

All of Colchester's Youngest Citizens are  
**Healthy, Happy, & Successful**  
Children

**COLCHESTER, CONNECTICUT**  
Raising families  
since 1698.



A community-wide blueprint plan for our  
youngest citizens and their families.

June 2009



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Collaborative for Colchester's Children would like to extend a special expression of gratitude to Lisa Grossman of The Capstan Group, LLC for her expertise and guidance through the plan development process. Her expertise, together with her desire to understand the very unique qualities of our community led us to the development of a realistic plan that will positively impact our youngest citizens and their families.  
Lisa, we cannot thank you enough.

The Collaborative for Colchester's Children would also like to thank the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. Their shared effort in funding the development of Colchester's early childhood blueprint, along with the development of 22 other early childhood blueprints across Connecticut, will most certainly yield positive, measurable results for the children, families, and communities of Connecticut.



June 22, 2009

Dear Citizens, Policymakers, and Stakeholders,

In January 2008, we were given an extraordinary opportunity to come together as a leadership body to improve the lives of Colchester's youngest citizens and their families. The community of Colchester was awarded a grant jointly funded by the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet through the State Department of Education and the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund to develop a community plan to improve the success of Colchester's youngest citizens – from birth through age eight – and their families.

When we committed to doing this plan, we also committed to:

- ▶ Involve community members in the process to develop the plan
- ▶ Use concrete data as a starting point for decision-making
- ▶ Use Results-Based Accountability (RBA) which is a planning process that intensively focuses on building a plan that is rooted on results and accountability
- ▶ Commit to no- or low-cost activities for at least two years, in recognition of our economic climate

With the excitement of this opportunity and this responsibility before us, we pulled together representatives from a broad range of Colchester stakeholders and worked together to develop a plan to help our children succeed. We brainstormed with abandon, discussed options with passion, sought and received input from more than 1,000 Colchester community members, and ultimately and collectively made hard decisions to focus on the actions that would most directly feed into the results we seek to achieve. At this point, we can honestly say that this plan contains our best ideas to achieve the single result that we all collectively care about most: that all of Colchester's youngest citizens are healthy, happy, and successful children.

We would like to extend our warmest acknowledgements to the individuals and organizations that participated in the process to develop this blueprint. The dialogue that took place during the planning process was a tremendous head start to implementation. As we as a community worked together, we got to know each other, had an opportunity to freely share ideas, and already we have found ways to work together better for our common goal.

We are pleased to present the work of the Collaborative for Colchester's Children who, along with the input of more than 1,000 Colchester stakeholders, have developed a results-based action plan to improve the lives of Colchester's young children and their families. We commit to you that we have amassed a strong collection of partners who will work with you and all those who care about Colchester's children to make this plan happen. Also, we stress that this plan is a work in progress. It is a concrete beginning to results that we seek to achieve, but we look forward to working with all of our partners to collectively deepen our planning efforts, take action to turn the curve for our children, and adjust our efforts as needed along the way. We extend our sincere thanks for the opportunity, support, and encouragement to do this work and invite you to join us.

Sincerely,

The Collaborative for Colchester's Children

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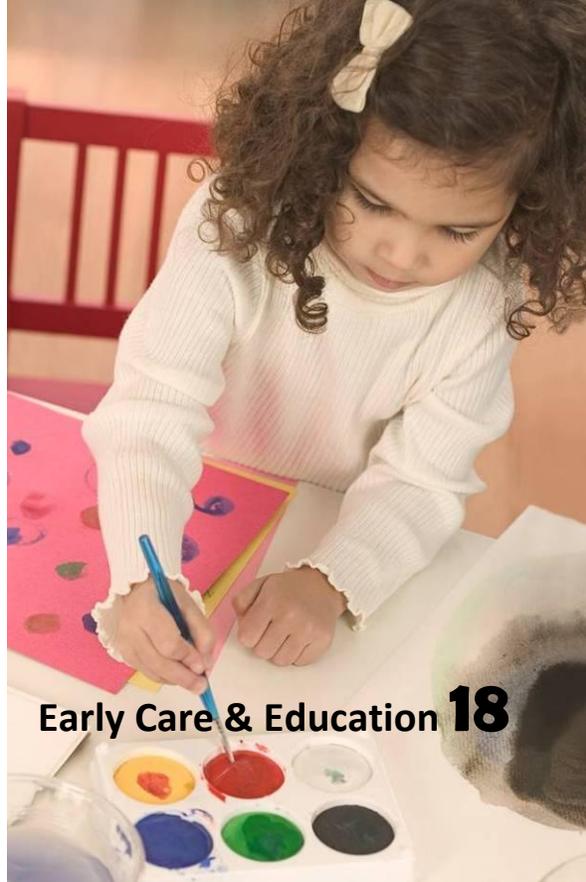
Patti White  
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# ABOUT THIS PLAN BACKGROUND

