

# **THE GREENWICH ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

**Envisioning a Community-Wide Response for  
Achieving Success**

Report of  
Achievement Gap Task Force

Greenwich Department of Human Services

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**Half of all kids in public education are below the poverty line. Two-thirds of the achievement gap comes from factors outside of school. Teachers influence about seven to ten percent of what happens to kid's lives. When you think about those statistics, you have to think about how to re-envision education so it's holistic and so we share responsibility.**

**Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Background.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Achievement Gap Definition and Causes.....	7
Greenwich Achievement Gap.....	9
Role of Trauma and Toxic Stress in the Achievement Gap.....	15
Solution: Integrated Set of Early Interventions.....	16
Conclusion.....	20
Recommendations.....	21
Appendix.....	23

**Greenwich Department of Human Services (GDHS)**  
**Achievement Gap Task Force**  
**Executive Summary**

An individual's education is one of the main predictors for their future success in employment and achieving success in life. The GDHS mission is to assist Greenwich residents in meeting basic human needs and promoting services that support self-sufficiency. The GDHS views education as one of the key prevention strategies to reduce the number of residents who will become reliant on local, state and federal entitlement programs.

It is clear that both school and non-school factors underlie the achievement gap and the conditions that improve learning in school and out of school are intertwined.

An increasing number of experts are concerned that pre-school programs start too late for children most at risk. Recent research shows that brain development is buoyed by continuous interaction with parents and caregivers from birth, and that even before age 2, the children of the more affluent know more words than do those of the poor.

**The income achievement gap is already large when children enter kindergarten and does not change over time.** Research shows that 60-70% of the achievement gap is evident by age 5. The growth in income inequality and in the correlation of income with other family resources means that family resources have become increasingly unequal at the same time that families are increasingly focused on their children's education.

Greenwich has a large and persistent achievement gap:

- The percentage of low-income children in Greenwich public schools that are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch has increased to 15%;
- Achievement gap between low-income and high-income students in Greenwich widened, causing a significant gulf between them;
- The results from State tests reveal that greatest achievement gaps are from Title 1 funded schools: New Lebanon, Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss and Western Middle School

## **Solution: Integrated set of early interventions**

Improving educational outcomes must be viewed within a broader context of community resources, health care, and poverty. The strategy of improving the achievement gap solely through educational programming (smaller class size, better qualified teachers, extended school day/year) will only meet with limited improvement.

Support interventions must start from day 1; not day 1 in school but day 1 of life. Kindergarten is too late. Identifying and providing supportive services to high at risk children and families before the pre-school years is essential. The parent or caregiver is the best shield against the effects of toxic stress. The quality of a caregiver's interaction with a child is a key building block for healthy emotional, social, and physical development.

After reviewing the research and literature and completing discussions with community stakeholders the Achievement Gap Task Force recommends that the focus of attention must be with infant/children ages 0-3 years old. This is a critical period in child development with learning preparation leading to pre-school. Parenting skills and engagement are major factors essential for the child's success in learning and education. Without proper preparation the seeds of future academic failure are sown but not fully identified until the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when it is almost impossible for the child to "catch up" academically.

The Task Force proposes that the Greenwich School District devote a greater share of its resources and efforts to the earliest grades, pre-school and kindergarten. Assessing children in pre-school that are beginning to exhibit intellectual and/or behavioral difficulties is critical for their future. Achievement gaps are self-perpetuating. The earlier we intervene to reduce them, the more effective we will be at eliminating them in the long run.

The achievement gap can be significantly narrowed but it will take a concerted effort to create a broader coalition of school and community human and health service resources collaborating together in a coordinated strategic action. The state testing data clearly shows that the achievement gap is greatest in the Title 1 funded schools reflecting the research that lower income students have much greater academic challenges. Now is the time to develop a more focused and comprehensive approach that concentrates its efforts in ways that benefit the long-term success of students.

**Greenwich Department of Human Services (GDHS)**  
**Achievement Gap Task Force**

**Background:**

In the fall of 2015, the Greenwich Department of Human Services Board formed an Achievement Gap Task Force. The task force was organized in response to the on-going Town issue of an academic achievement gap within the Greenwich School system. The Task Force's purpose was to: review and analyze information, data and interview key informants on the conditions that created the achievement gap; what strategies and programs presently exist to reduce it; the results, so far; and what is being proposed for the future?

