

Strategy 1 of 6: System Building

Build an early childhood system at both the state and local levels with communities as full partners from creating the vision to implementation.

How Strategy Contributes to Change

Connecticut needs an early childhood system to address educational disparities and ensure quality services that support early childhood development for every child. According to Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, the infrastructure necessary to support the varied programs for young children includes: common licensing standards, a quality rating system, early learning standards, measurement and reporting, early childhood teaching credentials, comparable wages, universal pre-k for all 3- and 4-year-olds, and facilities expansion and improvement. Our own experience over the last eight years expands this definition of infrastructure to include other capacities, such as: local decision-making structures, parent engagement, results-based community plans, integration of state and local advocacy, and measurement of progress. Defining what constitutes a system and its attributes will be the earliest work of those convened under the third action below.

Actions

- **Local Planning** - The Memorial Fund will continue to support local planning and action in up to 53 communities. Grants and intensive technical assistance will support at least 10 communities to implement local early childhood plans already developed, and up to 20 communities to develop new plans. Smaller grants will fund projects in other communities committed to pursuing Discovery's population result.
- ▲ **Support Advocacy** - The Memorial Fund will also continue to support communities and statewide grantees to pursue a common policy and practice agenda and to find ways to measure progress.
- **Convene System Thinkers** - Starting in 2010, the Memorial Fund will convene communities, statewide organizations, state agencies, policymakers and other stakeholders to create a vision for a more effective early childhood system in Connecticut. We will underwrite facilitation support, expertise, advocacy, research and communications.
- ◆ **System Research** - The Memorial Fund will support a research agenda about early childhood systems and the roles that community decision-making, parent leadership and policy change play in systemic change.

**Thank you to Gale Berkowitz from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for sharing ideas and proven tools for communicating progress to their board! We drew heavily from their format.*

Annual Progress Toward Impact

Where are we today?

At the local level, 39 of the 53 Discovery communities are engaged in planning or have developed a plan (15 communities are in implementation, 24 new communities are in development). Partnerships between the State Department of Education, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut have helped to support this work. At the state level, the core statewide grantees (CT Voices for Children, CT Early Childhood Alliance, CT Association for Human Services, and CT Parent Power) pooled resources to support the “I Care About Kids and I Vote” campaign, developed in collaboration with community members, to educate legislative and gubernatorial candidates about the importance of early childhood education. The campaign continues to serve as a tool for recruiting potential advocates into the statewide partners’ work.

The statewide grantees also hired a consultant to analyze early childhood systems in six states. This research by Susan Hibbard, the deputy director of the national BUILD initiative, will be used to inform a Systems Strategy Team being convened by the Memorial Fund. A smaller Process Team met in November and December to design a process for engaging stakeholders and convening the Strategy Team to take up the work in 2011.

What has gone well? (top 2 items)

- Multiple partnerships and collaborative groups are stronger and have built the capacity to sustain the early childhood work despite tough economic times.
 - Public/private funders have added \$1,322,500 in 2010 to the Memorial Fund’s funding for community planning, parent leadership training, and grade level reading.
 - Over 100 community members and advocates have been trained in Facilitative Leadership by the Interaction Institute for Social Change.
 - Results Based Accountability training has brought new people into community planning and increased collaboration across sectors and populations. Over 160 community members, representing 38 communities, have been trained to date.
- There is greater alignment between Discovery communities and statewide advocates, which has increased the effectiveness and sophistication of early childhood advocacy in the state.
 - Despite repeated attempts by the Governor to cut funding to support early childhood programs, Connecticut was able in 2009-10 to maintain school readiness dollars and increase the child care support for working parents.

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

What have been the challenges? (top 2 items)

- Our partnership with the state may leave us vulnerable to the fickle state budget process.
 - Last year the budget was late to pass, so the partnerships got off to a late start. Parent leadership training programs could not begin until January, 2011. State grants for community planning were added after communities had begun working.
 - In fiscal year 2011 we face a state budget deficit of at least \$3.5 billion.
- We struggle with how to support local collaborative groups to become more inclusive and reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of their communities.

