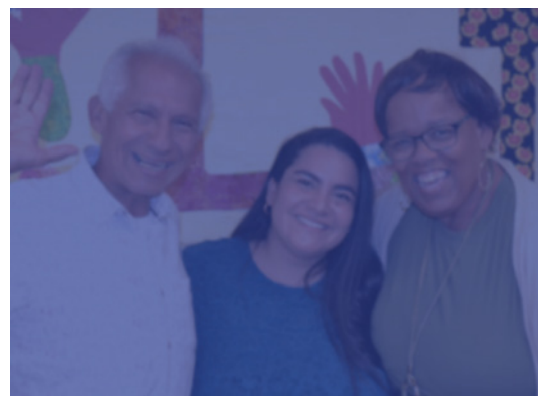


RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IMPACT REPORT

SUPPORTING YOUTH AND FAMILIES THROUGH RESTORATIVE APPROACHES



BUILDING FOR TOMORROW: CATALYST CT

Established in 1985, **Catalyst CT** is the only nonprofit provider in Connecticut that combines direct service, community capacity-building, public policy, and advocacy under one roof. Formerly known as **RYASAP**, our new name carries with it an even deeper commitment to serving as a catalyst for positive change in Connecticut. We are poised for an exciting new chapter of innovation and impact around the common values of improving lives, building healthier communities, and fostering a better future.

As a catalyst, we precipitate social change. The lasting impact we make on people's lives radiates out to those in need, those at risk, and the community as a whole. As a trusted partner, we work with individuals to tackle the toughest issues and solve the problems together. From gun violence to mental and behavioral health, from addiction to restorative practices, our expertise builds on the strengths of the communities we serve. Integrated programs build hope, resilience, and opportunity to create an exponential effect of positive change.



OUR VISION

Transforming communities together.

OUR MISSION

As a trusted partner, we foster social change and create a lasting impact on community well-being.

OUR VALUES



COMMUNITY VOICES

We elevate the voices of those with lived experience.



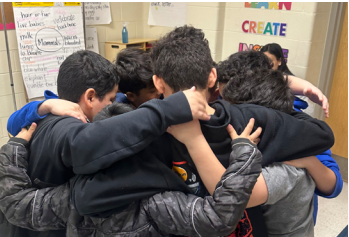
COLLABORATION

We learn and grow together.



INCLUSION

We embrace Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate principles, striving for equity, justice, & belonging for all.



INNOVATION

We create bold change and meaningful impact in all that we do.



INTEGRITY

We lead with honesty and openness.

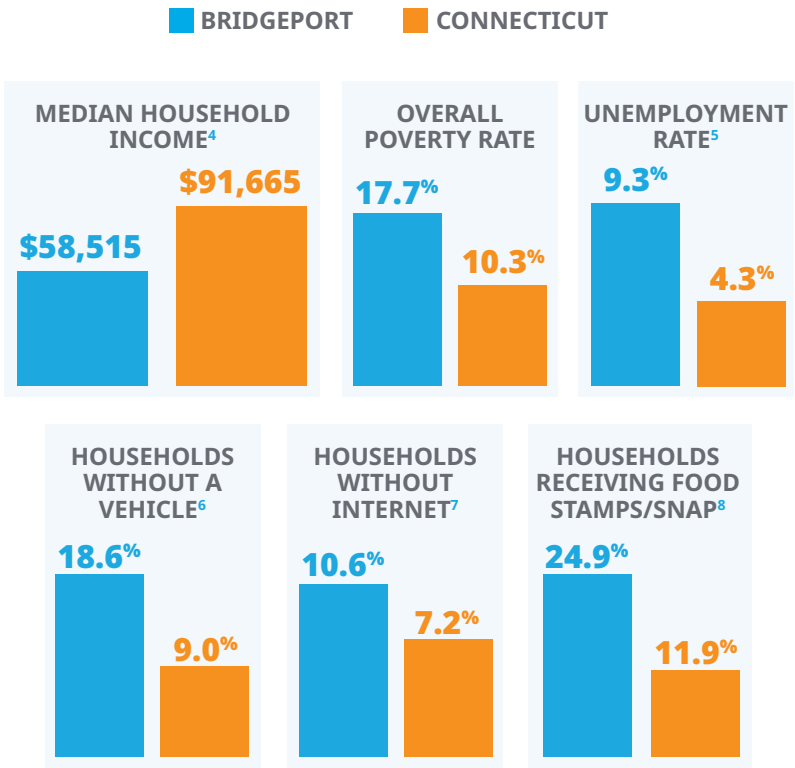
THE COST OF LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES

Bridgeport, the largest city in the state, stands out from the surrounding area and the rest of Connecticut. Neighboring cities such as Stamford and Norwalk have experienced greater economic growth. Too many Bridgeport residents experience financial insecurity, violence, crime, health disparities, limited access to transportation, language barriers, and more, which hinder both youth and family success.