Why would the Department of Human Services get involved in an achievement gap study? The main reason is that an individual's education is one of the main predictors for their future success in employment and maintaining self-sufficiency. The GDHS mission is to assist Greenwich residents in meeting basic human needs and promoting services that supports self-sufficiency. The GDHS views education as one of the key prevention strategies to reduce the number of residents who will become reliant on local, state and federal entitlement programs. Research done by the Harvard Graduate School of Education showed that a high school graduate will make an average of \$20,000 less a year than one who gets a bachelor's degree; a dropout will do even worse - \$30,000 a year less.

**Introduction**

The Achievement Gap Task Force was composed of GDHS Board members: Chair, Winston Robinson, Natalie Queen, Alan Gunzburg and Barbara Nolan.

The group met eleven times between October, 2015 and March, 2017 and had in-depth discussions with the following community leaders:

- Drew Marzullo, Town of Greenwich, Selectman
- Sal Corda, Interim Superintendent, Greenwich Schools
- Debbie Appelbaum, Greenwich Schools, Board of Education member
- Ben Branyan, Town Administrator, Former Managing Director of Operations, GPS
- Leslie Sexer, Family Centers, Early Childhood Program Coordinator
- Michael Chambers, Heidenreich Foundation, Director
- YMCA, Bob DeAngelo, CEO and David Cohen, Director of Youth Programs
- Nancy Weissler, Karen Keegan, and David Rabin, United Way Early Childhood Achievement Gap Solutions Program

## **Achievement Gap Definition and Causes**

### **Definition**

A simple definition of the achievement gap is the observed, persistent, disparity of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and gender.

### **Causes**

There is consensus that the achievement gap has many causes: less adequate early childhood preparation and health differences, absence of positive peer and community influences; lack of high quality after-school, weekend, and summer experiences; insufficient school resources; excessively large classes; family economic stress; unstable housing, and food insecurity are the most common reasons given for the achievement gap. It is clear that both school and non-school factors underlie the achievement gap and the conditions that improve learning in school and out of school are intertwined.

Amid the push for government-funded preschool for 4 year-olds, an increasing number of experts are concerned that such programs start too late for children most at risk. Recent research shows that brain development is buoyed by continuous interaction with parents and caregivers from birth, and that even before age 2, the children of the more affluent know more words than do those of the poor. Another study showed that by age 3, the children of professionals had vocabularies of about 1,100 words; those of parents on welfare had mastered only 552 words.

Another unappreciated factor in the achievement gap as measured by the “race and income gap” is parental depression. Up to 60% of impoverished parents feel a steady drizzle of hopelessness, that makes reading and communication at home difficult.

The research has shown that if we want to improve children’s opportunities for success, one of the most powerful levers for change is not the children themselves, but rather the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the adults who surround them.

The National Education Association has stated that the causes of the achievement gap are multiple and completely interrelated and vary from school to school, district to district, and community to community. There are, however, factors that have been identified in various studies as contributing to the achievement gap.

## Factors That Contribute to Achievement Gap

<b>Within School's Control</b>	<b>Outside School's Control</b>
<b>Schoolwide Factors</b>	<b>Factors in the Local Community</b>
Low expectations for student achievement	Economic opportunity for students' families
Lack of rigor in the curriculum	Access to health and social services
Large class size	Community Safety
Tracking groups of students into less demanding curriculum	Access to libraries, museums, and other institutions that support student 's development
Unsafe schools	Access to child care and after-school programs and facilities
Culturally unfriendly environments	
Poor, or no, instructional leadership	
<b>Teacher and Teacher-Related Factors</b>	<b>Student's Background</b>
Uncertified and inexperienced teachers	Families' income level
Insensitivity to different cultures	Students' birth weight
Poor teacher preparation	Students' diet and nutrition at home
Low expectations of students	Students' mobility
Inadequate materials, equipment, and resources, including technology –based resources	Students' primary language (if other than English)
<b>Student-Related Factors</b>	<b>Education Funding Shortfalls</b>
Students' interest in school	State budget deficits
Students' level of effort	Unfunded federal mandates
Students' feeling that they are, in part, responsible for their learning	Inequities in funding among school districts
<b>Families' Support of Students' Learning</b>	<b>Families' Support of Students' Learning</b>
Families' participation in school activities	Time family members are able to devote to support and reinforce learning
Families' skills to support and reinforce learning	Other Factors Societal bias (racial, ethnic, poverty and class)
Students' TV watching and at-home reading	



**The income achievement gap is already large when children enter kindergarten and does not change over time.** According to information gathered by the Greenwich United Way, national research shows that 60-70% of the achievement gap is evident by age 5. The growth in income inequality and in the correlation of income with other family resources means that family resources have become increasingly unequal at the same time that families are increasingly focused on their children's education. High-income families now spend 7 times as much in their children's development as low-income families, up from a ratio of 4 times as much in 1972.

