



Fairfield County
Community Foundation

School Leadership **Matters**

A guide for Connecticut donors, and education and legislative leaders



About the Fairfield County Community Foundation

The Fairfield County Community Foundation, in partnership with fundholders and donors, promotes smart philanthropy to make our communities healthy, vibrant and supportive to all.

We:

- Serve as a leader, advisor and catalyst for effective philanthropy
- Create and manage charitable funds
- Identify and respond to community needs with strategic grantmaking, partnerships and initiatives

In short, we help you make a difference in your own backyard and beyond.

What We Do

Provide fundholders with philanthropic advisory services that connect them to causes they are passionate about, share our insights and expertise on local issues, and introduce them to nonprofit organizations—large and small—that achieve excellent results. We professionally manage fund assets, and handle all administrative tasks and reporting.

Improve the performance and impact of nonprofits by building their leadership and management capability. We provide grants, professional development opportunities and other resources that strengthen their services, management, staffing, structure and operating methods.

Tackle critical community issues, including the achievement gap, by creating and leading regional initiatives. We bring together policymakers, nonprofit leaders, community leaders, fundholders, contributors, private funders and other experts to work in concert for measurable change.

Broker our knowledge of specific community needs to private and public funders. This generates millions of new charitable dollars each year to address local and regional needs.

Provide private foundations and corporate funders with philanthropic advisory services, management and administrative services by contractual agreement.

Cover: Mark Woodard, one of the Fairfield County Community Foundation's 2008 Urban School Leaders Fellows and former fourth grade teacher, was promoted in 2009 to Assistant Principal at Toquam Magnet School in Stamford. He helps lead 75 teachers and staff in a school serving nearly 600 students from kindergarten through fifth grade.

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Executive Summary

Connecticut has the widest achievement gap in the nation between poor students and their wealthier peers, according to the Nation's Report Card. Fairfield County, one of the most highly educated and wealthiest regions in the United States, is shamefully part of the problem, with one of nation's widest achievement gaps between African-American and Latino students and their white counterparts.

In-depth analyses show causes of the achievement gap are complex and include economic, societal, ethnic, cultural, and school system-based factors. While the achievement gap in high cost-of-living Fairfield County is most dramatic in our cities, it has an impact on every resident regardless of zip code.

The consequences of the achievement gap are enormous. Students do not attend or are unsuccessful at college, and thus face lifetimes of underemployment. Families and communities experience generations of poverty and few positive role models. Fairfield County becomes unable to compete in a global economy without an educated, highly skilled workforce.

In 2007, the Fairfield County Community Foundation conducted extensive research to determine how our resources, and those of our donors, should be invested to generate the greatest impact on this problem. Studies over the past 10 years show increasing evidence that school leaders have a profound impact on student achievement, second only to classroom

teachers.¹ A teacher can greatly influence a child's academic success. A principal can greatly influence a school's success. Turning a troubled school around always requires a talented leader.

While education experts now know how to best prepare school leaders, they question the current quality of many leadership programs. A rigorous alternative route to certification for principals must be developed, and is currently being pursued legislatively.

Our research also revealed an impending school leadership crisis. Over half of the 92 principals in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford planned to retire by 2012. Being an effective urban school leader is very difficult, and the pipeline of trained, passionate leaders to these positions in Fairfield County is too small and leaks.

The Community Foundation's resources are now focused on increasing the number of trained, passionate leaders in the urban schools that serve 60,000 children in Fairfield County. With generous support from donors and our new Fund for Academic Excellence, we established the Urban School Leaders Fellowship, which has to date prepared 67 new school leaders.

Regardless of where you live in Fairfield County, **your engagement is needed now** to strengthen the leadership of our urban schools. Action steps are included at the end of this report for citizens, legislators, donors, school districts, universities and state agencies.

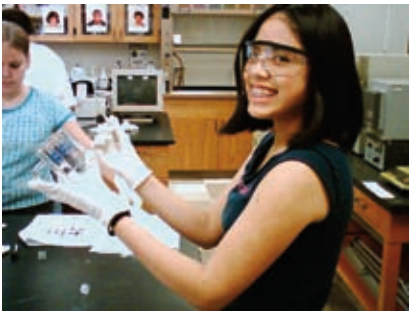
Studies over the past 10 years show increasing evidence that school leaders have a profound impact on student achievement, second only to classroom teachers.

¹ See Leithwood, Kenneth, Karen S. Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement: University of Minnesota; K. Miller. (2003). *School, Teacher, and Leadership Impacts on Student Achievement*. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning; and T. Walters, R.J. Marzano, and B. McNulty. (2003). *Balanced Leadership: What Thirty Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.

Introduction: A Tale of Two Schools

If you stood outside Main Street Middle School and Bay Street Middle School you might think you were looking at the same place.²

You would see two decently maintained brick buildings built in the mid-twentieth century in the same city in Fairfield County. Both have a lively crowd of approximately 500 diverse sixth, seventh, and eighth graders—20% African-American, 45% Latino, and 35% Caucasian and Asian—streaming into their doors at the start of the day.



If you had looked at the district web site before visiting, you might know that both schools spend the district average of \$13,400 per pupil (almost exactly mid-range for towns in Connecticut) and both have around 65% low-income students.

And then you step inside.

In Main Street Middle School, you are greeted by a warm and welcoming parent outreach volunteer who walks you to your destination. Everywhere you look, you see a cheerful patchwork of student work lining the corridors with examples of critical reasoning, story “thinking map” illustrations, and complex algebra equations.

When you peer into the classrooms, you see students engaged in group learning, leading class discussions on literature, working with manipulative models to untangle science problems, or listening attentively as a teacher explains goals for the day.

