Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Business Collaborative for Education Equity

TOGETHER WE THRIVE







Fairfield County Business Collaborative for Education Equity

2020-2025 Impact Report

Fairfield County Business Collaborative for Education Equity

Five-Year Overview







Established in August 2020 in partnership with Fairfield County's Community Foundation, the Fairfield County Business Collaborative for Education Equity worked as a local impact partner and funder to help reduce and eliminate educational disparities among Fairfield County's most vulnerable pre-K through 12+ students.

Initially, the focus was on mobilizing the business community's resources to offset the pandemic's outsized impact on vulnerable student communities. Over time, the focus expanded to strategic grantmaking that addressed deeply entrenched inequities in education and career outcomes for students across Fairfield County.

2020-2025 By the Numbers

85% Growth
in Collaborative membership

$1.68 million
Total awarded to local nonprofits supporting students*

*Total figure includes DonorsChoose grants and open grants, the results of which were not included in this analysis.

10,000 Fairfield County students served

29 Single and multi-year programs funded

7% of public school students reached with funded programs

$100K in individual gifts through DonorsChoose were matched by **$100K** from the Business Collaborative, resulting in **450 classroom projects** and **30K+ student experiences** in Norwalk and Bridgeport.

Strategic Funding to Strengthen Tomorrow's Workforce

The Collaborative funded local nonprofits working to ensure all Fairfield County youth **have access to quality education,** and are well **prepared for postsecondary education and employment.** The Collaborative's grantmaking focused on three key impact areas, funding the following strategies.



$460K Awarded

Early Childhood Education Access

- Early learning outcomes
- Childcare and early education equity
- Developmental screening and early intervention
- Systems change for early life success



$140K Awarded

Parent Engagement & Youth Voice

- Mental health literacy and support networks
- Youth leadership and peer mentoring
- Systems change and societal support
- Community engagement and advocacy



$895K Awarded

College & Career Readiness

- Career path exposure, exploration, and readiness
- Systems change for integrated academic and career progress
- Societal support for families
- Progression towards high school degrees

$460K AWARDED | 4 INITIATIVES

Early Childhood Education Access

Grantmaking addressed disparities in early learning benchmarks that impact students from cradle to career, focusing on access to quality, affordable childcare and early education and empowering families to be active partners in school readiness.

Improving Early Learning Outcomes

Interventions included screening, parent education, home-based learning, and developmental support to improve kindergarten preparedness.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

CLC Children's Learning Centers of Fairfield County

Norwalk ACTS Working together, everything is achievable

72% of children met developmental benchmarks[1]

after participating in Collaborative-funded early programs, compared to a statewide average of about 41%.

Supporting Developmental Screening & Early Intervention

Interventions included parent-facing digital screening tools and coordinated referrals to expand access to support for developmental delays.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

Norwalk ACTS Working together, everything is achievable

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut

Stamford Cradle to Career

1773 children were screened

in 2023 for developmental delays, a 75% increase over the previous year, with 30 children receiving follow-up support.

[1] ***EdSight Kindergarten Entrance Inventory***, *2022–2023; average preparedness across five domains (language, literacy, numeracy, creative/aesthetic, and personal/social).*





Advancing Child Care & Education Equity

Interventions included coaching programs for educators, childcare workers, and parents to help increase access to high-quality childcare and preschool education.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut

Stamford Cradle to Career

96 Danbury children[2]

received superior developmental education from 24 childcare providers and assistants, achieving at least one point growth on FCCERS-R scores.[3]

Addressing Systemic Barriers to Early Life Success

Interventions included connecting families to health coverage and food assistance, reducing financial strain to address systemic barriers to early learning.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut

building one community — The Center for Immigrant Opportunity

Stamford Cradle to Career

125 Stamford families

of low-income and/or immigrant status got information about SNAP and/or Husky and began receiving benefits for the first time.

[2]Representing 4% of all ALICE® children in Danbury (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). Source: United States Census Bureau ACS Demographic & Housing Estimates; applies 49% of Danbury households classified as ALICE to total Danbury population under the age of 5.
[3]Source: Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Revised (FCCERS-R).

$140K AWARDED | 3 INITIATIVES

Parent Engagement & Youth Voice

Grantmaking addressed the underrepresentation of meaningful parent and youth participation in educational decision-making, focused on strengthening the civic infrastructure of education through advocacy, leadership, and shared accountability.



Creating Mental Health Literacy & Support Networks

Interventions included mental health trainings, focus groups, and coaching sessions for parents, youth, and faith leaders to reduce stigma and expand access to supports.

GRANTEE PARTERS

stamford youth mental health alliance

dovetail

68 students and parents

reported greater awareness of mental wellness and literacy through 37+ sessions of training, focus groups, and school-family joint sessions.