The income achievement gap (high-income vs low-income families) has grown significantly in the last three decades. For children born in the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s, the reading achievement gap between those from high-income families and those from low-income was about 0.9 of a standard deviation. This gap began to widen beginning with the cohorts born in the mid-1970s. Among those born 20-25 years later, the gap in standardized test scores was roughly 1.25 standard deviations; that is 40% larger than the gap several decades earlier.

### **Greenwich Achievement Gap**

Greenwich has a large and persistent achievement gap:

- The percentage of low-income children in Greenwich public schools that are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch has increased to 15%
- Achievement gap between low-income and high-income students in Greenwich widened, causing a gulf of more than 30% between them
- The results from State tests reveal that greatest achievement gap results are from Title 1 funded schools: New Lebanon, Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss and Western Middle School

The data trend indicates that with changes in resident demographics the Greenwich low income population has increased with eligible free and reduced lunch students increasing from 10% in 2009 to 15% in 2017. The student test results for Greenwich (below) provides evidence that the \*Title 1 funded schools test scores are significantly lower than Non-Title 1 schools. The school student population that requires additional assistance to raise test scores and narrow the achievement gap are in schools located in lower income geographic areas of Greenwich.

\* Title 1 funded schools receive federal financial assistance because of higher numbers or percentage of children from low income families enrolled in the school. Funds are to assist in raising test scores.

The 2011-2013 CMT test score results for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades shows the Greenwich elementary schools that are falling below State scores for math, reading, writing and science are the Title 1 funded schools (see appendix).

**Average CMT Scores (2011-2013) for Non-Title 1 and Title 1 Funded Greenwich Elementary Schools**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade**

Scores	Non-Title 1 Schools	Title 1 Schools	Size of Gap	State
Math	285.0	258.3	26.6	259.4
Reading	265.1	244.6	20.5	242.9
Writing	278.7	245.9	32.8	252.2

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Scores	Non-Title 1 Schools	Title 1 Schools	Size of gap	State
Math	300.6	269.9	30.6	272.3
Reading	269.2	247.5	21.7	246.0
Writing	278.7	254.9	23.7	255.8
Science	283.3	254.4	28.9	258.1

Scores in red fall below State scores

In the 2015 school year the Next Generation Accountability Report replaced the CMT for testing in Greenwich Schools. One of the significant changes is that for each school there are scores for Non-High Needs and High Needs students. High needs students are economically-disadvantaged students, English learners and students with disabilities.

The 2015 and 2016 Next Generation Accountability test score results for Elementary schools shows that Greenwich High Needs students fall well below their Non-High needs student counterparts and Title 1 school scores for math, English language Arts (ELA) and science are below the Non-Title 1 schools (see appendix).

**Average Scores (2015 and 2016) for Not-Title 1 and Title 1 Greenwich Elementary Schools  
Grades 3-5 – Performance Index Gap**

Scores	Non-Title 1 Schools			Title1 Schools		
	Non-High Need Students	High Need Students	Gap Size	Non-High Need Students	High Need Students	Gap Size
ELA	75	71.4	<b>3.6</b>	75	64.5	<b>10.5</b>
Math	75	66.5	<b>8.5</b>	71.2	56.0	<b>15.2</b>
Science	69	-	-	65.7	50.8	<b>14.9</b>

**Average Scores (2015 and 2016) for Greenwich Elementary Schools**

**All Schools**

**Grades 3-5 – Performance Index Gap**

	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Gap Size
ELA	75	61.9	<b>13.1</b>
Math	73.3	58.7	<b>14.6</b>
Science	67.9	49.8	<b>18.1</b>

The 2011-2013 CMT test score results for 8th grade shows that Western Middle School falls below State scores for math and science. Scores for Reading and writing are slightly higher than State scores.

**Average CMT Scores (2011-2013) for Non-Title 1 and Title 1 Greenwich Middle Schools**

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Scores	Non-Title 1 Schools	Title 1 Schools	Size of Gap	State
Math	290.9	263.3	27.6	263.5
Reading	286	265.3	20.8	263.7
Writing	272.1	254.1	17.9	253.6
Science	279.2	251.8	27.4	255.8

Scores in red fall below State scores

**The Average 2015 and 2016 Next Generation Accountability test score results for Middle Schools**

Average Scores	Non-Title 1 Schools			Title1 Schools		
	Non-High Need Students	High Need Students	Gap Size	Non-High Need Students	High Need Students	Gap Size
ELA	75	64.0	<b>11.0</b>	75	61.7	<b>13.3</b>
Math	74.3	57.2	<b>17.1</b>	71.6	52.5	<b>19.1</b>
Science	69.0	55.0	<b>14.0</b>	65.2	51.3	<b>13.9</b>

## Average Scores (2015 and 2016) for Greenwich Middle Schools

### All Schools

#### Grades 6-8 – Performance Index Gap

	Non-High Needs Rate	High Needs Rate	Gap Size
ELA	75	62.9	<b>12.1</b>
Math	73.0	55.2	<b>17.8</b>
Science	67.2	53.4	<b>13.8</b>

The 2016 test results at the high school showed the performance gap in English, math and science between high-needs students and their peers is larger than the statewide average gap in each of those subjects. Those marked in red exceeded the state average.