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## **What was the opportunity for Colchester?**

In January 2008, we were given a tremendous opportunity to come together as a leadership body to improve the lives of Colchester's youngest citizens and their families. The community of Colchester was awarded a grant jointly funded by the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet through the State Department of Education and the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund to develop a community plan to improve the success of Colchester's young children – from birth through age eight – and their families.

## **What were the basic requirements of the plan?**

When we committed to doing this plan, we also committed to:

- ▶ Extensive involvement of community members
- ▶ Use of concrete data as a starting point for decision-making
- ▶ Use of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) which is a planning process that focuses on building a plan that is intensively based on results and accountability
- ▶ Commitment to no- or low-cost activities for at least two years, in recognition of our economic climate

## **How was the data collected to inform decisions?**

In order to make sure that the blueprint plan corresponds to the most urgent needs in the community, the Collaborative for Colchester's Children has conducted a comprehensive community-wide data collection effort to develop a systematic way to identify the most urgent needs in the community. These most urgent needs will then be used to inform community priorities and focus initiatives so that they correspond specifically with Colchester's needs. To take the first step toward developing the Blueprint, the Collaborative for Colchester's Children has identified the data that is most indicative of the success of young children, has gathered this data from external sources, and put it into a format that could be used by Collaborative members, decision-makers, and the community at large. The data collection effort includes general information about the community to put the information in context, information about early care and education, health and wellness, and the supports that exist for our families of young children.

## **How was community input sought out?**

We need everyone's help in the community to implement this plan, so it's no surprise that we were open to everyone having input into developing the plan. The Collaborative has maintained a high commitment to seeking input from Colchester stakeholders. At three different points in the planning process, Collaborative members have gone out to seek input in a wide variety of ways – through surveys, focus groups, presentations and discussions with official Boards and bodies, and through informal conversations about the plan. Along the way, the Collaborative has secured input from over 1,000 Colchester residents, business owners, workers, and stakeholders.

## **Why are we using Results-Based Accountability (RBA) format for the plan?**

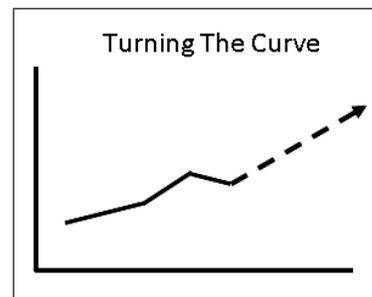
More than 40 states and 8 countries are using RBA format for community plans. It is a specific planning method that helps communities ensure that the actions that they develop will feed directly into the results that they seek to achieve. Please see the next page for a more detailed explanation of RBA plans.

## **In these economic times, is this plan really doable?**

Yes. The hardest economic times hit while we were planning – which made us highly attuned to the economic choices we need to make and to the realities of what is possible. Our entire first and second year activities are either no or low cost.

# RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY BACKGROUND

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a disciplined way of taking action to improve the quality of life in communities and show results. It is a recognized process that is known for “working backwards.” The process begins by identifying what result we want to achieve and then works methodically backwards to arrive at the specific actions that will achieve that result. RBA is known for making sure that the actions taken are ones that will feed directly into the results that we desire.



➤ **STEP 1: WHAT IS OUR DESIRED RESULT?**

The first step of an RBA plan identifies what quality-of-life condition we want to achieve for a target population. RBA results are stated in plain language, in a way that every taxpayer and voter can understand the issue and see its importance. Examples include “a prosperous economy in the town of Colchester,” “a safe community for Colchester residents,” and “successful Colchester children.”

➤ **STEP 2: WHAT WOULD THESE CONDITIONS LOOK LIKE IF WE COULD SEE THEM?**

The second step is to identify the possible indicators that will quantify whether we have achieved our result. For example, the Colchester unemployment rate helps quantify our local economic prosperity. The crime rate helps quantify the safety of our community. And third grade CMT scores help us determine how successful are our children.

