

stamford cradle-to-career: reengaging students through summer learning

Stamford Cradle-to-Career | Stamford, Conn.



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– Amy Beldotti, associate superintendent of teaching and learning at Stamford Public Schools

This summer, after more than a year of enduring social isolation and schooling disruptions, students across the nation finally have the opportunity to reengage with their peers and teachers. Summer school will play an integral role in providing students the transition period they need to reacclimate to in-person instruction and recover from the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is the largest federal funding boost that school districts across the country have ever received, with several billions of dollars specifically allocated for summer intervention programs. This gives school districts a tremendous opportunity to respond to the devastating impacts that the pandemic has had on students — particularly those from vulnerable populations.

In Stamford, Connecticut, Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) has partnered with Stamford Public Schools to offer a six-week, full-day summer school academic program combined with afternoon enrichment activities for students. The program is available for students enrolled in kindergarten through the eighth grade.

The school district will offer the academic portion of the program and SC2C will be responsible for the enrichment programming. The effort is part of a three-year partnership between the school district and SC2C to test,

learn and improve a first-of-its-kind summer programming model in the city made possible as a result of the federal aid to rebuild.

With the allocation of millions of dollars in federal funding, Stamford Public Schools will offer its largest-ever summer program, hosting 1,800 students. Additionally, the funding will also allow the school district to cover the cost of student transportation and meals, increasing accessibility for every child in the school community.

“We are extremely grateful for our partnership with the Stamford Cradle to Career,” said Amy Beldotti, associate superintendent of teaching and learning at Stamford Public Schools. “Like many school districts across nation, we had to make decisions quickly. It was extremely helpful to work with allies that already had the trusted partnerships in the community and knew how to help us navigate through the daunting technical aspects of hosting the largest-ever summer program we’ve held.”

Leveraging their long-standing relationships with local organizations, SC2C is partnering with the school district in a number of ways:

1. Serving as the intermediary funder for a duration of three years with a commitment of \$1 million per year. Stamford Cradle to Career will be sub-granting funds to community program providers.
2. Convening community program providers that will offer a wide range of enrichment experiences for students through coding, music, dance, sports, early intervention services and social and emotional learning supports.
3. Administering a request for proposal process that allows local community providers to sign up if they want to offer an enrichment program. The summer school program currently has 10 providers.
4. Hosting webinars to help community members learn how to support parents through the registration process.
5. Working with Stamford school leaders to reach out to disengaged students and ensuring that the program prioritizes the school district's most disadvantaged students. Students currently registered to attend the summer school program reflect the city's diverse demographic groups.
6. Connecting school leaders with community partners in an effort to increase diversity in the pipeline for educators in the city. The summer school program currently includes pathways for college students to participate as tutors and coaches through paid internship positions, giving them the opportunity to gain real-world learning experiences working with children.
7. Measuring and monitoring impact of the program by reaching out to parents and caregivers for feedback through surveys, measuring student engagement in after-school activities through attendance data and using weekly satisfaction surveys to understand student needs.

The millions of dollars in funding available through the American Rescue Plan Act provides educators unprecedented opportunities to meet student needs. The partnership between Stamford Cradle to Career and Stamford Public Schools is an example of how network members can serve as conveners, data experts and community mobilizers to support school districts with this unique opportunity. Network members can play a vital role in helping local leaders equitably distribute funds and sustain investments for long-term impact.



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