But when you visit Bay Street Middle School, a gruff security guard looks up momentarily from his newspaper. You can barely hear his directions over the din of a group of students hanging out in the hall.

As you near a classroom, a teacher pokes her head out, barks at the students to move on, and retreats behind the closed door of her room. The students laugh and do not budge. Inside another room, you see half the students falling asleep on their desks, a group gossiping in the back, and a few valiantly scribbling on worksheets filled with multiplication tables.

A smattering of student papers are stuck haphazardly on a board in the hall. Some of the student papers show simple sentence completion exercises and plot summaries of a story meant for students two grade levels below.

Not surprisingly, in 2007 92% of Main Street Middle School students scored at goal or above on state standardized tests. However, in the same year, at Bay Street Middle School only 11% of students scored at goal or above on the same standardized tests.

How can Bay Street Middle School become more like Main Street Middle School? By having a dynamic principal at the helm with a laser-like focus on instructional excellence.

Research shows that good school leadership is necessary to retain and support talented teachers, provide students a high-quality education, raise achievement, and promote a culture of inclusivity and excellence.

Just as importantly, we know what good school leadership does not entail. This report will highlight the importance of school leadership, the status of principal preparation programs in Fairfield County, the current landscape of school leadership in Fairfield County, and what is being done in Fairfield County and Connecticut today to address our school leadership challenges.

Good school leadership is necessary to retain and support talented teachers, provide students a high-quality education, raise achievement, and promote a culture of inclusivity and excellence.

² Names of schools and certain identifying features have been altered; the schools are composites for illustrative purposes.

Why Improving Student Achievement is Important

Though there has been a gap in academic achievement between white students and most racial minorities in this country for generations, the federal government did not get serious about holding school systems accountable until the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001.

President George W. Bush signed this legislation requiring public schools to help all students, but particularly lower performers, improve their scores on math, reading and other basic subject tests or risk loss of funding. Too often, children in low-income communities are the ones who suffer the most when school systems are not held to high standards. When they do, society loses.

Students in weak school districts who perform poorly on standardized tests tend to be the same students who drop out of school or graduate barely able to read or write or do simple math—rudimentary skills employers say are essential to hold down a job.

The Business Council of Fairfield County has determined that providing universal access to excellent K-12 education is critical to the recruitment and retention of local business talent.³ High quality education is increasingly important as the United States digs itself out of a recession and faces greater business competition than ever on the international stage.

Fairfield County is a very ethnically diverse community. In the 2008-09 school year, 36% of the public school student population were students of color. Sixty-four percent of the student population was white, 18.5% Hispanic, 12.6% African-American, and 5% Asian and Native American.

Diversity varies significantly by school district: 91.2% of the Bridgeport student population are students of color; 49.7% of the Danbury student population are students of color; and 60% of both the Norwalk and Stamford student population are students of color. In the Stratford Public Schools, 45.6% of the student population are students of color and in Greenwich 25% of the student population are students of color.⁴

Fairfield County is also an income diverse community. While 40.9% of public school students in Stamford qualify as low income and eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, only 1.7% of Darien Public School students fit this category. The median net worth of minority households in Connecticut is \$3,000—compared to \$195,771 for white households.⁵

The most recent 2008 American Community Survey census data highlights the percentage of children under 18 in poverty in Connecticut cities. In Bridgeport, this figure is 28%; in Norwalk, 16.9%; in

High quality education is increasingly important as the United States digs itself out of a recession and faces greater business competition than ever on the international stage.



³Business Council of Fairfield County. *Achievement Gaps in Our Schools: Realities and Remedies*.

⁴Connecticut State Department of Education, student demographic data for 2008-09 school year.

⁵Hero, Joachim (2009). *The Connecticut Family Assets and Opportunity Scorecard*. Connecticut Voices for Children.

A teacher can greatly influence a child's academic success. A principal and assistant principal can greatly influence a school's success.



Stamford, 14.3%; and in Danbury, 13.7%. In contrast, only 2.4% of children under age 18 in Darien live in poverty. This figure is 1.7% in Newtown; 1.9% in Ridgefield; and 2.6% in Fairfield.⁶

The 2009 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) reading, math and science results for eighth graders in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford show the percent of students achieving “Goal” level. The CMT is a standardized test given in grades three through eight. Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the United States. The achievement gap in Fairfield County is one of the largest in the nation.

Table 1

Percent of Eighth Graders Testing at Goal in 2009 Connecticut Mastery Tests			
	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Bridgeport	28.4%	21.5%	17.4%
Danbury	45.5%	36.5%	44.2%
Norwalk	43.4%	32.9%	39.0%
Stamford	45.7%	33.9%	41.5%
Connecticut	46.2%	35.1%	43.6%

Principals are Ground Zero for Eliminating the Achievement Gap in Fairfield County

A teacher can greatly influence a child's academic success, as any parent will tell you. A principal and assistant principal can greatly influence a school's success.

Until very recently, a principal's job revolved around the “Three Bs”—budgets, buses and busting. With the demands of No Child Left Behind, it became a much

broader assignment. Principals today hire teachers and staff, carry out district policy, and establish expectations for everyone from students to custodians.

Principals need to be instructional leaders, too. They must oversee the selection of good curriculum, seek out and in some cases fight for effective professional development for their teachers, coach and evaluate the staff's teaching practices, and set clear goals for instructional rigor.

But the best administrators also inspire their team to work together to achieve. They reward drive, nurture growth, encourage excellence—and not only manage change, but embrace it. Principals are ground zero for eliminating the achievement gap in Fairfield County.

