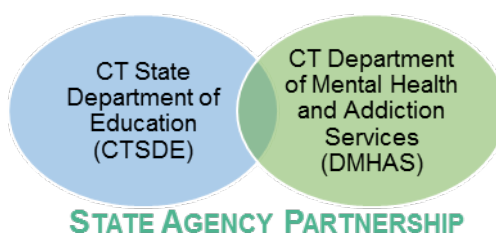




Connecticut Safe Schools/Healthy Students Diffusion Initiative

BACKGROUND

Connecticut's (CT's) Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) diffusion initiative (1) promotes the physical and emotional well-being of youth, (2) prevents youth violence and substance use, and (3) creates safe and respectful school climates. The project supports SS/HS implementation in three local school districts that serve over 36,000 students. Students in SS/HS districts face significant disparities across indicators such as poverty levels, academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, suspensions and expulsions, and arrests.



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Statewide Management Team (SMT):** The SMT assembles diverse stakeholders, including parents and representatives from education, mental health and addiction services, public health, juvenile justice, social services, child and protective services, family advocacy, and youth development. The SMT coordinates resources to sustain and scale innovation and to promote effective practices.
- **Community Management Teams (CMTs):** CMTs in each of the three SS/HS school districts create bridges with community partners and coordinate resources for the benefit of students and their families.
- **Statewide Data and Innovation Committee:** The committee supports data sharing across agencies. CTSDE hosts an SS/HS website to facilitate information sharing. Field testing is also under way to examine various prototypes and protocols for improving student- and school-level data collection on behavioral health, student supports, and service referrals.

More than 9,000* people have been trained,
including school staff, community partners, and parents.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS

Connecticut currently implements the following practices and programs in Bridgeport Public Schools, Middletown Public Schools, and Consolidated School District of New Britain:

- ✓ Attendance Works
- ✓ Boys Town Education Model
- ✓ Check in Check out
- ✓ Coping and Support Training (CAST)
- ✓ Kognito At-Risk for Educators Training
- ✓ Mental Health First Aid
- ✓ Peaceful School Bus Program
- ✓ Positive Action
- ✓ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- ✓ Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
- ✓ RULER (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence)
- ✓ School-Based Diversion Initiative
- ✓ Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)
- ✓ Second Step Elementary Program
- ✓ Well-Managed Schools Model

*Individuals who attended multiple trainings are counted for each training.

Bridgeport Public Schools

- **Boys Town Specialized Classroom Model:** More than 75 educators and support staff have been trained throughout the district. Seventy-five percent of students in therapeutic programs benefit from trained teachers. Since the implementation of Boys Town, chronic absenteeism rates have decreased, with a 25% decrease overall in the past 3 years.
- **Student Support Page:** This centralized reporting system for recording school-based mental health services, visits, and referrals to community providers captured more than 700 entries during its pilot year. Entries were made by more than 32 staff members, who documented more than 250 students receiving social-emotional supports.

12% decrease in the percentage of students sanctioned with in- or out-of-school suspensions and expulsions
—in New Britain Schools

63% decrease in overall number of suspensions and expulsions
—in New Britain Schools

More than 10% decrease in overall number of suspensions and expulsions
—in Bridgeport and Middletown Schools

Middletown Public Schools

- **Kognito:** A total of 625 teachers, administrators, school staff, bus drivers, and community partners completed Kognito's At-Risk for Educators PK–12 online training to promote early identification and referral of mental health concerns for students.
- **Child First:** Middletown SS/HS partners with the Middlesex Hospital Center for Behavioral Health Family Advocacy Program to expand Child First. This evidence-based model provides intensive, home-based services to vulnerable young children and their parents to develop nurturing, consistent, and responsive parent–child relationships.

"All the programs funded by the SS/HS grant have tremendously improved the overall school climate."

—Colleen Weiner, Principal,
Middletown High School

Consolidated School District of New Britain

- **Afterschool and Summer Programs:** Community partnerships (e.g., The Coalition for New Britain's Youth) help ensure consistent, high-quality programming. New Britain was named an All American City by the National Civic League (one of 10 communities in the United States), and the school district's summer programs received the Program Excellence Award from the National Summer Learning Association.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Practices:** All kindergarten teachers have been trained in the development of executive functioning skills (i.e., inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility) through purposeful play. Strengthening these areas helps young children (PK–3) develop task orientation, attention to detail, and social problem-solving skills.

LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD

Connecticut is focused on strategies to leverage progress in the Local Education Authorities to expand to other districts. This includes the spread of specific evidence-based practices that promote attendance, support education for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges in least restrictive settings, and encourage documentation of outcomes and data sharing among multiple partners invested in student behavioral health.

The percent of chronically absent students has decreased by 30.7% in the Bridgeport School District, by 40.3 in Bridgeport Focus Schools, by 26.8% in the New Britain School District, and by 18.8% in the Middletown School District.

We are committed to sustaining and/or expanding the following programs and services in Connecticut:

- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance Service Center
- ✓ Statewide Student Outcomes Workgroup
- ✓ Community Volunteerism
- ✓ Diffusion of Evidence-Based Practices
- ✓ Student Support Pages
- ✓ Data Sharing Protocols