Enabling Youth Leadership & Peer Mentoring

Interventions included coaching, peer-mentoring programs and youth-led activities to build youth leadership, confidence, civic voice, and teamwork.

GRANTEE PARTERS

stamford youth mental health alliance

dovetail

278 students

engaged in structured peer-mentoring and leadership sessions to build confidence, teamwork, and civic voice.







Facilitating Community Engagement & Advocacy

Interventions included bringing caregivers, youth, and educators together to share resources, exchange feedback, and strengthen local collaboration.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut

Stamford Cradle to Career

2930 community members

engaged in more than 72 community-facing events that spread information and strengthened communication between stakeholders.

Societal Support for Families

Interventions included distributing meals to improve food access, reduce household stress, and strengthen families' capacity to support children's learning.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

person to person

1221 families

representing 87% of program participants, reported reduced anxiety over food insecurity with more than 40,000 meals distributed.

$895K AWARDED | 14 INITIATIVES

College & Career Readiness

Grantmaking addressed significant countywide disparities in access to postsecondary pathways and livable-wage employment,[4] with a focus on Opportunity Youth (young adults aged 14–24 without high school and postsecondary degrees).

Aiding Progression Towards High School Degrees

Interventions included tutoring, summer, and transitional programs for high school students, with focus on increasing the share of Black and Latino and low-income graduates.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

Norwalk Community College Foundation; Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers, Celebrating 30 Years; Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF); DOMUS Love Lives Here; the CARVER Building Lifetime Achievers; HORIZONS Hosted at New Canaan Country School, Building Brighter Futures Since 1964

1052 students who were previously off-track reclaimed credits, improved grades, and met benchmarks to advance towards graduation.

Addressing Financial Barriers & Financial Literacy

Interventions included assistance accessing financial aid for postsecondary education, and education sessions to help low-income students and families navigate barriers to career success.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut; Bridgeport Prospers Cradle to Career; Norwalk Community College Foundation

50% less of a decline in FAFSA applications during 2020-21 for Bridgeport high schools supported by Collaborative initiatives,[5] than those without support.[6]

[4] Building Tomorrow's Workforce: Equitable Education and Career Pathways for Opportunity Youth in Fairfield County
[5] Central High School, Harding High School, and Bassick High School
[6] FAFSA Completions Down In CT: How Bridgeport Area Schools Compare, 2021, CSDE Statewide FAFSA Completion Report







Career Readiness & Planning

Interventions included mock interviews, career panels, networking, and leadership development to bolster critical job skills and provide support in career planning.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

the CARVER BUILDING LIFETIME ACHIEVERS

Bridgeport Prospers CRADLE TO CAREER

HORIZONS Hosted at New Canaan Country School Building Brighter Futures Since 1964

UNITED WAY Coastal and Western Connecticut

FUTURE 5

14% more students

met benchmarks for college and career readiness[7] after intervention, while 67% of participants reported high confidence in postsecondary readiness.

Career Path Exposure & Exploration

Interventions included internships, shadowing, special courses, and tactical skill development that introduced students to real-world, livable-wage career tracks.

GRANTEE PARTNERS

Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers™ CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

UNITED WAY Coastal and Western Connecticut

SoundWaters DISCOVER THE SOUND. EMBRACE THE WORLD.

the CARVER BUILDING LIFETIME ACHIEVERS

HORIZONS Hosted at New Canaan Country School Building Brighter Futures Since 1964

Bridgeport Prospers CRADLE TO CAREER

2500 students

(or about 25% of all local Opportunity Youth) learned about career paths in maritime, construction, teaching, STEM, and more.

[7] *EdSight Postsecondary Readiness Report, 2020-21 and 2024-25*

Reflections



The Business Collaborative provided individuals in our community with quality education, training, and skills-building opportunities to help set our region on a course for long-term success and promote broader economic inclusion.

Bill Tommins
President
Bank of America Southern Connecticut

With support from the Business Collaborative, The Carver helped Norwalk public schools become the number-one urban school district in Connecticut. Our after-school programs help students grow faster.

Novelette Peterkin
CEO, The Carver
Grantee Nonprofit





I experienced firsthand the power of pooling resources, expertise, and knowledge to benefit broader social and systems change in an impactful and accelerated way. We helped transform the lives and futures of students, and propelled meaningful progress in education equity for the collective benefit of our community.

Kim DePra
VP and Director of Marketing & Communications
The Ashforth Company

Members

Fairfield County Business Collaborative for Education Equity



The efforts of the Collaborative demonstrate the positive impact a group of like-minded corporations can have when working together to support a common goal.

Karen M. Kelly
Senior VP & Chief Digital Banking Officer
First County Bank