THE COST OF DISCONNECTION

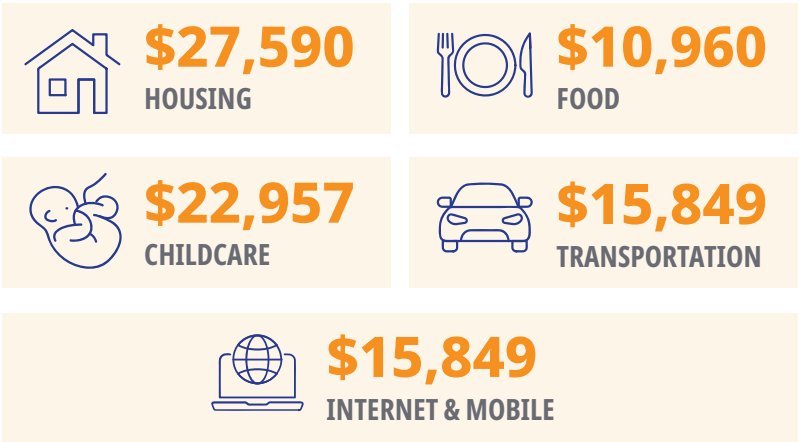
Bridgeport and Connecticut overall are facing a crisis. According to [Dalio Education's 2023 report](#), one in five young people aged 14 to 26 in Connecticut are considered either at-risk of being or are completely disconnected, meaning they may be close to or have already dropped out of school and are either not employed or unemployable. Shockingly, one in three high school students risked not graduating in 2022.¹ These challenges, rooted in poverty, mental health issues, and systemic racism, demand our immediate attention. When looking at Bridgeport, the numbers are even more alarming. 42.79% of the city's high school students are at risk of not graduating, more than twice CT's average. Within the first year of leaving high school, 42.27% of Bridgeport's youth have become disconnected compared to 24.7% of CT youth.² A 2023 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report found that individuals over 25 without a high school degree (or equivalent) earned a median weekly income of \$721, less than half of an individual with a bachelor's degree of \$1,499.³ Catalyst CT supports and empowers these students so they may reach their full potential.

HOW DOES BRIDGEPORT COMPARE TO CONNECTICUT?



TYPICAL FAMILY HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES: 1 Adult, 1 School-Aged Child, 1 Child Under 5

The cost of living challenges Bridgeport residents, with **\$78,774** for basic living expenses⁹ far outpacing the median household income of **\$58,515**, leaving families short by **\$20,259**. This does not include medical costs, emergency funds, taxes, or other daily living expenses.



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN ACTION

UNITING OUR PROGRAMS FOR EXPONENTIAL IMPACT

590

INDIVIDUALS EMPOWERED

Through our Restorative Justice programs, from Pre-K to adulthood.

Restorative Justice is a process of approaching conflict by focusing on repairing harm that was done rather than using punishment. It brings affected parties together to talk about what occurred and how to move forward. Our Restorative Justice work is done in a variety of settings, including the area public schools, juvenile review boards, youth diversion teams, and the juvenile court system.

To tackle the toughest issues, a multifaceted approach is required. This past year, we united our **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Community Schools, Mediation Program, Youth Diversion Team (YDT), Park City Career Pathways (PCCP), and Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI)** programs to deliver services and empower young people and their families to invest and take ownership of their lives—even in the most difficult of situations.

Having these five programs under the umbrella of **Restorative Justice** strengthens coordination between program approaches, supports, and services. Through this innovative approach, staff can more effectively collaborate, providing clients with the most relevant and impactful services to tackle the challenges they face.

DAWN'S STORY*

Dawn's journey is one of personal growth and determination. After a fight at school turned into a brawl, she faced a turning point when a School Resource Officer referred her to the Youth Diversion Team. She and her family met with her case manager, MariaStar, and together they identified Dawn's strengths and goals, building a road map for the next couple of months. Although hesitant at first, Dawn began to build trust with MariaStar and openly expressed her desire to make a change. One of the areas Dawn made a priority was improving her grades and YDT staff were able to set her up with tutoring.