➤ **STEP 3: HOW CAN WE MEASURE THESE CONDITIONS?**

The third step whittles the list of possible indicators down into those that are the most representative of the result we seek to achieve.

➤ **STEP 4: HOW ARE WE DOING AND WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE CURVE?**

The fourth step analyzes current data and recent trends for these top indicators and asks how the community is currently performing on them. During this step, we also work hard to identify the story behind the curve – including the root causes of these current trends.

➤ **STEP 5: WHO ARE THE PARTNERS WHO HAVE A ROLE IN DOING BETTER?**

The fifth step identifies all of the potential partners who can contribute to making the numbers better. Who can work together to improve conditions for Colchester’s children?

➤ **STEP 6: WHAT STRATEGIES WILL TURN THE CURVE, INCLUDING NO- AND LOW-COST IDEAS?**

The sixth step develops our strategies and actions to improve these conditions. These strategies are based on what we know works (from research and best practices) and common-sense approaches.

➤ **STEP 7: WHAT DO WE PROPOSE TO DO?**

The seventh step lays out the precise actions that will bring the results that are desired. These actions include no-cost and low-cost efforts and span a five-year period of time.

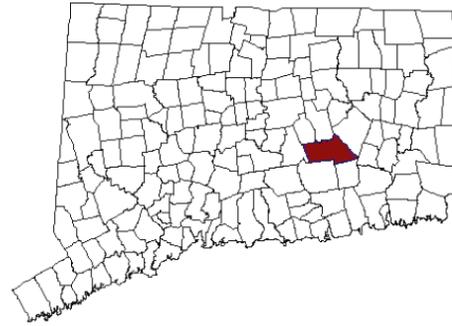
➤ **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

After developing our proposed plan, we collectively work with our agencies to select the most important measures that we all agree to track and to which we hold ourselves accountable.

The intent of RBA is to help communities bring public and private sectors together to turn around conditions that are “not okay.” RBA is being used in over 40 states and at least 8 countries. For more information, see Mark Friedman’s book [Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough](#) or visit the websites at [www.raguide.org](http://www.raguide.org) and [www.resultsaccountability.com](http://www.resultsaccountability.com).

# OUR COLCHESTER COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

**History.** The Town of Colchester, Connecticut was founded in 1698 by Nathaniel Foote from the Sachem of the Mohegan Indians. Nathaniel Foote's grandfather had emigrated from Colchester, England early in the 17th century and the settlers set out to establish a Colchester in America. In the 1700s, the town grew from early grist and saw mills. In the 1800s, during the industrial era, the town population flourished as other mills, factories, and industrial companies operated in Colchester. As the industrial era ended, Colchester evolved into a major tourism destination.



The town became known as the “Catskills of Connecticut” in the early 1900s. Over time, with the construction of Route 2 and its location that provided a rural home environment in close proximity to major cities, the town has emerged as having an extraordinarily high quality of life. In 2005, Colchester was ranked 57th on the "100 Best Places to Live" by Money Magazine. In honor of this designation, Colchester developed an annual celebration, the Colchester 57 Fest, which takes place each September. It is a family festival featuring entertainment, activities, food, fireworks and more.<sup>1</sup>

**Today.** The Town of Colchester, Connecticut has a population of 15,319 individuals in 5,563 households.<sup>2</sup> Colchester is located in New London County, near the intersection of Connecticut Route 2 and Route 11. It is approximately 15 miles from Willimantic, 15 miles from Norwich, 25 miles from Hartford, and 27 miles from New London. Colchester operates under the Selectman – Town Meeting form of government.