<b>Greenwich High School</b>	Non-High Needs Students	High Needs Students	Size of Gap	State Mean Gap
English Performance Gap	74.2	51.5	22.7	16.6
Math Performance Gap	74.8	49.5	25.3	19.1
Science Performance Gap	75	56.2	18.8	17.3

Source: State Department of Education’s Next Generation Accountability Report 2015-2016

The achievement gap widens as children grow older as illustrated by the test scores in the Greenwich High School.

**2015-2016 School Scores and Gap Size for Non-High Needs Students and High Needs Students  
Next Generation Accountability Test**

<b>Scores</b>	<b>Non-High Needs Score</b>	<b>High Needs Scores</b>	<b>Gap Size</b>
<b>Elementary Schools</b>			
ELA	75	61.9	<b>13.1</b>
Math	73.3	58.7	<b>14.6</b>
Science	67.9	49.8	<b>18.1</b>
<b>Middle Schools</b>			
ELA	75	62.9	<b>12.1</b>
Math	73.0	55.2	<b>17.8</b>
Science	67.2	53.4	<b>13.8</b>
<b>High School</b>			
English	74.2	51.5	<b>22.7</b>
Math	74.8	49.5	<b>19.1</b>
Science	75	56.2	<b>17.3</b>

## **Problem: We are treating symptoms and not causes**

- Too many young children from low-income families face diminished opportunities by the time they are 2 years old.
- Lapses in infancy - Too many low-income infants/children suffer from undiagnosed medical, psychological, and developmental issues. Example vision/hearing impairments, toxic stress, and learning disabilities
- When it comes to vocabulary, large gaps exist between low-income and high-income students.
- Toxic home environment – presence of addiction, mental illness, domestic violence
- Children are being misdiagnosed with ADHD or bi-polar disorder when it is a result of toxic stress caused by trauma.
- Research reports the finding that when resources are increased in a high-poverty school by an unrealistically high amount, the resulting increases in reading and math scores for the average student in the high-poverty school increases only modestly.
- Unrealistic to think that school-based strategies alone will eliminate the stark disparities in academic success.
- Investing in programs that help parents is hard to do politically. Some argue that they don't want government telling parents how to raise kids and encourages government dependence and others worry that emphasizing parenting is another opportunity to denigrate poor families.

## **Role of Trauma and Toxic Stress in the Achievement Gap**

### **Toxic stress in many low-income families impairs the child's cognitive development**

**Toxic Stress** occurs when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity – such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship (poverty) –without adequate adult support.

Something bad happens to a child and there is no positive adult response to mitigate the trauma. Lack of adult support creates the stress which is unavoidably toxic to the child. Repeated or prolonged activation of a child's stress response system can disrupt the development of brain architecture and organ systems and increase the risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment.

Between birth and 4 years old, some children experience high anxiety or fear because of home or neighborhood environments are unsafe. The trauma can have a tremendous impact on a child's brain development. Repeated adverse childhood experiences can activate the body's stress response system. Chronic stress leads to frequent triggering of this chemical response and can be harmful to a child's long-term development –toxic stress.

Recent reports and research studies are pointing out the links between toxic stress in early childhood to a host of bad life outcomes including poor mental and physical health and cognitive impairment. Children's brains rapidly adapt to the environment around them, for better or worse. Child is drowning in cortisol and adrenaline, which wears down the body and raises the risk of behavior and learning problems, depression, substance abuse, homelessness and crime.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) – Researchers have begun to realize just how profoundly exposure to social ills, not to mention, addiction, incarceration, and violence in the home affects long-term mental and physical health. They are common everywhere but rampant in low-income neighborhoods. Stress of Poverty. More than 80% of youth in CT's juvenile justice system report having a history of trauma. When you see a troubled child, rather than asking, "What's wrong with them?" We need to ask, "What happened to them?"

### **Solution: Integrated set of early interventions**

Interventions must start from day 1; not day 1 in school but day 1 of life. Kindergarten is too late. Identifying and providing supportive services to children in pre-school that are beginning to exhibit intellectual and/or behavioral difficulties is critical for their future. Early childhood educators have an essential role to play.