Effort Data

Figure 1. Total Dollars Leveraged in 2010 to Support Discovery Work
(amounts listed in thousands \$)

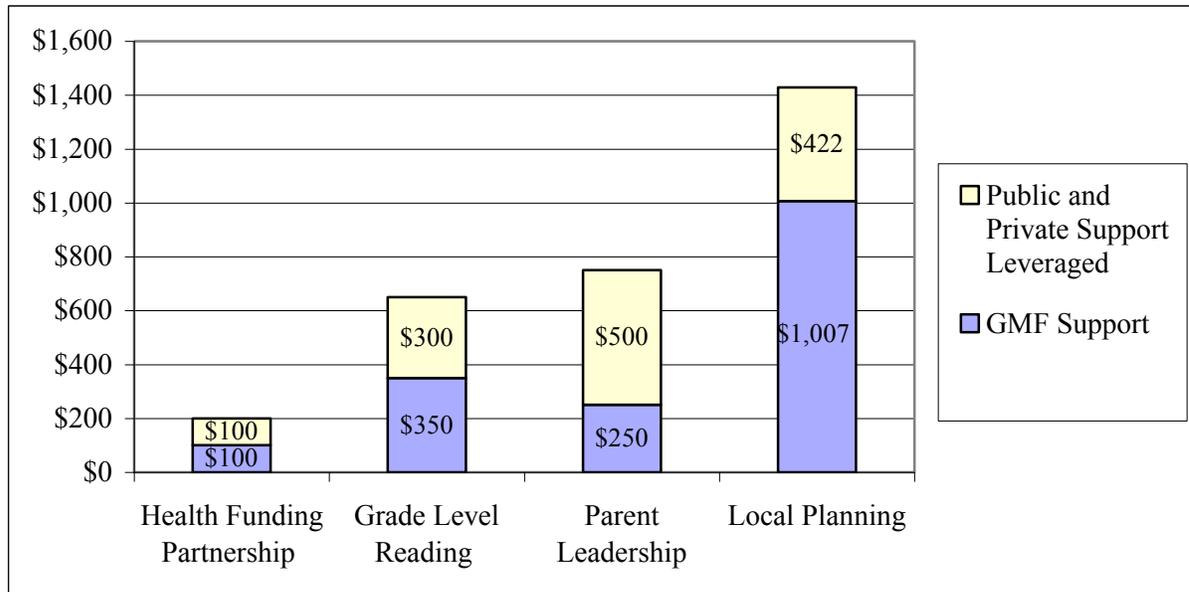


Table 1. Participation in Capacity Building (as of November 2010)

	All (n=53)	Option 1 (n=15)	Option 2A (n=4)	Option 2B (n=20)	Option 3 (n=12)
Participation of Discovery Coordinators in Facilitative Leadership	53%	87%	25%	50%	25%
Participation of Discovery Communities in Results Based Accountability Institute	82%	93%	75%	90%	58%

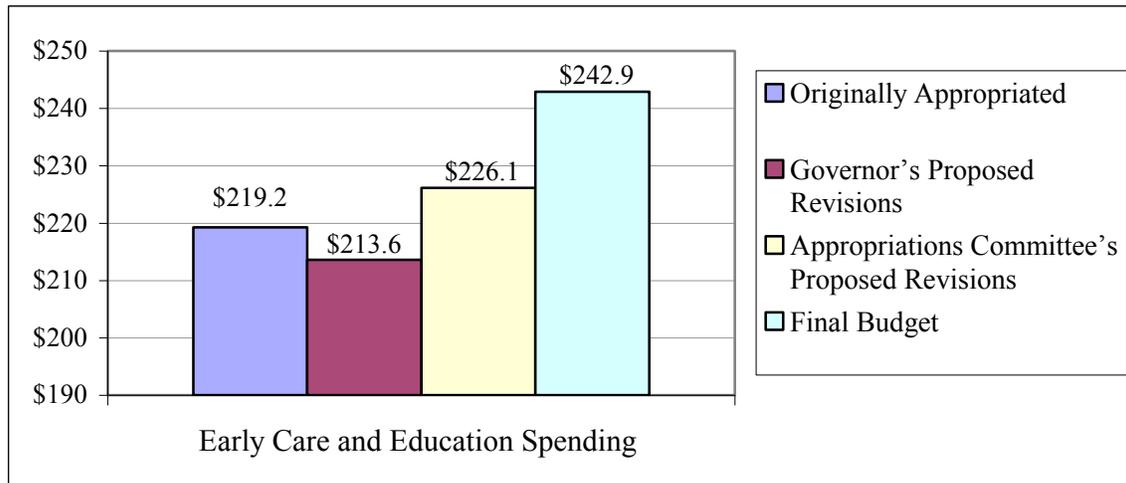
**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

Table 2. Advocacy Events Convened by Statewide Partners in 2010

Early Care Legislative Collaborative	A group of 12 legislators and advocates (typically 4 legislators and 8 advocates) met weekly during the session to work on legislative issues, and to develop and coordinate legislative initiatives.
Legislative Tours	Twenty-five legislators visited local early care and education programs, strengthening relationships between providers and policymakers. The tours were coordinated by the Early Childhood Alliance.
Children's Champions Event	A total of 57 legislators were recognized for leadership and commitment to young children. Discovery community members were asked for nominations. Twenty-five legislators and 100 advocates attended the event.
Advocacy Day	Five key legislators spoke at this highly visible event. Their unified message was "protect programs for young children." Approximately 150 early childhood advocates, most from Discovery communities, attended the event.