This support is especially important as teachers retool to address the achievement gap. A seminal study of principals' importance found “virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders.”

High-quality support from principals is also linked to higher teacher retention⁸ and strong instruction.⁹ As the Philanthropy Roundtable report *Achieving Teacher and Principal Excellence* states, “A good principal is a teacher force-multiplier: He or she inspires, motivates, and empowers dozens of teachers.”¹⁰

A myriad of research studies identify the impact of principals on a student's success as second only to that of classroom teachers. Strong school leaders create schools that are singularly focused on success.

⁶Hero, Joachim (2009). *Poverty in Connecticut: Summary of 2008 American Community Survey Census Data*. Connecticut Voices for Children.

⁷Leithwood, Kenneth, Karen S. Louis, et al. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement: University of Minnesota.

⁸Ingersoll, R.M. and T. M. Smith (2004). “Do Teacher Induction and Mentoring Matter?” *The NASSP Bulletin* 88. (638): 28-40.

⁹Wong, H.K. *Induction Programs That Keep New Teachers Teaching and Improving*. Also Connecticut Center for School Change, *In Search of Quality: Recruiting, Hiring and Supporting Teachers* (2006).

¹⁰Rotherham, Andrew (2008). *Achieving Teacher and Principal Excellence: A Guidebook for Donors*. The Philanthropy Roundtable.

The Education Trust has identified the key strategies of high performing, highly successful schools.¹¹ All of these strategies connect to school leadership. They include:

- Articulated belief systems regarding high expectations for students and teachers;
- Very specific criteria for hiring teachers, assigning the best teachers to the most academically challenged students and providing high quality, targeted professional development; Teacher evaluation that reflects multiple classroom observations;
- A curriculum aligned with clear goals, common standards;
- Regular student assessments and use of data to inform instructional strategies;
- Leadership opportunities for teachers; and
- Facilitation of teacher collaboration and learning communities.

Here at home, Stamford's superintendent Dr. Joshua Starr cites greater principal presence in the classroom as a factor in that city's gains on the 2009 CMTs.¹² Yet 2008 research by the Connecticut Center for School Change on the retention of Connecticut teachers revealed that "principals were rarely provided with guidance on how to organize and deliver new teacher support."¹³

Who Prepares the Principals?

There are fewer options than you might think. Many colleges and universities have been slow to adjust their curriculum to reflect the new administrative demands of No Child Left Behind.

Arthur Levine, former dean of Columbia's Teachers College, said today's principal



training needs to look more like an MBA, with an emphasis on skill building, and less like a Ph.D., which is focused on theory.¹⁴

A pipeline needs to better connect higher education and Fairfield County's urban school systems. Four institutions—Sacred Heart University, University of Bridgeport, Western Connecticut State University and the main University of Connecticut campus in Storrs—account for about 47% of Connecticut's certified administrators.¹⁵ But none of these institutions currently has a formal arrangement to recruit from or train school leaders for Fairfield County's urban districts.

All school systems could benefit from this training, but urban systems need it more—and not just because of lower test scores. Urban schools have more complicated problems.

They experience higher rates of student mobility, teacher turnover and superintendent turnover. Their students come from poorer families, are less likely to speak English, and have access to fewer after school and tutoring opportunities.

To increase the number of qualified future school leaders, a pipeline needs to better connect higher education and Fairfield County's urban school systems.

¹¹ The Education Trust (2010). *Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Between Groups: Lessons from Schools and Districts on the Performance Frontier*.

¹² Parry, Wayne. "Stamford Students Improve in Math, Reading Tests." *The Stamford Advocate*, September 1, 2009.

¹³ Reichardt, Robert, Michael Arnold, et al. (2006). *In Search of Quality: Recruiting, Hiring and Supporting Teachers* (2006, Connecticut Center for School Change).

¹⁴ Levine, Arthur (2005). *Educating School Leaders*, The Education Schools Project.

¹⁵ Data from most recent years available. Source: Connecticut State Department of Education.

There is mounting evidence of the inadequacies of leadership preparation programs, and educational leaders themselves have shared serious reservations about the current quality of leadership programs.

Research also tells us that urban schools in impoverished areas are far more impacted by micro and macro economic changes and budget fluctuations than their wealthier counterparts. This strain on resources impacts all students in urban systems—regardless of race, family economics or academic performance.

How to Train Future Leaders for Our Most Challenging Schools

Since good leadership is critical to student success and teacher retention, and we know what good leadership looks like, how do we train leaders for these critical roles?

What do principal preparation programs and certification requirements need to contain to create successful school leaders?

The elements which comprise the most effective leadership preparation programs are summarized in Table 2.

We know what it takes to design a high-quality leadership preparation program. Unfortunately, there is “mounting evidence [of the] inadequacies of leadership preparation programs,”¹⁷ and “educational leaders themselves have shared serious reservations about the current quality of leadership programs.”¹⁸

In the last several years, however, there have been efforts to address the slow rate of change within existing principal preparation

Table 2¹⁶

Features of a Strong Principal Preparation Program	
A teaching and instructional approach that...	has an active, hands-on approach .
	provides opportunities for future leaders to form lasting networks for social and professional support and that fosters collaborative learning .
	exposes aspiring principals to high-quality mentoring and advising by expert principals.
	emphasizes well-designed and supervised school administrator internships under the guidance of expert veterans.
	has a systematic process for evaluating and improving students' performance and coursework.
Curriculum that...	clearly focuses on instructional leadership , change management, school improvement, and organizational practice.
	integrates the best knowledge from both theory and practice .
	links all aspects of the preparation experience around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organizational practice.
	is aligned with state and professional standards.
Faculty who are...	knowledgeable in their subject areas, and include both university professors and practitioners experienced in school administration.
	constantly seeking their own professional growth opportunities to improve their teaching practice.
Recruitment of future leaders that is...	vigorous, targeted , and seeks out expert teachers with leadership potential.
Selection of future leaders that is...	a rigorous process that gives priority to underserved groups , particularly racial/ethnic minorities.
A program structure that provides...	community collaborations which create a seamless and coherent program for students.
	a supportive organization for student retention, engagement and placement.
	a low student-faculty ratio (i.e., 20/1 or lower).