Improving educational outcomes must be viewed within a broader context of health care, community resources and poverty. The view of improving the achievement gap solely through educational programming (smaller class size, better qualified teachers, extended school day/year) will only meet with limited improvement.



The parent or caregiver is the best shield against the effects of toxic stress. The quality of a caregiver's interaction with a child is a key building block for healthy emotional, social, and physical development. Ways to support a child's health and development involve simple things such as, talking, laughing, reading to the child, taking time to play with a child one-on-one and spending time together.

- Family Planning – help young women, especially teenagers avoid unwanted pregnancy. Outreach efforts to help pregnant women curb use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Strong, stable positive relationships between parents and children, particularly during the first years of life, are the lynchpin for cognitive and social development.
- Fighting poverty begins at home, with greater support for parents of very young children. Home visitation programs that encourage parents to speak to children and read to them.
- Primary Medical Care – Screening for: vision, hearing, asthma, anemia, dental, nutrition, lead exposure and behavioral problems
- Investing in helping children in the first few years of life as their brains are developing.

An investigation of model programs revealed the following evidence-based programs:

#### **Evidence-Based Programs:**

**Nurse-Family Partnership – Lancaster, PA.** Program serves 175 low-income first-time mothers. Nurses start visiting the mothers before birth and continue, with diminishing frequency, until child is 2 years old. Nurses are trained to form close relationship with mother and advise on prenatal health and child-rearing issues – including smoking and drinking during pregnancy and planning future pregnancies – and on life skills. Typically, 20-30 visits are involved. Three randomized controlled trials have shown that the program has major impacts that last at least until child is 15. Mothers who participated were less likely to abuse or neglect their kids and more likely to be working and their kids were more likely to be healthy and ready for school.

**Success for All** – Primarily for high-poverty elementary schools, emphasizes early detection and prevention of reading problems before they become serious. Students of various ages reading at the same performance level are grouped together and receive daily, 90 minute reading

classes, as well as, one-on-one tutoring and cooperative learning activities. 41 schools across 11 states found improved reading skills, including comprehension.

**Early Head Start Program** – Aim is to support the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of each child as early as possible. Services begin as early as pregnancy and end when the child turns 3 and is eligible for Head Start pre-school. Almost half of Early Head Start families receive weekly home visits designed to help parents support a child's development.

#### **Innovative Programs:**

**Too Small to Fail** – Non-profit encourages low-income parents to speak and read to their children. Goal is aimed at closing the word gap.

**Thirty Million Words Initiative** – Home-based curriculum intended to teach parents how they should talk with their children and why.

#### **State Programs:**

**Department of Developmental Services: Birth to Three** – State's early intervention program for children under age three who have significant developmental delays or who are diagnosed with physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay.

**Department of Children and Families (DCF): Early Childhood Consultation Partnership** – Serves Children from birth to age five in center-based child care programs. Advanced Behavioral health (ABH) subcontracts with 10 community-based non-profit mental health agencies for 20 Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to provide services statewide.

**Department of Children and Families: Family Based Recovery** – An in-home service developed by the Yale Child Study Center, Johns Hopkins University and CT DCF for families with infants or toddlers who are at risk for abuse and/or neglect, poor developmental outcomes and removal due to parental substance abuse. This program works to promote stability, safety and permanence for families through intensive psychotherapy, substance abuse treatment, and attachment-based parent-child therapy.

## **Greenwich Programs:**

**Family Centers: Nurturing Families Network** – Helps first time parents manage the challenges of parenthood by providing a system of continuous care designed to promote positive parenting through telephone support, parenting groups, as well as, home visits for eligible parents. Staff works in partnership with parents to enhance their strengths, provide education and create community connections.

**Family Centers: Minding the Baby** – Staffed by a registered nurse and social worker, this program helps parents establish early and positive bonds with their babies through home visits focusing on maternal and child health, parent-infant attachment, developmental guidance, parenting support and maternal life course outcomes. The home visits promote strong early relationships that form the foundation for physical health, solid brain architecture, social development and learning. By coordinating care through the nurse/social worker team, each mother's, infant's and family's needs are met.

**Child Guidance Center: Child First** – Program that works with young children and their parents/caregivers together in the home. Helps with the child's behavioral or learning problems and with stresses in their parent's lives. Child First Team visits with parent and child one time per week in home. Team has an expert in child behavior, relationships and development and an expert who knows available services in community.