Impact Data

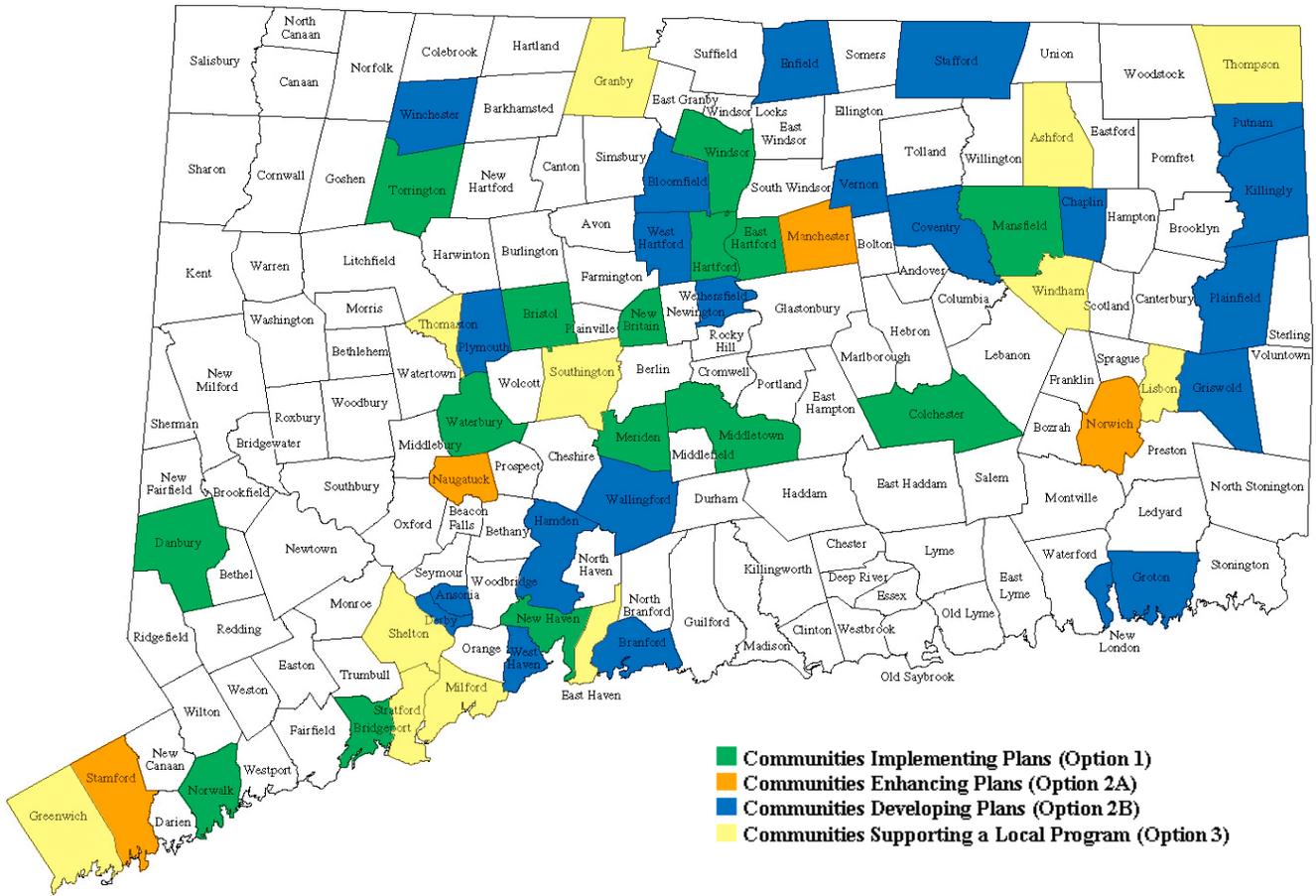
Figure 2. Connecticut FY 2011 Early Care and Education Budget Comparisons¹
(all amounts are listed in millions \$)



¹ Anniemarie Hillman, "Impact of May Budget Adjustments on the FY 11 Budget for Early Care and Education." Available at: <http://www.ctkidslink.org/publications/ece10budgetimpactfy11ece.pdf>

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

Figure 3. Discovery Communities by Option



Discovery Public School K-12 Student Demographics (2009)

- 55% of students in Connecticut live in Discovery Communities.
- 87% of the English language learners in the state live in Discovery communities.
- 83% of the students who receive free/reduced lunch live in Discovery communities.