As she got more involved, Dawn discovered new opportunities that sparked her interest. She actively participated in new activities, including the NextGEN Workshop series. Immersing herself in this new world of possibilities at her fingertips, she found purpose and inspiration. Dawn's grades improved and so did her confidence. She began to frame her future more clearly, even securing her first job. Now, with her sights set on higher education, Dawn is working with Park City Career Pathways to explore her college options that will help her grow and succeed.

**Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.*

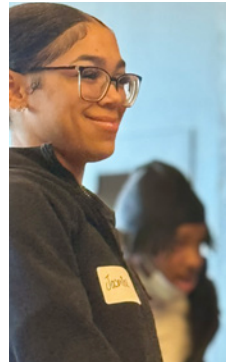




FUTURE-READY: Our NextGEN STEM Series Shares Local Opportunities With Students



5 WEEKS
5 LOCAL BUSINESSES
31 STUDENTS



THE SOUND OF INNOVATION: Introducing Students to STEM Careers in the Arts



**LIVE MUSIC
PRODUCTION
APPRENTICESHIP
STARTING IN 2025!**

Throughout the spring of 2024, Restorative Justice programs **Park City Career Pathways, Youth Diversion Team,** and **SEL Community Schools** held the NextGen STEM Workshop Series. We engaged 31 students aged 15 to 18 from across Bridgeport Public Schools and introduced them to a variety of employment opportunities and non-traditional career paths in the diverse STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields.

Each weekly session featured a local entrepreneur or small business owner who introduced themselves and their business, often including a hands-on demonstration. Featured fields included chiropractic medicine, culinary arts, green energy, manufacturing, and automotive technology. After the presentation, participants had an opportunity to ask in-depth questions around personal struggles, how to run a successful business, and so much more.

The series lasted five weeks, with 11 students attending all five sessions. The majority of students participated in three or four of the sessions, heightening their awareness and interest in STEM. "I really enjoyed the insights shared by those who came in and told their stories," said one student. "Everyone who came had such uplifting and amazing energy. It motivated me to continue showing up to see who I would meet each week."

Our **Park City Career Pathways** and **Youth Diversion Team** case managers partnered with **Park City Presents** to introduce live music and event production to ten Bridgeport students aged 15 to 17 in February. Through this collaboration, participants gained firsthand insights into the inner workings of the live music industry during an interactive program held at **Park City Music Hall**. Collaborations like this give our youth a chance to develop new skills, gain confidence, and spark their curiosity.

Participants had a unique opportunity to learn about the various aspects that go into producing a successful live music event in a hands-on and interactive environment featuring light and sound technicians. Experienced professionals shared their knowledge and answered questions in an engaging and accessible manner. The program concluded with a Q&A session, providing an opportunity for everyone to reflect on what they learned.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Catalyst CT to get young people excited about the industry," said Brandon Clark, Executive Director of Park City Presents. "The arts and music can transform lives. Everyone should have access to opportunities to explore their passions and discover potential career paths that can be rewarding from both a personal and a financial standpoint."

SEL Community Schools Program

The Social Emotional Learning Community Schools (SEL CS) program works with students and school staff within the Bridgeport Public Schools to support students' social, emotional, and mental health needs by providing extra interventions and supports. We engage students struggling at school, at home, or in the community.

Our SEL Community Schools team builds the Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Practices at the school level, by reducing chronic absenteeism, lowering Out of School Suspension (OSS), and helping to improve the overall school climate/culture. Students, staff, and parents work together to provide a safe space, collaborate with school staff on reinforcing positive behavior, provide coping skills, and improve culture, focusing on Restorative Practices, Mediation, and conflict resolution. Together, we build long-lasting relationships, helping students achieve success in their futures.

When class disruptions and other incidents occurred, we tailored interventions depending on the school and who was involved. We engaged in preventative measures whenever possible. Although we were in fewer schools during the 2023-2024 school year, we **spent 365 hours implementing Restorative Practices**, an increase of 22% over the previous year. School staff and administrators are more willing to take a restorative approach to discipline rather than the more traditional punitive one. Incidents were resolved with a **91% success rate**. Our staff held check-ins with students, discussing past physical altercations and how to avoid potential future ones. Lunch bunches and other groups offered students the opportunity to rebuild and maintain positive relationships with their peers.