**Population Trends.** From 1980 to 2000, the total population in Colchester has grown from 7,762 to 14,551 and is estimated to have grown to 15,102 individuals in 2007. This represents a 41% growth rate from 1980 to 1990 and a 33% growth rate from 1990 to 2000 (which far exceeds the 5.9% growth rate in Connecticut from 1980 to 1990 and the 3.6% growth rate from 1990 to 2000). The growth rate has slowed to 5.3% from 2000 to 2008. The number of households has been growing steadily in Colchester, along with the family population rate.<sup>3</sup>

**Child Population.** The median age in Colchester is 37 years. Of the Colchester residents, there are approximately 1,100 young children under age 5, and 5,300 school-aged children (ages 5-17). Colchester's 1,896 youngest citizens – ages birth to eight – represent 13% of the Colchester citizen population.<sup>4</sup>

**Socio-Economic Status.** While the median household income in Colchester is \$82,662 per year, verifiable poverty exists in Colchester, creating a population with significant need for supportive educational and social services.<sup>5</sup> On a statewide basis, Connecticut's towns are rated by the State Department of Education to determine educational cost-sharing basis. The 2008-09 Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Town Wealth and Rank identifies Colchester as 137<sup>th</sup> of the 169 towns in its wealth and rank, which is a factor of the net grand list, the per capita income, the median household income, the population, and the number of need students.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Colchester website ([www.colchesterct.org](http://www.colchesterct.org))

<sup>2</sup> CERC Town Profile 2008

<sup>3</sup> US Census 1990, US Census 2000, CERC Town Profile 2008

<sup>4</sup> CERC Town Profile 2008

<sup>5</sup> CERC Town Profile 2008

<sup>6</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education 2008-09 Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Town Wealth and Rank

**District Reference Group.** In 1996, the State Department of Education developed Education Reference Groups (ERGs) to group school districts which have similar socioeconomic characteristics. The groupings were established to compare achievement and expenditures among districts. Connecticut's school districts were divided into nine groups, based upon socioeconomic status, indicators of need and student enrollment data. Indicators such as median family income, education level of parents, parents' occupation, family structure and home language are used to group the districts. School districts were then compared with others in their ERG. The Department of Education recently reclassified the nine groups into District Reference Groups (DRGs) using updated data, but the same formula used. The most affluent and low-need districts are grouped into DRG A, while the poorest and highest need districts are grouped into ERG I. Colchester is in DRG Group D, along with Berlin, Bethel, Branford, Clinton, Cromwell, Granby, Hampton, Lyme, Ledyard, Milford, New Milford, Newington, North Haven, Old Saybrook, Rocky Hill, Shelton, Southington, Stonington, Wallingford, Waterford, Watertown, Wethersfield, and Windsor.

## OUR POPULATION RESULT

**What is a population result?** The population result is our end goal. It is what we want for our children.



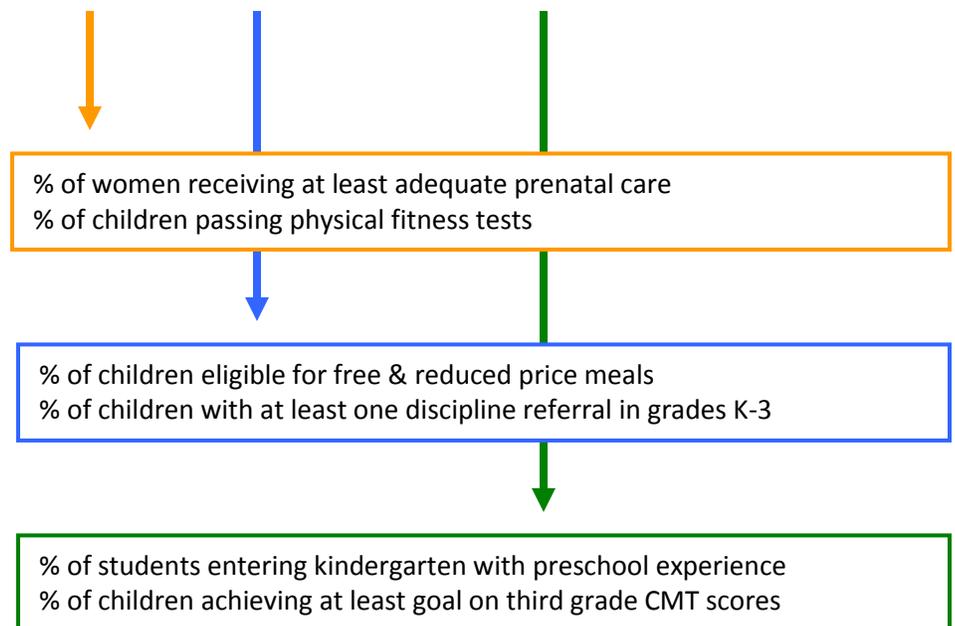
**All of Colchester's youngest citizens are healthy, happy, and successful children.**

*What are the most important hopes for our children, families, and community? What do we want for this population? How do we want our children to be? How do we want our families to be? In what type of community do we want to live? By discussing these questions, our community collectively developed our population result statement.*

# HEADLINE INDICATORS

**What is an indicator?** Very simply, an indicator is a measure that tells us if we are getting our results or not. The best indicators are those that are extremely well-connected with the result (representative power), can be communicated to a broad audience (communication power), and for which there is quality data available on a timely basis (data power).