¹⁶ Sources: Darling-Hammond, Linda, Michelle LaPointe, et al. (2007). *Preparing Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs*. Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute; Young, Michelle D., E. Fuller, et al. (2007). "Quality Leadership Matters," *University Council for Educational Administration* 1(1):1-8; The Wallace Foundation (2006). *Leadership for Learning: Making The Connections Among State, District, and School Policies and Practices*. New York, The Wallace Foundation. Orr, Margaret (2006). "Mapping Innovation in Leadership Preparation in Our Nation's Schools of Education." *Phi Delta Kappan*. 87 (7):492-499.

¹⁷ Young, Michelle D., E. Fuller, et al. (2007). "Quality Leadership Matters." *University Council for Educational Administration* 1(1), p.4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

institutions. These alternative routes have included nonprofits running leadership academies funded by foundations and corporations (e.g., New Leaders for New Schools), for-profit companies offering coaching, online, or drop-in training modules (e.g., The Breakthrough Coach), charter schools developing internal leadership training programs (e.g., Achievement First), and school districts designing their own “grow your own” programs (e.g., The Boston School Leadership Institute). Many of these approaches employ the above features of a high-quality preparation programs.¹⁹

Characteristics of Fairfield County’s Current School Leaders

For Fairfield County’s four urban districts, the data paint a picture of a relatively experienced and aging population of school leaders that is somewhat diverse. Examining the status of existing school leaders reveals the pressing need and challenge of finding and cultivating the next generation of urban principals.

Student and Administrator Diversity

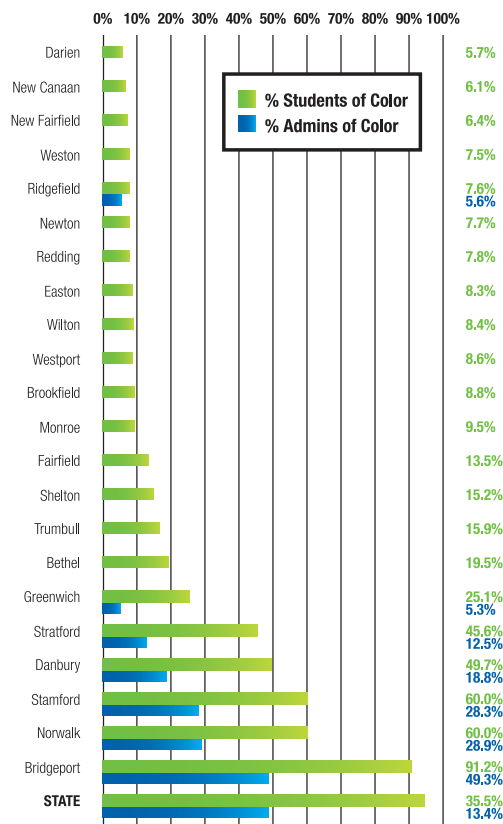
The four districts in the county with the most diverse student population currently also have the highest percentages of administrators of color. In Danbury—often described as one of the most diverse communities in Connecticut—49.7% of the student body are students of color and 18.8% of their administrators are people of color.

Bridgeport, with a student population of over 90% students of color, is the only urban area in the county in which a near majority of the administrators (49.3%) are also people of color.

In Bridgeport, students speak over 70 languages at home. More than 50 languages are spoken by Norwalk and Danbury public school students, and over 40 languages are spoken in Stamford students’ homes. A diverse leadership team is important for role modeling, cultural awareness, community connections and parent communication.

Between 2006 and 2008, 88.7% of the certifications issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education went to Caucasians.²⁰ Only 6.8% of new administrators in those years were African-American, 2.9% were Latino and 0.9% were Asian-American. There is no new evidence to suggest these percentages have shifted in any significant way since 2008.

Figure 1: Student and Administrator Diversity in Fairfield County, 2009



Source: CT State Dept. of Education, Characteristics of School Administrators by School District, 2008-09.

In Bridgeport, students speak over 70 languages at home. More than 50 languages are spoken by Norwalk and Danbury public school students, and over 40 languages are spoken in Stamford students’ homes.

¹⁹ Olson, Lynn (2007). “Leading for Learning: Getting Serious About Principal Preparation,” *Education Week*. (Special report funded by the Wallace Foundation.)

²⁰ Data from the most recent years available. Source: CT State Department of Education, school year 2008-09.