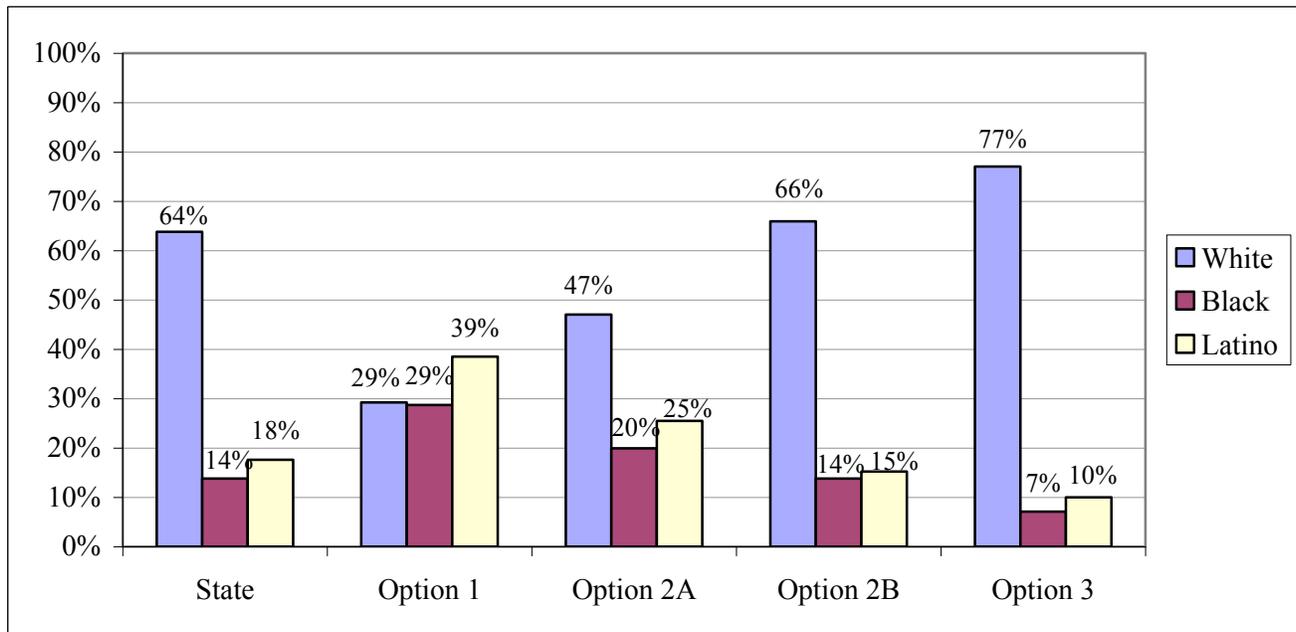
Table 3. Percentage of K-12 Students Enrolled in Programs by Discovery Option (2009)²

Communities	Free/ Reduced Lunch	English Language Learners
Option 1	69%	12%
Option 2A	45%	10%
Option 2B	34%	5%
Option 3	20%	3%

² Data are from the CT State Dept. of Education “Connecticut Education Data and Research” database. Available at: http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/CedarHome.aspx

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

Figure 4. Race and Ethnicity of K-12 Students in CT by Discovery Option (2009)³



Strategy Milestones

2001-2010

*Memorial Fund milestones in blue
Discovery grantee milestones in red
External milestones in black*

- Local Planning
- ▲ Support Advocacy
- Convene System Thinkers
- ◆ System Research

- 2001 ● Strategic decision to expand from 7 communities in the Children First Initiative to a broader statewide initiative called Discovery.
- 2001 ● Forty-nine communities receive a \$25,000 noncompetitive grant to develop a 4-year plan.
- 2002 ▲ CT Voices receives a grant for the development of the Early Childhood Alliance (EC Alliance).