**Child Guidance Center: Early Childhood Developmental Evaluations** – Provides a comprehensive snapshot of a young child's status at a given point in time. Evaluation presents diagnostic clarification, identification of the child's strengths and deficits and an overview of "what the child is about". Evaluations are administered to children 2-6 years old and identifies specific developmental or psychiatric disorders. Following the evaluation, a written report is generated that gives recommendations along with help implementing the recommendations.

**Greenwich Hospital: Parents Exchange** – Parenting classes and support groups are divided according to ages of child, from infancy through high school. Facilitated by a child developmental specialist to help build confidence in parenting skills. Groups meet weekly for 1.5 hours.

**Greenwich Hospital: Newborn Mothers Group** – Four-week course addressing the needs of newborn (under 4 months) and the physical and emotional adjustments of parenthood. Designed for mothers who have recently given birth.

## **Greenwich Planned or New Initiatives:**

**United Way** – After an exhaustive review of community needs, the United Way is launching a fundraising effort to narrow the achievement gap. It is a two-pronged research-based approach with a plan to provide funding support for:

### **Planned**

**Family Centers: Parents as Teachers Program** – home visitation program for at-risk families and children ages birth to 3 years. Improve outcomes for children from low-income families. Help at-risk residents improve their parenting skills and reduce some of the socio-economic barriers that limit their children’s educational performance and eventual career options. Supportive services are offered through in-home visits by trained professionals. Program elements include: education focused parenting education, case management, literacy/ESL support and referral services.

**YMCA:** Instructional Coach for Family Centers and YMCA pre-schools that serve a larger percentage of the low-income children ages 3-5.

### **New**

**Family Centers/YMCA/Heidenreich Foundation – Family First**, pilot program collaborative that provides structured after-school program for 22 high-at-risk families. 22 families (38 elementary school children) and parents participate in the program that provides after school academic tutoring/enrichment program and wrap around services for parents/families. This program is supported through funding by the Heidenreich Foundation.

### **Conclusion:**

Schools have historically been thought of as the great equalizer – the social institution best suited to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to learn, develop and thrive. It is unrealistic, however, to think that school-based strategies alone will eliminate today’s stark disparities in academic success.

In a University study, published in the Research and Economics Journal, entitled “Closing the Achievement Gap between High-Poverty Schools and Low-Poverty Schools, states, “When we create an extremely high quality school by increasing the resources in the high-poverty schools by an unrealistically high amount, the resulting increases in reading and math scores for the average student in the high-poverty schools increase only modestly.”

The results also lead to the unsettling conclusion that schools alone, cannot close the achievement gap that persists between economically disadvantaged and disproportionately minority students who inhabit the high-poverty schools and their higher income disproportionately white counterparts who inhabit the low-poverty schools.

This requires a comprehensive strategy:

1. Economic policies that reduce inequality – alleviate poverty and low parental education levels that plague the average high-poverty student.
2. Family support policies that ensure children grow up in stable, secure homes and neighborhoods. Parenting consistently emerges as the single most important factor in gaps in school readiness.
3. Early-childhood education policies that promote cognitive and social development. Evidence shows conclusively that early childhood education can improve school readiness and with larger effects for disadvantaged children.
4. Schools need to develop stronger partnerships with community mental health agencies and with in-home providers.

## **Recommendations**

The Greenwich Department of Human Services views its role as being a catalyst for identifying important, critical community social issues, such as the achievement gap, and promoting effective, strategies for achieving program improvements leading to successful outcomes.

After reviewing the research and literature and completing discussions with community stakeholders the Achievement Gap Task Force recommends that the focus of attention must be with infant/children ages 0-3 years old. This is a critical period in child development with learning preparation leading to pre-school. Parenting skills and engagement are major factors essential for the child's success in learning and education. Without proper preparation the seeds of future academic failure are sown but not fully identified until the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when it is almost impossible for the child to "catch up" academically.

One successful strategy is dyadic or two-generation work. By viewing the parent and child as a single unit to be treated, then engaging, educating, and empowering caregivers to be buffers between their kids and the stressors they face. Child-Parent Psychotherapy helps parents address their own often traumatic histories, so they can establish healthy attachments to their children and break the intergenerational cycle of trauma.

A number of successful and effective evidence-based programs, along with local community initiatives have been identified and the Task Force recommends expanding support for these programs. Providing additional resources so that more children and families are assisted earlier will result in achieving higher academic standing and narrowing the achievement gap in the long term. Home-based counseling that fosters family support and recovery are showing very promising results.

Social and emotional learning programs in the school system could be strengthened by establishing partnerships with mental health agencies. One example is a pilot Social and Emotional Learning Program now being offered by Kids In Crisis to Kindergarten class at Julian Curtiss Elementary school. Mental health consultation with teachers and parents help to create healthy environments that will assist in the promotion of mental wellness strategies into day-to-day work with children.