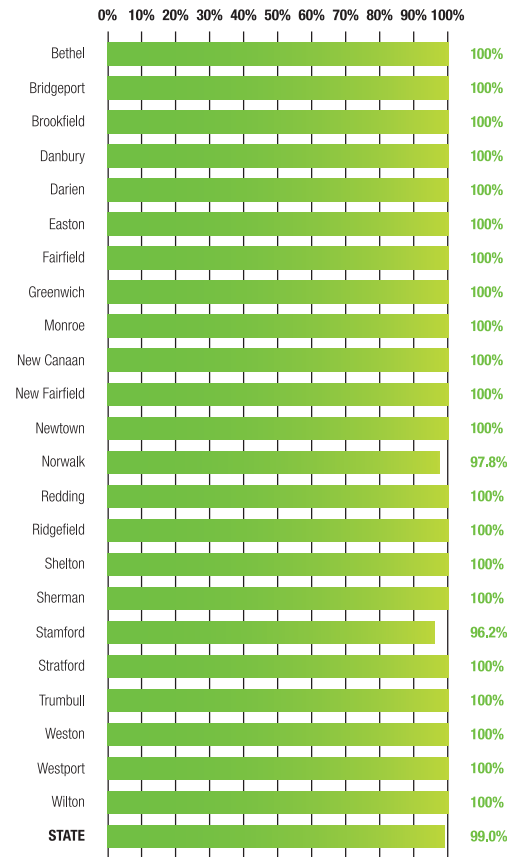
A diverse leadership team is important for role modeling, cultural awareness, community connections and parent communication.

Administrator Experience and Age

Overall, the administrators in Fairfield County are an experienced group. Virtually all school leaders in the county have at least six years of experience.

Not surprisingly, there is a close link between mean experience and age. For the most part, the older the mean ages of the administrators, the more mean years of experience those individuals will have in a given district.

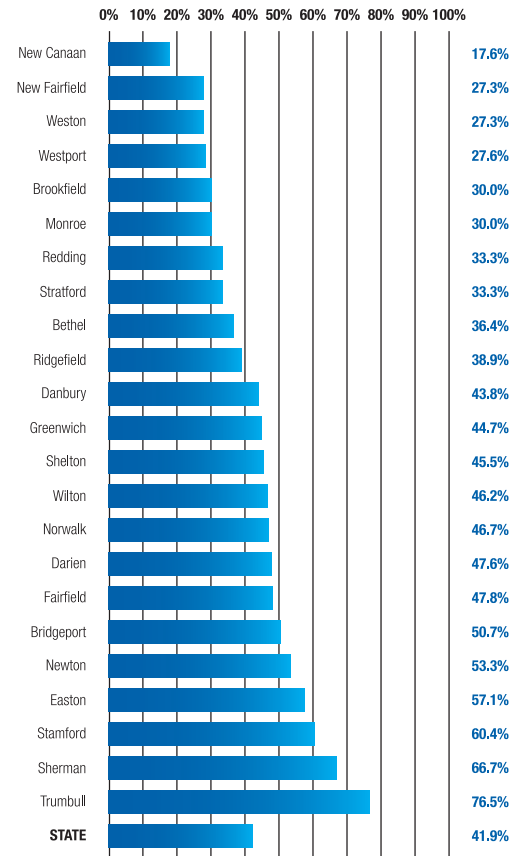
Figure 2: Percent of Administrators with 6+ years experience in Fairfield County



Source: CT State Dept. of Education, Characteristics of School Administrators by School District, 2008-09.

Stamford and Bridgeport have two of the county's greatest percentages of older leaders, with Danbury and Norwalk falling in the middle of the county in terms of older administrators.

Figure 3: Percent of Administrators Age 55+ in Fairfield County



Source: CT State Dept. of Education, Characteristics of School Administrators by School District, 2008-09.

The Looming Retirement Crisis— and Opportunity

In Connecticut, 60 and 30 are the “magic numbers” for educators with an eye on retirement. After reaching age 60 or 30 years of service, an educator can retire with full pension and benefits. Although some educators will remain after these milestones are reached, even in a recession many educators still opt for retirement.

The Connecticut State Department of Education classifies towns by district reference groups (DRG) A through I, grouping areas by socioeconomic status, need, and enrollment. Thus, DRG A contains the wealthiest districts with the

fewest children receiving aid and the lowest enrollment numbers. DRG I includes the poorest per capita households, the most children receiving free and reduced lunch, and the highest enrollments.

Stamford, Danbury, and Norwalk all fall into DRG H, along with seven other communities across the state. Bridgeport is in DRG I, along with cities such as New Haven and Hartford. Of the nine towns in DRG A, eight are in Fairfield County.

We can currently predict that in wealthy towns of DRG A—Darien, Easton, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Westport and Wilton—41% of the principals and assistant principals will retire in the next five years.

The cities on the bottom of the economic spectrum—Stamford, Danbury, Norwalk, and Bridgeport—expect 54% of their school leaders to retire within the next five years.

These retirements will mean a loss of experience and institutional knowledge for Fairfield County in the short term. But they also are an opportunity to bring fresh, vibrant and committed perspectives to the achievement gap challenge and public education in general.

Salary Levels for Fairfield County Public School Administrators

Average salaries for administrators in the four urban areas are at both ends of the spectrum in the county—both some of the lowest and highest.

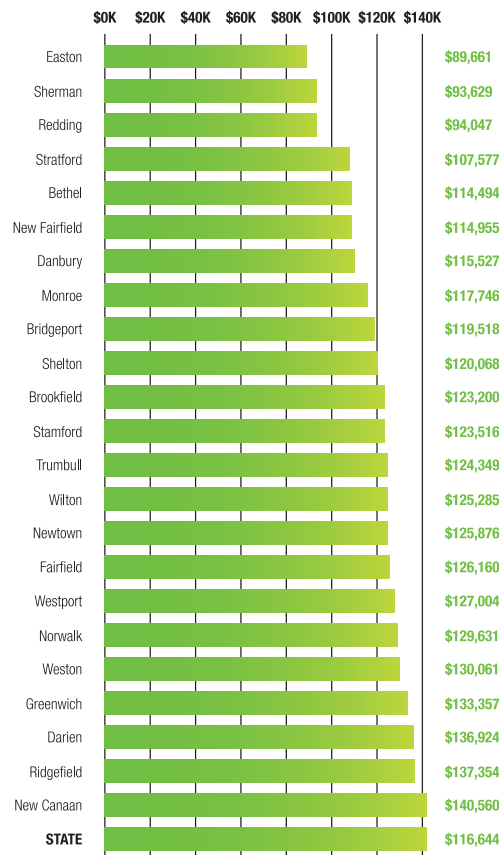
Bridgeport, in particular, faces the greatest need for principals and assistant principals in terms of both numbers and quality. However, as seen in Figure 4, Bridgeport’s administrator salaries are in the bottom third for Fairfield County.

