



HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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To: Mayor's Task Force on Developing Hartford's Future Workforce

From: Robert Henry, Chief of Staff

Date: September 17, 2002

Re: Overview of the Hartford Public Schools

Introduction:

The Mayor's Task Force on Developing Hartford's Future Workforce has been charged with developing a series of recommendations and actions to address the projected labor shortage in Hartford and the Capital region over the next ten years. A particular concern of the Task Force is the development of a capable workforce among a target group of young adults, ages 18-24. This sub-group is confronted by a number of workforce readiness issues that includes language and computer literacy, substance abuse, appropriate work behavior, and social and employability skills.

The Hartford Public Schools provides educational services for youth ages 14-17, per the new state statute. This abbreviated profile of the Hartford Public Schools will assist the Task Force in understanding how the HPS prepares its students to transition from high school to post-secondary education opportunities, direct entry into the workforce and other career paths.

Graduation Requirements:

Recently the Connecticut Legislature adopted more stringent graduation requirements for all matriculating seniors. The new standards now require a minimum of 21 credits, and includes mandated testing and assessments in reading, writing, science and mathematics. The respective graduating classes of 2007, 2008 and 2009 are mandated to be in compliance with these standards. In addition, credits must also be attained in the areas of social studies, cultural/aesthetics, physical education, health education and other electives. Each high student over the course of four years must also perform 60 hours of community service work. The Hartford Public Schools are on track to achieve full compliance with the new standards.

To address the challenges of low literacy rates, the HPS instituted a uniform district-wide reading curriculum Success For All (SFA) three years ago. This has resulted in an increase of the number of students reading on grade level from 20% in 1999 to 51% in 2002. Moreover, the district has installed a reading intervention program at the high school level called Direct Instruction to increase literacy proficiency.

Over the past three years district test scores have been rising and the HPS are now ranked second in the state on the standardized CMT for cities in the same Economic Reference Group (ERG). Correspondingly, the dropout rate for Hartford Public Schools, particularly at the High School level has been steadily declining, and the percentage of students graduating from High School has been increasing. In the 2001-2002 school year a total of 729 seniors graduated from the HPS, compared to 654 in 2000-2001.

Two significant intervention programs were deployed to increase graduation rates. The "Save our Seniors" program (SOS) focuses on academic enrichment and Summer School credit courses. To combat the disproportionately high dropout rates among ninth graders a "Freshman Institute" was created during summer school to help 9th graders negotiate the difficult transition to the high school environment.

In developing instruments to measure the workforce readiness of our graduating students, the HPS has been tracking graduates in their post-secondary endeavors through the Superintendent's Wall of Fame. For example, in the 2000-2001 school year, of the 654 students Hartford Public Schools graduated (80.4% graduation rate) 69% were college bound. A total of 22 students enlisted in the armed forces and 33 students entered vocational schools. Approximately 113 students entered the workforce and 130 Seniors were referred to summer school.

Career Academies

To prepare Hartford students for the modern day workforce, the HPS School to Careers Program has created Career Academies at all its High Schools. In addition to the core academic courses these academies feature specialized course work in their respective academic themes and are supported in partnerships with local corporations and businesses. Hartford Public High School hosts the Technology Academy. Weaver High School hosts the Allied Health and Nursing Academy and a Finance Academy. Bulkeley High School hosts a Health and Finance Academy. The Finance Academy's are four-year programs.

The Sport Sciences Academy (converted to an Interdistrict Magnet School in September 2002) is a career-focused program offering an interdisciplinary educational program that prepares youth for successful admission into college or immediate transition to the workforce. The Academy's areas of concentration include: Sports Communications, Sport Fundraising, Sports Management, Sports Marketing, Manufacturing and Merchandising, Sports Nutrition, Sports Pedagogy and Sports Law. The Academy served 297 students in the 2001-2002 school year.

Each high school, including the Sport Sciences Academy, maintains a career center staffed by career specialists. The career centers provide job counseling, perform assessments to determine student interest in the workforce, conduct employability workshops, instruct students on filling out job and college applications, resume writing, conducting interviews and coordinates job shadowing opportunities and internships. These centers are supported by Hartford-based corporations.

Vocational Education

The School to Career Program has three vocational departments that provide job training and workforce opportunities tied to course curricula. The three vocational clusters are Business Education, Technology Education and Family and Consumer Science.

Hartford Public Schools On The Rise!

Summer Youth Employment

Summer youth employment opportunities are provided by the HPS in conjunction with the Capital Region Workforce Development Board.

The Adult Education Department

The HPS Adult Education Department provides critical education services and programs focused on completing high school and skills acquisition. In the 2001-2002 school year Adult Education programs served 6,500 students. Many Adult Education students fall in the 18-24 year old age bracket. In the 2001-2002 school year the Adult Education Department fielded its largest graduating class ever and provided the following services for its students:

- Citizenship/Americanization 19 students
- English as a Second Language 1,164 students
- Elementary Basic Skills 155
- GED Preparation 917
- High School Credit Diploma 1,059
- High School External Diploma 3,331

The Adult Education Department offers vocational opportunities in computers, technology and auto mechanics. The HPS is also in the process of acquiring a mothballed automotive shop to convert into a large automotive center. To increase its accessibility to Hartford residents, the Adult Education Department opened a new Adult Education Center on Main Street in North Hartford.

To assist the City of Hartford efforts to increase the number of city residents applying for the Police and Fire Departments, the Adult Education Center provides assistance for citizens taking the Police and Fire Department written examinations. All Adult Education programs are audited and reviewed by the State Department of Education.

Alternative Education

The Alternative Education Department also provides educational services for non-traditional and at-risk students. In September 2001, the HPS opened the HALO center for students that experienced behavioral and disciplinary problems in the classroom. The HALO center was created as an alternative to most of these students dropping out of school. One of the goals of the program is to return students to their mainstream high school classrooms at the earliest and most appropriate time. In its first year the HALO center serviced 205 students.

The Hartford Public Schools Mentoring Project

The Hartford Public Schools Mentoring Project was created in 2001, as a partnership between the HPS, the American Leadership Forum and the Governor's Prevention Partnership. The mentoring initiative provides young people with sustained adult relationships through which they can experience support, care, guidance and advocacy. In 2001, the Mentoring Partnership created a special program called Architecture, Construction and Engineering. Planning is going forward for a similar program in the area of Aviation and related careers, such as Flight Attendant training. Currently, the Mentoring Partnership has 450 mentors working with 2000 students.

The Detention Center Program

The Detention Center Program operates at five centers to provide incarcerated students with educational opportunities. Instruction and curriculum is the same provided for mainstream students, with certified teachers, social workers and paraprofessionals. Students receive grades and credits that are transferred to their appropriate schools. Students are required to take CMT and CAPT tests.

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