## All of Colchester's youngest citizens are healthy, happy, and successful children.



**Are those the only data points that are important?** Not at all! The headline indicators are the major data points that we, as a community, have determined are the best representations of our population result statement. However, we have identified additional secondary indicators that may also tell us if we are moving toward our result, including:

- ▶ % of children who are obese
- ▶ % of children receiving dental health care
- ▶ % of children attending well child visits
- ▶ % of families not having transportation options
- ▶ % of families able to afford housing
- ▶ % of families with DCF referrals
- ▶ # of social service assistance requests
- ▶ % of infant/toddler care demand filled
- ▶ % of preschool demand filled
- ▶ % of parents able to afford pre-Kindergarten
- ▶ % of children succeeding on incoming K dibels

# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

**What is a strategic focus area?** Strategic areas are meant to be large “buckets” to collect strategies that are all related to each other. Usually, there is a one-to-one correlation between the results statement and the strategic areas. Given our results statement, we chose three strategic areas to help organize our efforts. Each area is identified below, and is described in much greater detail on the following pages.

*Population Result*  
**All of Colchester’s youngest citizens are healthy, happy, and successful children.**

Strategic Area #1:  
**Health & Wellness**



Strategic Area #2:  
**Family Supports**



Strategic Area #3:  
**Early Care & Education**





*"The first years of a child's life are critically important to brain development. Billions of brain cells are formed in the first months of fetal life. After birth, trillions of brain cell connections are established and form the brain's physical "maps" that govern such things as vision, language, and hearing. Brain cells, or neurons, analyze, coordinate, and transmit information. The brain learns and remembers throughout life by constantly changing its networks of trillions of connections between neurons as a result of stimuli from its environment."<sup>7</sup>*

Approximately 190 children are born each year to Colchester households. The health of these children – from the time they are conceived through the first years of their life – has an enormous impact on their ability to succeed. Keeping Colchester's children healthy and well is a major strategic focus toward our population result.

To help move us toward our population result, this section articulates:

- How we are doing on our most important health indicators
- What are the stories behind the curve
- What strategies and activities will turn the curve

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<sup>7</sup> Early Head Start National Resource Center ([www.ehsnrc.org/InformationResources/ResourceArticles/rmbrain.htm](http://www.ehsnrc.org/InformationResources/ResourceArticles/rmbrain.htm))

Colchester has chosen two major headline indicators to track our results for the health and wellness of Colchester’s children and families: prenatal care and the percent of Colchester children passing physical fitness tests in school. What is the current trend for each of these indicators? Read on to find out!

## PRENATAL CARE

Billions of brain cells are developed during the first months of fetal life. The very first step to healthy children is adequate prenatal care. Access to basic medical care for pregnant women and children can help prevent threats to healthy development and can provide early diagnosis and appropriate management if problems emerge. The Department of Public Health keeps detailed records on the level of prenatal care for each child born to a Colchester resident, classifying the care as non-adequate, adequate, or intensive. In Colchester, the level of non-adequate prenatal care is rising – a deteriorating trend for our community.

## PHYSICAL FITNESS

Those who are physically fit are much less likely to have health problems. Colchester Public Schools conducts physical fitness tests at regular intervals, testing the aerobic endurance, abdominal, flexibility, and strength of students. The data shows a decreasing rate of physical fitness among Colchester students, which is a declining trend.