This district already faces significant competition recruiting top-notch leaders,

further compounded by the fact its salaries cannot compete with the surrounding suburbs.



Figure 4: Average Administrator Salaries in Fairfield County



Source: CT State Dept. of Education, Characteristics of School Administrators by School District, 2008-09.

The cities on the bottom of the economic spectrum—Stamford, Danbury, Norwalk, and Bridgeport—expect 54% of their school leaders to retire by 2012.

It Can Take Years to Recruit Qualified Principals to Lead Urban Schools

Finding qualified candidates isn't as easy as posting principal job openings and waiting for the top applicants to line up, even in a time of high unemployment.

Districts with large percentages of minority and impoverished students encounter the greatest difficulty in attracting highly qualified principal candidates.²¹

The Norwalk Public Schools recently spent three years searching for an appropriate principal for one of its high schools. The Bridgeport Public Schools had to re-hire retired administrators or bargain with administrators to stay past their retirement date to keep some schools open and functioning.

Over the next five years across Connecticut, 50% or more of our baby boom principals will retire—and there are few qualified candidates to take their places.

The current salary structure rewards the degree, yet does little to encourage truly committed and talented future school leaders.

The Leaky Pipeline for School Leaders

In Connecticut, a Master's graduate degree and a special certification are required to qualify for positions of assistant principal or principal. There is a shortage of graduate students aspiring for those positions in the state. In addition, there is a very small number of graduates interested in leadership positions in Connecticut's urban public schools.

There are currently seven universities in the state that are accredited to train assistant principals and principals, and prepare them for certification. Over 91% of school leaders in Connecticut are trained in-state, with 8% of certificates issued to new principals and assistant principals who received out-of-state training.

Furthermore, in Connecticut, as in many states, the Administrators 092 Certificate may be earned by educators who are not actually required to become school leaders. In other words, educators are not required to become school leaders in order to earn a salary increase. The current salary structure rewards the degree, yet does little to encourage truly committed and talented future school leaders.²² During recent school years, half of the educators who recently acquired administrative certification were not working in school leadership positions.

We therefore have a leaky pipeline for school leaders: the actual numbers graduating from Connecticut universities and headed to school leadership positions in Fairfield County is small relative to coming needs, with an even smaller percentage setting their sights on leading urban public schools.



²¹ State of Connecticut, Department of Education. Administrative Endorsements – Fact Sheet #100. Last revised 12/01.

²² Mitgang, Lee D. (2003). *Beyond The Pipeline: Getting The Principals We Need, Where They Are Needed The Most*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

How the Fairfield County Community Foundation is Tackling the School Leadership Challenge

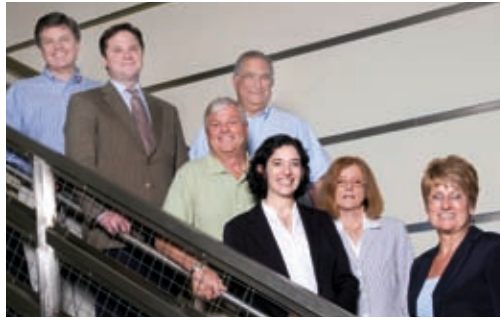
In 2007, the Fairfield County Community Foundation, concerned about the looming school leadership crisis, brought together school superintendents from Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford, the Connecticut Center for School Change, and Dr. Richard Lemons from the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education for unprecedented cross-district collaboration.

Together the partners designed a program to train aspiring principals who could turn urban schools into places where children succeed and teachers thrive. The resulting Urban School Leaders Fellowship trains school administrators and leaders in the county to become exemplary principals.

The Fellowship is designed to address what the four urban superintendents identified as a gap between their systems' impending school leadership needs and the pool of prospective administrators. Although the Fellowship is not an accrediting, full training program, it exemplifies the principles of the best programs described above.

The Community Foundation's Fund for Academic Excellence, with initial support from The United Illuminating Company, funded the Urban School Leaders Fellowship in the first year (2008-09) and received outside funding for the second year (2009-2010) from the GE Foundation and several FCCF donor advised fundholders.

The first class of 30 Urban School Leaders Fellows, with academic credentials to qualify for a principal position, graduated in June 2009. The second class of 37 Fellows will graduate in June 2010, creating a pool of 60



to 70 leaders, each ready to take the helm of a local urban school and steer it towards success.²³

The Urban School Leaders Fellowship is already having an effect in the county's schools. Midway through the program's first year, four Fellows had already received promotions within their district, including two who became urban principals. Six Fellows have been promoted to positions of school principal, assistant principal or other senior leadership roles.

Importantly, the four districts view the Urban School Leaders Fellowship as their own and believe it is addressing a critical need.

Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent of the Stamford Public Schools, states, "The Urban School Leaders Fellowship is confronting the major question we face: how do we develop leaders who can create

The Fairfield County Community Foundation brought together school superintendents from Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford, the Connecticut Center for School Change, and the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education to design a program for creating a pipeline of qualified urban school leaders. Participants included (L-R) Dr. William R. Glass, Associate Superintendent Danbury Public Schools; Dr. Richard W. Lemons, former Director of the Institute for Urban School Improvement, University of Connecticut Neag School of Education; Dr. Sal Corda, former Superintendent, Norwalk Public Schools; Larry Schaefer, Program Coordinator, Connecticut Center for School Change; Dr. Rebecca Eden Wolfe, former Director of the Fund for Academic Excellence, Fairfield County Community Foundation; Dr. Winifred Hamilton, Deputy Superintendent, Stamford Public Schools; Laura Boutilier, Program Coordinator, Connecticut Center for School Change.

Six Fellows have been promoted to positions of school principal, assistant principal or other senior leadership roles.



Urban School Leaders Fellows launch their specialized training with an intensive summer bootcamp.

²³ For more information on the Urban School Leaders Fellowship, see Lachman, Andrew, Richard W. Lemons, Margaret Terry-Orr, and Monica Byrne-Jimenez. (Fall 2009). "Developing Instructional Leaders." *Annenberg Institute for School Reform: Voices in Urban Education*.

Without formal programs that include mentoring, coaching, and other quality professional development opportunities for new leaders—in addition to what districts can provide—even the best trained and motivated principals are likely to flounder in their first few years.

systems that support the highest quality instruction in every classroom, for each and every child? I believe that the program's approach—grounded in a partnership between the Foundation, higher education, school districts and a technical assistance organization—is breaking new ground and will be a model for those who seek to improve the future of all our children in urban school districts."²⁴

The Community Foundation will also continue to work closely with school districts, state agencies, state advocacy organizations, the business community, local and national nonprofits, and others committed to ensuring that school leadership reform is embedded and not temporary.

Critical Next Steps to Increase and Support School Leaders

The Urban School Leaders Fellowship was designed to strategically target one segment of the leadership continuum: developing aspiring leaders. With finite resources, the Community Foundation determined that focusing on developing aspiring leaders would target the area of greatest need, provide the best return on investment, and the highest likelihood of resulting in ready-made school leaders.

However, each aspect of the leadership continuum is critical for producing successful school leaders. Much more work is clearly needed to sustain quality leadership in the county, particularly in the areas of retaining high quality teachers, developing teacher leaders into entry-level administrators, and supporting new principals.

Local, state and foundation experts studying the school leadership development landscape also agree that the induction year support for new principals is the place most in need of formal, high quality programming.²⁵

Without formal programs that include mentoring, coaching, and other quality professional development opportunities for new leaders—in addition to what districts can provide—even the best trained and motivated principals are likely to flounder in their first few years. The Fairfield County Community Foundation is currently exploring how we can ensure that high quality induction support exists for new principals in our four urban districts, including those who are graduates of the Urban School Leaders Fellowship.

There are many roles different institutions and individuals can play in ensuring Fairfield County's urban districts fill their coming positions with the best possible school leaders. Table 3 describes 10 action steps for Connecticut—including an important first step which is time sensitive.

In February 2010, Connecticut competed in the first round of the federal Race To The Top funding competition and lost. Among the state's deficiencies, Connecticut scored zero points for not providing strong alternative routes to certification for educators. States with strong alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals are eligible for 21 points in the second round of the Race to The Top competition.²⁶ Fortunately, Connecticut has another opportunity to apply for Race To The Top funding this spring.

As this report went to press, ConnCAN and other education advocates are championing H.B. 5421 (An Act Concerning Educators and Administrators) in the

²⁴ Interview with Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent of Stamford Public Schools, September 2008.

²⁵ Spiro, Jody; Mary C. Mattis, and Lee D. Mitgang. (2007). *Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field*. The Wallace Foundation.

²⁶ ConnCAN (2010). *The State of Connecticut Public Education*, p.16.

General Assembly. If passed, this bill would establish an alternative certification route for Connecticut's principal corps, thereby enabling Connecticut's public school districts

to cast a wider net for principal talent and strengthen Connecticut's second application for Race To The Top funding.

Table 3: The Top 10 Things Citizens, Philanthropy, the State, Universities, and School Districts Can Do to Ensure Quality Leadership for Urban Schools²⁷

	WHO	WHAT
1.	Citizens, Philanthropy, State, Education Advocacy Organizations	Support the adoption by the State Department of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Education, of alternative routes to certification which enable thoroughly screened, non-traditional programs meeting high levels of quality standards to certify school leaders in Connecticut. H.B. 5421 was raised in the Education Committee to do just that, and had its first public hearing on March 8, 2010. ²⁸
2.	Citizens, State, Universities, Districts, Philanthropy	Sponsor and support more programs which identify, train, motivate, and coach emerging, aspiring, and new leaders within high need districts.
3.	Districts, Philanthropy	Find ways to make the urban principalship more attractive: 1. Hire "school administration managers" to handle more managerial tasks and compliance. ²⁹ 2. Make principal salaries in our urban districts comparable to other districts across the county and to the demands of the position. 3. Provide appropriate autonomy and control over curriculum, budgets, and hiring in exchange for accountability. 4. Set clear expectations around school leadership that align to state standards. Use expectations to inform performance reviews and accountability.
4.	State, Universities	Pursue the adoption of state level licensure, certification and program approval policies that align with benchmarks in the Connecticut Common Core of Leading. Revise curriculum and program structure to meet the identified features of high-quality leadership programs.
5.	State, Universities, Districts, Philanthropy	Engage in continuing and collaborative dialogue among the State Department of Education, preparation program leaders, school district leaders, and policymakers focused on needs and solutions for addressing the leadership gaps in urban districts.
6.	State	Ensure the appropriate financial incentives for those who earn an administrator's certificate and become school leaders. ³⁰
7.	Universities, Districts	Establish formal university-district partnerships that include: feedback on training needs, high-quality internship opportunities, recruitment strategies, placement priority, and evidence-based practice that monitors the placement and performance of graduates and adjusts accordingly.
8.	Districts, Philanthropy	Collaborate with, or convene, urban districts in Connecticut to share resources, best practices and develop regional strategies.
9.	Universities	If not already being done, actively recruit appropriately motivated and skilled aspiring leaders as students.
10.	State, Federal	Provide funding to state education agencies to develop high-quality databases that track individuals through preparation programs and into the field.