486
TOTAL STUDENTS
SERVED



478
TOTAL INCIDENTS
RESPONDED TO



827
TOTAL HOURS
SPENT WITH STUDENTS



91%
INCIDENTS
SUCCESSFULLY
RESOLVED



SUPPORTING OUR MOST AT-RISK STUDENTS

While we engaged with the entire school community during the year, we prioritized high-risk students. These **focus students** were in the most need of SEL services and supportive resources. They were referred to our program by school staff and administrators to our program because they may struggle with attendance and have a history of school discipline. Across five schools, we had 60 focus students who needed additional interventions, care coordination, or therapy. By concentrating on these particular students, we prevented further class disruptions that not only affected their learning, but their peers' learning as well.



To whom it may concern Ms. Paz and Ms. Kat have helped in many different ways. They helped me throw all my panic attacks and anxiety attacks. They helped me with problems I had with with friends and teachers. Overall what I'm trying to say is please don't make them leave.

ADDRESSING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Chronic Absenteeism (CA), or missing more than 10% of school days, can cause social and emotional consequences for students. When not in school, students are not learning or available to receive needed support and resources. This school year saw a small 1% rise in CA across the district as a whole. Comparatively, **three of our five SEL CS maintained or lowered their CA rate**, with Bridgeport Military Academy (BMA) emerging as a standout with a 5% decrease. SEL CS staff at BMA credit this achievement to improved attendance monitoring, increased Restorative Practices interventions, and collaborative effort meetings with parents. The difference in CA rates underscores the need for tailored interventions based on a school's diverse population. However, we still see inconsistent data collection across schools. The sharing of standard, best practices will foster improved attendance district-wide.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

An integral part of education and human development, SEL is the process of acquiring and applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships.

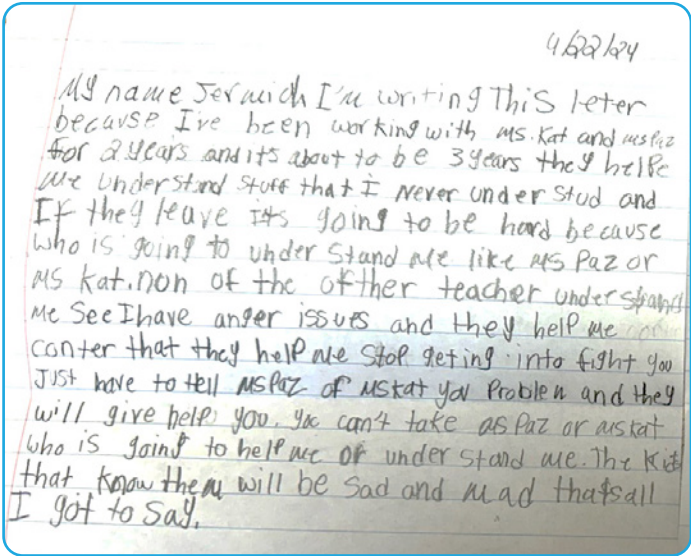
Restorative Practices (RP)

Consisting of methods and interventions that prevent harm and conflict, RP creates a sense of belonging, safety, and social responsibility. This discipline shifts from punitive to restorative, focusing on harm done rather than consequences. It supports strong relationships among all school community members.

OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Out-of-school suspensions (OSS), like chronic absenteeism, can adversely affect student engagement and learning. During the 2023-24 school year, Bridgeport Public Schools suspended 1,112 students and administered a total of 1,859 suspensions. This means 5.6% of all students enrolled experienced suspension at least once during the school year. Across the district and within our SEL Community Schools, we saw a high rate of repeat suspension. For example at Paul Laurence Dunbar School, two students received 80% of suspensions administered during a single quarter. When we look at our high-risk, focus students population, many of whom have a history of school discipline, less than ten were suspended last year. By providing targeted interventions to the students who need it most, we reduced the number of suspensions dramatically.

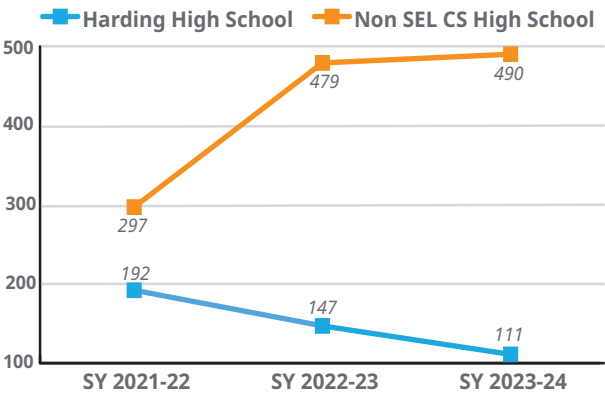
When analyzing suspension data over three years between Harding High School (one of our SEL Community Schools) and another high school within the district without an SEL CS program, we see a dramatic difference. In the continued wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the non-SEL CS high school saw suspensions rise by 65%, while **Harding saw suspensions decrease by 42%**. Over the three years we worked within the school, we fostered a positive school climate. Both schools face unique challenges, however, the school that implements Restorative Practices—designed to deescalate situations before leading to a suspension—consistently has fewer suspensions than the school that does not have an SEL CS Program. In addition to reacting to incidents, we provide proactive services aimed at improving school climate.



IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE

Our SEL Community School program works with the whole community of a school: students, faculty, staff, administrators, and parents to build a healthy school climate. By learning how to listen to and communicate with others, students peacefully resolve conflict and know when to ask for or offer help. Individuals learn how to better cope with emotional stress, solve problems, and avoid peer pressure to engage in potentially harmful activities. These skills are lifelong and will be used long after they leave the classroom.

Our program staff responded to over 478 incidents during the school year, ranging from cyber-bullying spilling over into the school day to physical conflict. Out of the 649 interventions last school year, half were impromptu, responding to the many in-class and hallway disruptions that occur throughout the day. By de-escalating and repairing in the moment, we ensured that distractions were kept to the minimum and the focus shifted back to learning. 94% of the students enrolled in the program successfully closed out at the end of the school year. Unless the youth were seniors, our staff often remained in contact with those who needed extra support, particularly for when they transition from middle school to high school



Mediation Program

For nearly two decades, we have served justice-involved youth in the Bridgeport, Danbury, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury court catchment areas. Sought after by front-line judicial staff and court diversion programs, the Mediation Program finds practical resolutions to address conflict and harm.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, our **Mediation Program** staff successfully mediated **22 cases** out of **28 referred**, impacting a **total of 104 justice-involved youth, adults who support them, and victims.**

The process of mediation is a learning conversation between all parties. The process brings everyone affected by a conflict—the youth in the justice system, the victim(s), and supporters—to discuss how the offense impacts those involved and how to repair the harm.

The opportunity to go through mediation allows for all participants to be heard, giving individuals control over how to approach issues that directly affect them. Our clients talk about their perspectives, experiences and motivations regarding the actions they took, often providing victims and other impacted participants answers to questions they have. Everyone then can determine how best to make amends, repair or restore what had been damaged, and resolve conflict.

Although mediation is a brief encounter, our clients are given strategies to address conflict and negative situations in a more productive way, building their confidence. In our technologically driven society, our Mediation Program exposes youth to in-person communication which has been linked to better mental health.¹⁰

92%

CASES SUCCESSFULLY MEDIATED

Where parties agreed to participate in the mediation process.

89%

CASES REFERRED BY JUVENILE COURT

Shortening interactions with the justice system to weeks instead of months



MOST COMMON CHARGES FACED BY JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH

Breach of Peace

Assault

Disorderly Conduct

Threatening

Other



I recently shoplifted from your store. After I did some research, I learned that shoplifting affects more than myself or the person that shoplifted. It also hurts the person the company along with the customers, who now have to pay a extra charge for what I did.

I am truley sorry for my actions. I have learned so much from what I did and I can assure you that I will never again do what I did. The Cost and inconvence because of my selfish act is wrong and unconservable.

I apologize for my crime and I Surely regret what I did, and if I Could turn the time buck I am such deed.

Youth Diversion Team

The Youth Diversion Team (YDT) serves Bridgeport youth between the ages of 9 and 18 who may otherwise become involved with the juvenile court system. Clients may have committed minor delinquent offenses or display at-risk behavior at home, in school, or in the community.

Between July 2023 and June 2024, YDT **received 168 referrals** from police, the juvenile courts, school resource officers, or the Bridgeport Youth Services Bureau. Of those referred, our program **served 137 youth in total**. By building rapport and trust with youth and their families, case managers establish a foundation for clients to feel heard, supported, and engaged. Together, they build a plan that addresses the referring incident and encourages the individual to take ownership of their future by setting realistic, attainable goals. Goals selected most often include dedication to improving relationships (19%), followed by positively re-engaging with school and improving overall physical health (15% each). This process instills a sense of agency and responsibility, critical factors for long-term success.