Another area that would greatly assist in narrowing the achievement gap is establishing effective academic ties between the schools and the after-school programs. A significant number of children attend and participate in after-school programs that offer homework assistance. By a closer collaboration the after-school programs could provide assistance by focusing on academic issues identified by the school.

The Task Force believes that the Greenwich School District would benefit by directing additional resources to the earliest grades, especially pre-school and kindergarten. Achievement gaps are self-perpetuating. The earlier the intervention to reduce them, the more effective we will be at eliminating them in the long run. Establishing a universal pre-school program in Greenwich would greatly assist in this effort.

An expansion of support for early childhood pre-school for toddlers (ages 1 to 3 years) where social and cognitive development is fostered. These programs offer an opportunity to identify developmental issues earlier and the chance to provide remedial assistance to the child and family.

The achievement gap can be significantly narrowed but it will take a concerted effort to develop a coordinated community-wide strategic approach. The state testing data clearly shows that the achievement gap is greatest in the Title 1 funded schools reflecting the research that lower income students have much greater academic challenges. Now is the time to focus on the more important issue of developing an effective collaborative approach with school and community resources in ways that benefit the long-term success of low income students.

**Appendix**  
**CMT and Next Generation Accountability Report Scores**

**CMT 2011-2013**  
**Grade 3**  
**Scores**

**Math**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	278.5	79.1	260.4	66.4	18.1	7.00%	259.3	63.2
2012	292	88.6	265	68.2	27	10.20%	262.9	66.8
2013	284.4	85.9	249.6	55.1	34.8	13.90%	256	61.6
AVG	285	84.5	258.3	63.2	26.6	10.30%	259.4	63.9

**Reading**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	257.7	76.3	241.9	56.7	15.8	6.50%	241.2	58.3
2012	271.4	83.8	248	59	23.4	9.40%	245.2	59.2
2013	266.4	79.7	243.9	57.8	22.5	9.20%	242.5	56.9
AVG	265.1	79.9	244.6	57.8	20.5	8.30%	242.9	58.1

**Writing**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	275	79.6	241.7	51.6	33.3	13.80%	252.5	61.1
2012	282.8	83.4	253.3	63.2	29.5	11.60%	254.2	62.7
2013	278.3	83	242.7	55.6	35.6	14.70%	250.1	60
AVG	278.7	82	245.9	56.8	32.8	13.30%	252.2	61.2

Scores in red fall below State scores

**CMT 2011-2013 (and 2015 Science)**

**Grade 5**

**Scores**

**Math**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	301.8	89.4	265.6	61.2	36.2	13.63%	273.6	72.7
2012	301.2	86.9	277.3	70.9	23.9	8.62%	273.7	71.8
2013	298.9	86.6	267	69.4	31.9	11.95%	269.7	69.4
AVG	300.6	87.6	269.9	67.1	30.6	11.30%	272.3	71.3

**Reading**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	270.4	84.6	237.8	51.2	32.6	13.71%	242.7	61.4
2012	267.4	83.5	257.6	76.3	9.8	3.80%	248.1	67.7
2013	270	87.8	247.2	63.2	22.8	9.22%	247.2	66.9
AVG	269.2	85.3	247.5	63.5	21.7	8.90%	246	65.3

**Writing**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	278.9	88	256.4	72.5	22.5	8.78%	257	66.8
2012	279.2	88.6	259.9	76.1	19.3	7.43%	255.8	68.1
2013	278.1	85.8	248.6	62.1	29.5	11.87%	254.7	65.6
AVG	278.7	87.4	254.9	70.2	23.7	9.30%	255.8	66.8

**Science**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	281.6	84.2	246.1	48.2	35.5	14.43%	258.1	60.2
2012	285	84.8	264.3	68.1	20.7	7.83%	262.2	64.1
2013	287.9	86.2	258.2	61	29.7	11.50%	260.4	62.5
2015	278.8	77.9	249.1	53.9	29.7	11.92%	252	55.5
AVG	283.3	83.2	254.4	57.8	28.9	11.40%	258.1	60.5

Scores in red fall below State scores



**CMT 2011-2013 (and 2014-2015 Science)**

**Grade 8**

**Scores**

**Math**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	293.5	88.6	265.1	69.6	28.4	10.71%	264	66.8
2012	289.4	87.7	265.5	67.9	23.9	9.00%	264.7	67.4
2013	289.9	87.7	259.4	59.4	30.5	11.76%	261.9	65.2
AVG	290.9	88	263.3	65.6	27.6	10.40%	263.5	66.4