²⁷ Adapted from Young, Michelle D., E. Fuller, et al. (2007). "Quality Leadership Matters." *University Council for Educational Administration*.

²⁸ Mitgang, Lee D. (2003). *Beyond The Pipeline: Getting The Principals We Need, Where They Are Needed Most*. The Wallace Foundation.

²⁹ For more information on the concept of school administrative managers and its implementation in several states and districts, see Turnbull, Brenda J., M. Bruce Haslam, et al. (2009). *Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project*. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

³⁰ Levine, Arthur. (2005). *Educating School Leaders*. The Education Schools Project.

Action Steps

1. Donate to the Fairfield County Community Foundation's Fund for Academic Excellence

Your contribution will:

- Support mentoring/induction support for new principals in Fairfield County's cities, including graduates of the Community Foundation's Urban School Leaders Fellowship.
- Provide funding for research on the impact of school leadership in closing the achievement gap.
- Provide funding so local universities and districts can establish high quality internship opportunities for Fairfield County aspiring principals.
- Underwrite additional research reports on school leadership, closing the achievement gap, and other important education topics.

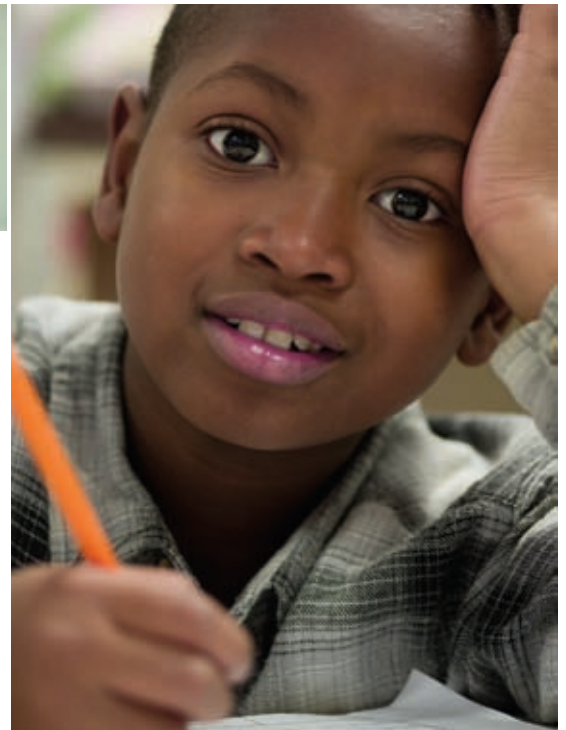


When you donate to the Fairfield County Community Foundation's Fund for Academic Excellence, you invest in improving school leadership for 60,000 urban school students, year after year.



2. Raise awareness, advocate, and fund

- Get involved with or fund statewide advocacy efforts that emphasize strengthening the principalship, such as through ConnCAN and the Connecticut Center for School Change.
- Communicate with your legislators about the importance of school leadership issues. Urge them to sponsor and support bills and funding that strengthens school leadership in Fairfield County (see some of the suggestions in the Top Ten list on page 13).
- Encourage the in-state establishment of proven alternative principal preparation programs, such as New Leaders for New Schools or district-based leadership academies. Contribute to the funding of such initiatives.
- Host a reception or small event. Distribute copies of this report and invite staff from the Community Foundation to address the group and answer questions.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper briefly outlining this issue and why it impacts all Connecticut residents.
- Contact the Community Foundation to offer your additional ideas, connections or resources.



About The Authors

As the first Director of the Fairfield County Community Foundation Fund for Academic Excellence, *Rebecca Eden Wolfe, Ph.D.*, worked with donors, staff, board and community volunteers to narrow the achievement gap in Fairfield County, especially in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford. She led the effort to develop the School Leadership Initiative and to partner with the four urban school districts, the Connecticut Center for School Change, and the University of Connecticut Neag School of Education to create the Urban School Leaders Fellowship.

Dr. Wolfe joined the Community Foundation in 2007 after serving as a Research Assistant at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University and consulting with community foundations striving to be more strategic in their community leadership work to benefit children, youth and families.

She earned a B.A. in Sociology with a focus in Urban Education from Harvard University and a Ph.D in Education Administration and Policy from the Stanford School of Education. Dr. Wolfe is currently a Senior Program Manager at Jobs For the Future in Boston.

Karen R. Brown, M.P.A., is the Vice President of Programs at the Fairfield County Community Foundation, where she has overall responsibility for its competitive grantmaking and initiatives and also provides philanthropic advisory services to a portfolio of donor advised fund holders. She joined the Community Foundation in 1998. Ms. Brown is a current board member of the Support Center for Nonprofit Management, a member of the Program Committee for the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, and a Steering Committee member for the Fairfield County Collaborative Fund for Affordable Housing.

She is a graduate of Brown University and has a Master's degree in public and nonprofit administration from the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. In May 2008, the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy awarded Ms. Brown the Martha S. Newman Award for sustained and exemplary staff performance at a Connecticut foundation.



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