Circle meetings are a critical Restorative Practices intervention for YDT. Circles bring together the youth, their families, and members of the larger community in a non-judgmental space to discuss the referring incident and how harm may be resolved or repaired. By involving the community in this process, youth not only feel supported, but receive the message that they are valued members of their communities, such as their school or neighborhood. Through the circles, youth learn how their actions have a wider impact beyond the immediate participants. Recommendations to repair harm often include community service, apology letters, and mediation.

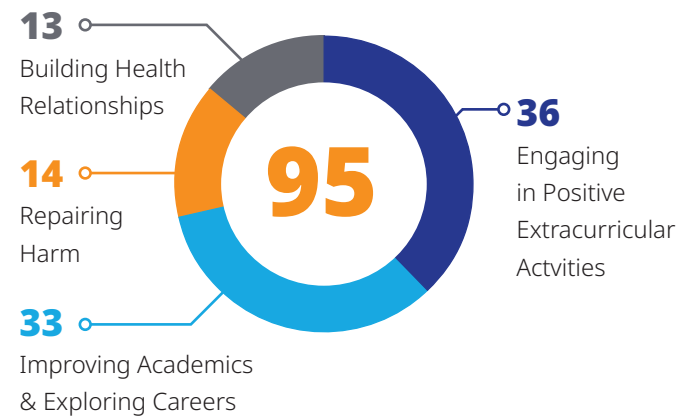
Consistent communication and check-ins with case managers help to hold youth accountable while continuing to offer support. Based on the plans they built together and a youth's expressed interests, case managers may arrange enrollment in extracurricular activities such as art classes, boxing, or cooking classes. Case managers often communicate with school guidance counselors and attend meetings to provide insight into assisting youth to achieve their educational goals. With support and mentorship, youth gain the tools, support, and skills needed to overcome a momentary challenge in their life and achieve their full potential.



A FAMILY'S STORY

"I would like to thank you for assisting, coaching, and guiding my daughter and I through a difficult period. My daughter was only 13 and very defiant, the police were called when she became destructive, endangering herself and others. We received a referral to YDT and were introduced to our case manager, Tyese. Patient and determined, he made himself available whenever my child needed additional support, connecting us with resources so she could get the help she needed. My daughter learned coping skills, reflecting and identifying where she went wrong and how to make it right. I also learned how to better communicate, hearing and not just listening. The team kept an open line of communication through the process, checking in from time to time to see if I had any questions or concerns. Thank you so much for everything you have done for my family. If I had to do it again, I would definitely choose YDT. Our youth need support!"

GOALS COMPLETED BY YDT YOUTH



137
TOTAL YOUTH SERVED



78%
COMPLETED THE
PROGRAM SUCCESSFULLY



53%
OF CASES REFERRED
BY SCHOOL RESOURCE
OFFERS

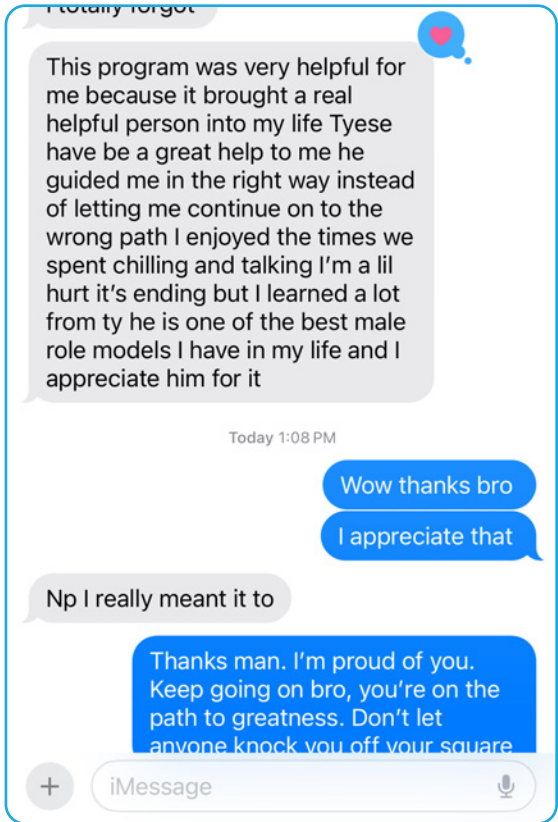


MENTORSHIP AND TURNING STRUGGLES INTO IMPACTFUL, INSPIRING ART

For the second year in a row, our Youth Diversion Team collaborated with the **Housatonic Museum of Art** to put on a summer exhibition, *We Rise: Overcoming Challenges, Manifesting the Future Through Art* that showcased the talents of students who worked diligently over six months to create inspiring artwork.

