

Bridge to Success Community Partnership Press Conference and Community Forum October 15, 2015 – Waterbury City Hall

Partnership Achieves Highest National Cradle to Career Status as a “Sustaining Community”



Mayor Neil M. O’Leary opened the Press Conference and congratulated the community on “the recognition of the hard work of all the BTS partners community-wide which has allowed this important organization to sustain its admirable goals.” Mayor O’Leary noted that “Boston and Waterbury are the only two sustaining communities in New England, and Waterbury is one of only 27 sustaining communities in the country.” He called BTS a “shining example” of dedication and community engagement and commended the partnership on its cutting-edge collective impact approach toward achieving child and youth educational success.



Stepping in for **Dr. Kathleen Ouellette, Superintendent of Waterbury Public Schools, Board of Education President Charles Stango** noted that the Waterbury Public Schools have been engaged in genuine partnerships with stakeholders across the community for many years in order to improve learning and life outcomes for our students. It was noted that the schools are “proud of the long-standing participation ... with the Bridge to Success Partnership Cradle to Career initiatives.” The BTS partnership is “our most historic and far-reaching

collaboration to date.” From the School’s perspective, “All community members have a stake in the success of our city’s youth.”

Bridget Jancarz, associate director of Network Quality for StriveTogether, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, traveled from Cincinnati Ohio to congratulate all members of the Bridge to Success Community Partnership for moving from the emerging to sustaining gateway in StriveTogether's Theory of Action, a framework that guides communities in their collective impact work. She noted that "moving gateways is a well-deserved accolade, proof of the hard work, grassroots



engagement, and shared commitment to and for educational outcomes."

Ms. Jancarz remarked that StriveTogether was impressed by the Partnership's laser-like "focus and strategic positioning of major community priorities" including kindergarten Social-emotional skills, third grade reading skill, and on time high school graduation to "keep results at the center of all efforts and move the dial on vital education outcomes."

The Partnership's "efforts at the grassroots level" and "focus on community involvement" were a concern for all communities across the country and that "Waterbury serves as an exemplar." She noted that StriveTogether has been "especially impressed with your ability to provide growth opportunities for parents" citing the Community Messengers initiative which she said "stands out on a national level; we believe it is critical to include the voice of those directly impacted by partnership efforts and this is a strong foundation on which to base the work."

Ms. Jancarz noted the Partnership's commitment to changing the way we do business and its focus on "making continuous improvement the norm. You have been embedding continuous quality improvement into how you do business, not as an afterthought or as something you do in addition to this important work." As part of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, "Waterbury is in good company from San Diego to Boston, from Milwaukee to Dallas, 65 communities throughout the country are using rigorous collective impact to improve education outcomes for local students."

Ms. Jancarz congratulated all of the BTS Partners on this "great success and well-deserved accomplishment" and encouraged BTS partners to "keep working together to continue moving forward to help every Waterbury youth succeed in school, in work, and in life."



Christine Bianchi, Chair of Waterbury's Bridge to Success Community Partnership, asked the 75+ community partners in attendance to visualize a child in need of assistance and attention, and asked partners to continue to display the empathy and caring needed to ensure the city's children and youth have what they need to succeed in school, work and life. She noted not only how exciting it was for 90+ Waterbury organizations, and more than 200 community members who work tirelessly together to be recognized for this achievement.

"By joining forces, we continually succeed in ensuring that Waterbury's youth – from cradle to career – have access to the quality education and support that they need to become responsible adults."

Lori Hart, Executive Director of the Bridge to Success Community Partnership outlined some key ways the community has been and will do their work differently to ensure the city's children and youth succeed in school, work and life. She noted that full community involvement is necessary, and that this system-changing work should not be in addition to what you do, but "is what you do." She noted that one reason BTS had progressed to the StriveTogether sustaining gateway was BTS partners' shift from "proving ourselves to using data as a guide to learn and improve." She encouraged funders and partner organizations alike to "change investment goals to invest in systems that lead to capacity building and to encourage the adoption of high impact strategies."



Darren Schwartz, Chief Academic Officer of Waterbury Public Schools, noted the strong relationship between the public schools and the community partners. He thanked Anne Marie Cullinan previous Chief Academic Officer, who was present, for paving the way for this important work. He outlined several key measurements that the schools use to gauge success including the mCLASS DIBELS Next and PELI reading assessments that allow for immediate teacher feedback on student progress. He noted the schools saw an increase of 9.3% in

reading scores for students in grades K-5 in 2014-2015. He noted that means 848 students are no longer at high risk of reading failure and 877 more students are on target for future reading success based on the 2014-2015 data. Reading teachers, literacy facilitators over 20 tutors work hard to produce this outcome. Mr. Schwartz explained other focus areas in the schools based on data including chronic absenteeism, and child and youth development measures such as personal-social kindergarten readiness, arts access, physical fitness and suspensions. He also noted the schools focus on post-secondary school and career readiness as measured by Smarter Balanced, SATs, AP and CTE course enrollment, 9th grade on-track status, high school graduation, and post-secondary entrance. He noted that 100% of students participated in SAT Day in which all high school students 9-12 and middle school 8th graders were assigned to take an SAT, PSAT or ReadStep exam. This increased the number taking the test from 515 to 940 students. He reiterated how pleased the schools were to work side by side with the community to ensure every single child in Waterbury is provided with the support they need to succeed.

The Press Conference and Community Forum provided a brief question and answer period and community partners remained at City Hall to share their own stories and joint work plans with their colleagues.

Waterbury youth succeed in school, work and life