**Reading**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	285	89.2	263.1	77	21.9	8.32%	261.4	74.7
2012	286.6	88.2	268.2	79.8	18.4	6.86%	265.7	76.8
2013	287	88.8	264.7	75.3	22.3	8.42%	264.1	76.3
AVG	286.2	88.7	265.3	77.3	20.8	7.80%	263.7	75.9

**Writing**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	267.6	81.8	253.6	67.1	14	5.52%	250.9	64.8
2012	276	85.9	259.6	72.1	16.4	6.32%	255.6	68.4
2013	272.7	80.5	249.2	62.1	23.5	9.43%	254.4	67.3
AVG	272.1	82.7	254.1	67.1	17.9	7.00%	253.6	66.8

**Science**

	Non-Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	Title 1 Schools	% Goal Range	# Size of Gap	% Size of Gap	State	State
							#	%
2011	276	80.8	251	61.7	25	9.96%	254.9	63.3
2012	284	83	256.6	62.4	27.4	10.68%	255.9	62.1
2013	279.4	81.6	250.1	53.8	29.3	11.72%	255.1	60.6
2014	275.6	79.6	245.8	48.3	29.8	12.12%	258.2	62.5
2015	281.3	86.2	255.7	64.7	25.6	10.01%	255.3	61.1
AVG	279.2	82.2	251.8	58.1	27.4	10.80%	255.8	61.9

Scores in red fall below State scores

**Next Generation Accountability Report  
Gap Indicators**

**Elementary Schools - Title 1 and Non-Title 1 School Rates**

	YEARS	Non-Title 1	*Non-Title 1	Size of Gap	Title 1	Title 1	Size of Gap
		Schools-Non-High Needs Rates	Schools-High Needs Rates		Schools-Non-High Needs Rates	Schools-High Needs Rates	
ELA Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	75	71.4	3.6	75	64.9	10.1
	2015-2016	75	71.1	3.9	75	64.1	10.9
Math Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	75	67.1	7.9	69.3	54.3	15
	2015-2016	75	65.9	9.1	73.2	57.7	15.5
Science Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	67.4	-	-	63.7	48.8	14.9
	2015-2016	70.6	-	-	67.8	52.9	14.9

\*7 Schools

All Schools	YEARS	Non-High Needs Rate	High Need Rate	Size of Gap
ELA Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	75	61.9	13.1
	2015-2016	75	61.9	13.1
Math Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	72.2	60.7	11.5
	2015-2016	74.5	56.8	17.7
Science Performance Index Gap	2014-2015	65.6	44.8	20.7
	2015-2016	70.2	54.9	15.3

**Next Generation Accountability Report  
Gap Indicators**

**Middle Schools - Title 1 and Non-Title 1 School Rates**

	YEARS	Non-Title 1	*Non-Title 1	Size of Gap	Title 1	Title 1	Size of Gap
		Schools-Non-High Needs Rates	Schools-High Needs Rates		Schools-Non-High Needs Rates	Schools-High Needs Rates	
<b>ELA Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	75	64.9	<b>10.1</b>	75	60.7	<b>14.3</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	75	63.05	<b>11.95</b>	75	62.8	<b>12.2</b>
<b>Math Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	74.9	57.25	<b>17.6</b>	69.6	51.8	<b>17.8</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	73.75	57.25	<b>16.5</b>	73.5	53.2	<b>20.3</b>
<b>Science Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	69.1	55.5	<b>13.6</b>	63	51.5	<b>11.5</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	68.75	54.55	<b>14.2</b>	67.4	51.2	<b>16.1</b>

All Schools	YEARS	Non-High Needs Rate	High Need Rate	Size of Gap
<b>ELA Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	75	62.8	<b>12.2</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	75	63	<b>12</b>
<b>Math Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	72.3	54.5	<b>17.8</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	73.7	55.9	<b>17.8</b>
<b>Science Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	66.1	53.5	<b>12.6</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	68.3	53.4	<b>14.9</b>

**Next Generation Accountability Report  
Gap Indicators**

**High School - Rates**

<b>All Schools</b>	<b>YEARS</b>	<b>Non-High Needs Rate</b>	<b>High Need Rate</b>	<b>Size of Gap</b>
<b>ELA Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	75	60.8	<b>14.2</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	74.2	51.5	<b>22.7</b>
<b>Math Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	75	51.2	<b>23.8</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	74.8	49.5	<b>25.3</b>
<b>Science Performance Index Gap</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	73.4	51.5	<b>21.9</b>
	<b>2015-2016</b>	75	56.2	<b>18.8</b>