These young artists from across Bridgeport tackled various personal and collective challenges through their creative process. Their participation provided them with a meaningful outlet to express their experiences. This exhibition not only celebrates their artistic achievements but also highlights their resilience and strength. Guided by dedicated mentors, these students transformed their struggles into powerful and impactful pieces of art.

Marvin, one of the featured artists, said of the experience: "This is my second time doing the art show. It offered a much different perspective, and I felt more reflective, particularly going back to my old neighborhood of Marina Village and seeing the buildings knocked down, but I am still standing."



Park City Career Pathways

Park City Career Pathways (PCCP) serves Bridgeport's transition-aged youth (ages 17-21) through a multifaceted approach to education and career development. We are committed to fostering the next generation of leaders by providing them with the tools, resources and support they need to succeed.

During the 2023-2024 school year, we served **58 students**, who had the opportunity to participate in hands-on experiences with **Park City Presents** and the **NextGEN STEM Series**. While enrolled in the program, students work one-on-one with their case manager. Together, they navigated challenges effectively. Students built their confidence and developed essential life skills including communication, decision-making, and problem solving. This enabled them to pursue their career goals, make informed decisions about their future, and ultimately achieve success in their chosen field.

This year, our program expanded to reach additional students in six schools within Fairfield County: five in Bridgeport and the Walter Fitzgerald Campus, an alternative school in Fairfield. By the end of the school year, **94% of enrolled students successfully completed the program**, meeting each of their goals and aspirations. Such achievements include students' enrolling in post-secondary education or college, improved academics and refocus on education, gainful employment. Nearly half of students sought assistance in applying to college or other post-secondary education.

PCCP played a pivotal role in helping students and parents navigate the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application process, which had a difficult rollout this year. This particularly impacted low-income first-generation students.¹¹ We provided support to address our students' unique circumstances that they may encounter, such as changes in income or family size, to ensure that their package accurately reflects their current situation.

94%

STUDENTS COMPLETED THE PROGRAM

Students successfully met their goals
to further their education or career.

"PCCP's support and understanding gave me the confidence I needed as the first person in my family to apply to college. Carolina's patience and kindness when explaining the FAFSA process made such a difference. With every meeting and conversation, I felt valued, never once uncomfortable or out of place."

- PCCP Participant



Parent Leadership Training Institute

Since 1998, Bridgeport’s Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) participants enhance their civic skills and community impact, focusing on non-partisan involvement in their neighborhood and in public policy at the local, state, and federal levels. PLTI isn’t just training, it’s a transformative initiative.

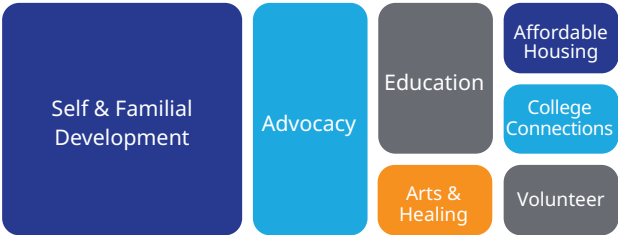


Our PLTI 2024 cohort, made up of **15 adults and 7 children**, was notable for its diversity and inclusivity. By offering the 22-week curriculum virtually, we engaged individuals from communities across Connecticut, including Bridgeport, Trumbull, Deep River, and Norwalk. There were several immigrants, representing Vietnam, Nigeria, Peru, Colombia and Uganda, who brought unique perspectives and lived experiences to their advocacy. This year, **we had a 100% graduation rate**. All parent leaders who showed up on the first day of class successfully completed the program and their community projects. PLTI projects were bold in 2024, ranging from serving developmentally disabled youth and their peers to first-generation college students.

PLTI serves over eighty communities across the United States. Partnering with the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity since 1998, Bridgeport’s PLTI program has an **alumni network of 385 graduates**. In 2002, we began a parallel program, Children’s Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) for participants’ children aged 3-12, aimed to enrich their advocacy skills. To date, there have been **over 400 CLTI graduates**.

Graduates of PLTI and CLTI are encouraged to participate in alumni activities and workshops facilitated by the National Parent Leadership Institute, including Public Speaking, Racial Equity Conversation, Book Publishing, and Advocacy in School Systems. They continue to take active roles in their local government and community projects, including becoming elected members of the Board of Education. When the tools of democracy are understood, the public will become active participants in communities.