³ Data are from the CT State Dept. of Education “Connecticut Education Data and Research” database. Available at: http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/CedarHome.aspx

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

- 2003 ● Efforts to focus on capacity building include: the Discovery Community Planning and Assessment Tool; parent leadership training; and technical assistance in parent engagement, improving the quality of early care, and kindergarten transition.
- 2004 ● Communities begin to implement a locally developed agenda for young children.
- 2004 ● Expanded capacity building efforts include: the Stone Soup conference; the Advocacy Toolkit; the Communications Toolkit; the Action Plan; the Discovery website and listserv; and TA in community organizing and effective kindergarten transition.
- 2006 ▲ EC Alliance hires full time staff and Parent Power receives funding to engage, empower, and mobilize parents in a statewide network to act on children's issues and to help generate solutions.
- 2006 Governor Rell creates the Early Childhood Cabinet to enhance early childhood initiatives and programs. Governor Rell also appoints the Early Childhood Research & Policy Council, which develops an investment plan for the Cabinet's priorities.
- 2006 ● Trustees vote to extend Discovery another two years – through 2008-09, making Discovery a \$32 million, 8-year commitment.
- 2008 ● The number of communities has grown to 54; five regional grants, which were created based on community feedback, are awarded.
- 2008 ● An increased commitment to capacity building results in an expanded menu of trainings, including: Facilitative Leadership training; Effective Community Planning; Results Based Accountability Institute; and the K-Transition Institute.
- 2008 ▲ The four major statewide grantees receive special project grants encouraging them to collaborate on joint work; they initiate a collaborative management team.
- 2008 ● State Department of Education responds to a GMF challenge grant to support 27 Community Planning Partnership grants (25 of the communities participate in Discovery).
- 2008 ● Memorial Fund partners with the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut to support health planning grants for 8 Discovery communities.

**William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
2010-14 Strategic Plan Update**

- 2009 ● Trustees vote to extend Discovery initiative to 2014, and approve the result statement: *Connecticut children of all races and income levels are ready for school by age five and successful learners by age nine.*

- 2009 Funding for the Early Childhood Cabinet is drastically cut, creating a void for early childhood planning at the state level.

- 2010 ◆ Statewide grantees pool carry-in resources to hire a consultant to analyze early childhood systems in other states and to support the “I Care About Kids and I Vote Campaign.” Both initiatives support the systems building work and serve as further evidence of the statewides enhanced collaboration.

- 2010 ■ The Memorial Fund hosts representatives from 27 Discovery communities, to introduce the Interaction Institute for Social Change and their approach to systems building.

- 2010 ▲ Early Childhood Alliance hosts candidate forums with CT Governor candidates Tom Foley and Dan Malloy. Both candidates voice a commitment to support early childhood education.

- 2010 ● 15 Discovery communities are in implementation, 24 new communities are in development.

- 2010 ■ Alliance co-sponsors an event with the Memorial Fund with guest speaker Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, to celebrate the Discovery community blueprints.

- 2010 Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement recommends creating a commissioner of early childhood education and care, and expanding funds for PreK to close the achievement gap.

- 2010 ■ Several Connecticut community foundations form a collaborative with early childhood education as the funding priority.

- 2010 ◆ The Memorial Fund identifies scholars to invite into the Discovery work. Twenty candidates apply from private and public universities, representing all levels of career development and administration.

- 2010 ■ Dannel Malloy is elected governor. With his leadership as mayor, Stamford became the first city in Connecticut to offer universal access to preschool. In his words, “Providing an opportunity for every child to have access to early childhood education and to attend pre-Kindergarten programs is critical to Connecticut's future.”

Related Learning Questions

(for incorporating into our learning agenda)

Trustee:

- Is there consensus on the definition of early care and education quality? (Board Meeting 4/10)
- Who besides the schools is taking responsibility? (Board Meeting 4/10)
- How are roles being articulated and what is the accountability for implementation? (Board Meeting 4/10)
- In terms of knowledge and resources, what are the means of the people in the state to work on systemic issues? (Board Meeting 4/10)

Staff:

- What does it truly mean to have communities as full partners in the system and how do we measure that? What does being full partners in system building mean to communities and have they experienced that in the system building process? (Staff Meeting 5/10)
- How will we know that the systems will work for families? How do we measure progress along the way to determine who is better off? (Staff Meeting 5/10)
- Definition of system – what do stakeholders believe about what a system means? What are the different cognitive maps? (Staff Meeting 5/10)
- How is network learning incorporated into systems? And what is the interaction between network and system? (Reflection 5/10)
- How is racism addressed in systems? (Reflection 5/10)
- What is the role of data in decisions within the system? (Reflection 5/10)