6.2%

Charter Authorizer(s): Connecticut Department of Education

School District Governing Body: Mayor appoints most school board

Compact Grant Amount: \$5,000,000

CURRENT STATUS OF COLLABORATION:



OVERVIEW

Roughly 1 in 65 public school children in Connecticut attend charter schools, one of the lowest rates in the country; there are over 4,000 students on charter school waiting lists. The state's restrictive charter law limits the number of out-of-state charter operators and in late 2014, the state Board of Education voted to add eight more charter schools. However, the teachers union wants a review of oversight procedures before more charter schools open. Amid strong statewide opposition to charter schools, former Hartford Public Schools (HPS) superintendent Steven Adamowski stated that HPS is an important partner in improving education options for its children. In 2010, Adamowski signed the Compact with the city's two charter operators, Achievement First (AF) and Jumoke Academy, as part of his goal to implement a portfolio management strategy to raise student achievement. Since 2006, HPS graduation rates more than doubled and the performance gap between Hartford and the state declined over 10 percentage points. It is difficult to say, given the transition to Common Core testing, but test scores in HPS appear to have plateaued.

The Compact has weathered the turnover of three superintendents and a very public media storm. In 2014, Family Urban Schools of Excellence (FUSE), the charter management organization that oversaw three Jumoke Academy Charter Schools and the Milner School (a district school under turnaround), came under federal investigation. In June 2014, citing allegations of FUSE's financial mismanagement and its CEO's admission of misrepresenting

his academic credentials and criminal history, both HPS and Jumoke severed their relationships with FUSE. The state allowed Jumoke's schools, with its strong academic performance, to remain open under increased oversight.

Compact activities between HPS and AF continued with joint principal training, teacher effectiveness initiatives, and Common Core implementation; progress has varied widely. The principal training program is the shining star: AF's Residency Program for School Leadership is operating across 3 districts, training 30 new administrators and placing 5 in HPS district-run schools. Initial feedback from the new principals and their schools is strong. The spring 2015 student achievement results will help show how principals performed. The Common Core work has proved far more challenging. AF, Jumoke, and HPS entered the Compact at different starting points. AF's teachers had years of training: their network operated schools in New York where Common Core started much earlier, and they used different tests and materials. And, the local teachers union resisted having charters at the trainings. With these factors, AF's participation was not what many had originally hoped it would be.

The HPS board appointed Beth Schiavino-Narvaez as superintendent in 2014, citing "frustration around the pace of progress." With the \$5 million Compact grant ending soon, and the difficult charter politics in the state, cross-sector collaboration will continue to be a challenge in Hartford. But collaboration has continued despite other challenges; hopefully, that will be the case going forward.

COMMON AREAS OF COLLABORATION	COMPACT PROGRESS
High-Performing Schools	Achievement First Public Charter Schools, known for high student performance, worked with the district to open their fourth school in Hartford in fall 2014.
Special Education & English Language Learners (ELL)	Hartford Public Schools and Achievement First signed a memorandum of understanding that details how Achievement First provides special education students services and receives information on new students. After an investigation, one of the Achievement First charter schools signed a federal civil rights agreement to improve services for students with disabilities who had been continually suspended or expelled for behavioral problems.
Facilities & Resources	Achievement First charter schools are located in district buildings. In exchange for student achievement results, HPS provides AF schools with transportation, food, custodial, and nurse services. AF also receives \$500 per pupil from the district to make up the operations funding gap created by state law. District and charter leaders have lobbied state officials for equal funding among all schools and point to their contract as a positive example.
School Performance Framework	The district's school performance matrix includes both district-run and charter schools.
Enrollment Systems	Achievement First participates in the district's common enrollment system, however, families must complete separate enrollment processes for regional choice options such as the state's magnet schools.
Human Capital & Professional Development	Taking its cue from residencies for medical doctors, Achievement First's Residency Program for School Leadership trains aspiring principals through residencies in high-performing charter and district schools, cutting-edge workshops, and intense individualized coaching. Residents receive full salary and benefits during the program year. Achievement First says they continually adapt their program as they learn more about leadership in a district, non-charter setting. As part of the Compact's teacher effectiveness initiative, Achievement First shared its teacher coaching model with the district. As a result, the district hired someone from Achievement First to implement the model in district-wide professional development.
Common Core	The district and Achievement First have invited each other to their respective planning meetings on Common Core implementation, but there has been only minimal collaboration. Each organization uses different standardized tests and struggles to find ways to make their new materials relevant to each other. Achievement First launched a network with other charter management organizations to develop Common Core English Language Arts materials, which will be made available to the district.