PLTI Project by Type

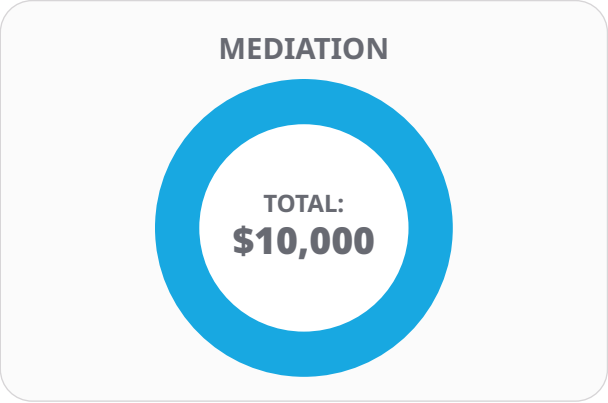
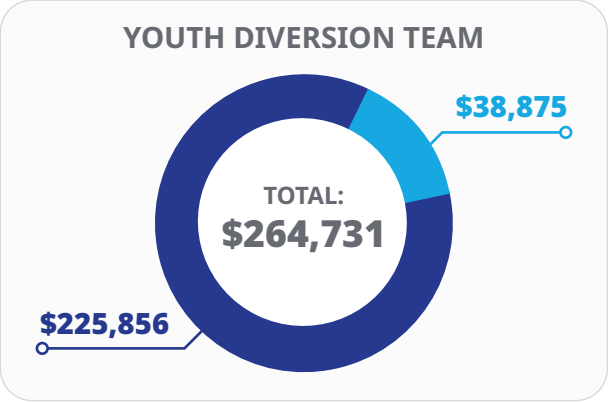
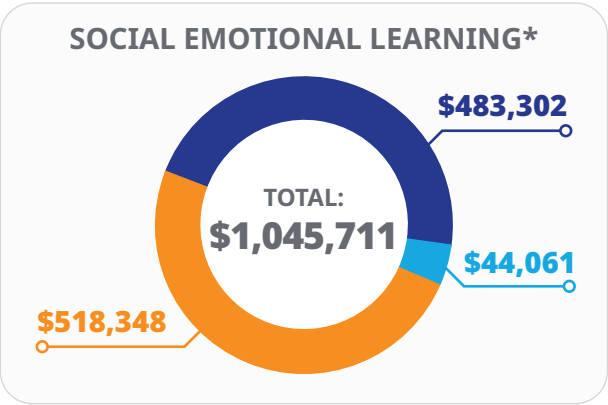


“When I walked in the doors to PLTI and my children were going into the other room for CLTI the first thing that came to mind was Break the Cycle.”

- PLTI Participant

FINANCIALS

INVESTING IN OUR COMMITMENT TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



*Social Emotional Learning includes the SEL Community Schools, Park City Career Pathways, and Parent Leadership Training Institute programs.

“Our clients that Catalyst CT serves make our work meaningful. Recently, a mother thanked me for taking the time to connect with her daughter and be a positive role model in her life—just by being relatable and consistent. Being my most authentic self is an asset every day.”

- MariaStar, YDT Case Manager



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES, DEFINITIONS, AND REFERENCES

¹ Boston Consulting Group. (2023). *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis*. Dalio Education. Retrieved August 7, 2024, from bit.ly/4f2x3gQ.

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¹⁰ Shpancer, D. N. (2023). *Face-To-Face Communication: Healthier Than Digital?* Psychology Today. Retrieved September 11, 2024, from bit.ly/3UbIgDQ.

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LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

Marc Donald President & CEO	Tina Quinones-Cabrera Director, Development - Grants	Andreana Lubin Student Support Advocate, SEL Community Schools Program	Sandra Carmichael Coordinator, Parent Leadership Training Institute
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Ashley Blanchard-Miller Director, Research & Policy	Mory Hernandez Manager, SEL Community Schools Program		

YOU ARE A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Your commitment is invaluable to our common mission of creating equal opportunities by collaborating with the communities we serve to provide the support they need to face their challenges and not just survive—but thrive. Together, we work diligently to be a part of the solution to reduce youth and gun violence, advocate for healthier communities, and create a positive impact that extends far beyond today.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE CATALYST CT COMMUNITY!

With your support, we provide the necessary resources, mentorship, and opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible to those who need it most.



We thank you for advocating for a Connecticut where opportunity knows no bounds and zip codes don't dictate destiny. You are a change-maker for under served and marginalized youth and families in our communities and beyond.



Catalyst CT

*Empower People.
Transform Community.*

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