### % OF WOMEN RECEIVING PRENATAL CARE FOR COLCHESTER BIRTHS

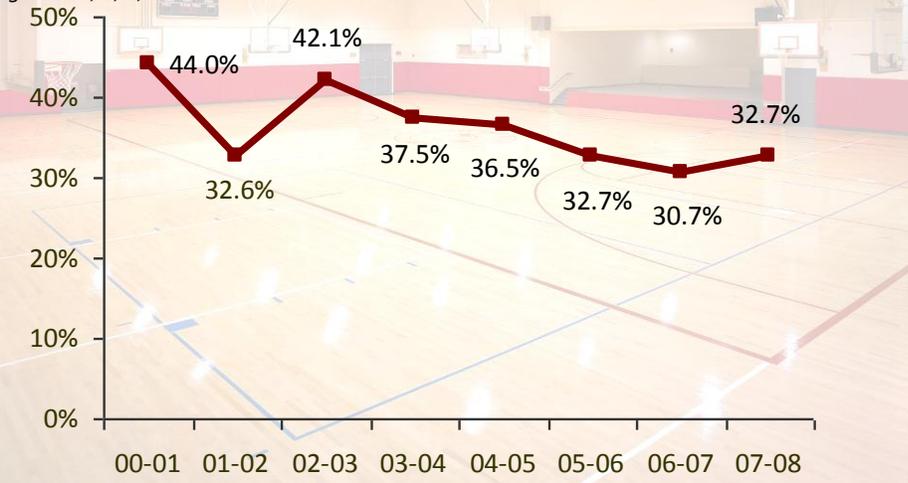
*Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health Registration Reports*



Note: Adequacy is rated based on the Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization (APNCU) Index. Inadequate care: Prenatal care begun after the 4th month or less than 50% of recommended visits received or prenatal care begun by the 4th month and 50%-79% of recommended visits received. Adequate care: Prenatal care begun by the 4th month and 80%-109% of recommended visits received. Intensive care: Prenatal care begun by the 4th month and 110% or more of recommended visits received.

### PERCENT OF COLCHESTER CHILDREN PASSING ALL FOUR PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTS

*Source: Colchester Public Schools District Profiles, based on test results from students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10.*



# STORY BEHIND THE CURVE HEALTH & WELLNESS

**What is a ‘story behind the curve’?** The graphs on the previous page each have a curve to them, which shows the trend moving in a particular direction. By taking time to think about the ‘story behind the curve,’ we work to identify why these trends are happening. What is creating these conditions? What is the root cause of the problem? If we understand what is causing these conditions to happen, we can take action that will best address the cause. To learn the story behind the curve, we used quantitative data, as well as qualitative data through input from 1,026 Colchester stakeholders through a community survey, focus groups, and conversations.



1. Quotes are statements made by Colchester stakeholders through the community survey, focus groups, and documented conversations with Leadership Work Group members  
 2. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Employee Health Benefits: 2008 Annual Survey. September 2008  
 3. CT Transit Route Map 2009  
 4. CERC Town Profile 2008  
 5. DemographicsNow 2007  
 6. Community Health Assessment for New London County, CT May 2007  
 7. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation study, October 2003  
 8. Connecticut State Department of Education School Wellness Policy Report 2007-2008

**So we need to...**

1. Improve local systems and policies to promote children’s healthy development
2. Increase opportunities for physical activity for children and their families



## STRATEGY 1

Improve local systems and policies to promote children’s healthy development

### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Research “best practices” and lessons learned of other local systems/policies that have been successful, including education about prenatal care, health insurance, and fitness programs
- ▶ Implement community partnerships to promote healthy development, including prenatal care, developmental milestones, and health insurance, specifically:
  - Widely communicate prenatal development, developmental stages and appropriate developmental milestones
  - Investigate causes of increasingly inadequate prenatal care, and develop and implement corresponding public health education curricula to address the prenatal care curve
  - Provide family education about health insurance coverage options
- ▶ Review and revise school policies to promote healthy development in response to the district’s fitness assessment data, including:
  - Wellness policy to address identified weaknesses in physical activity, and inform staff, families, communities, etc. and measure effectiveness
  - Transportation policies to increase walking opportunities for students
  - Inclusion of daily physical activity routines

### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Revise Town policies and practices to increase amenities in Colchester that foster wellness (sidewalks, bike racks)

### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Increase opportunities for families to be healthy together (e.g., family cooking classes)
- ▶ Develop support groups / playgroups for families and caregivers to discuss health concerns & needs on a long-term basis with professional expertise available
- ▶ Create more local child and family counseling services
- ▶ Revise school system’s policies to include a “7th inning stretch” for students during the school day
- ▶ Provide enrollment assistance for health insurance



## STRATEGY 2

Increase opportunities for physical activity for children and their families

### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Disseminate resources and information to make physical fitness opportunities in Colchester and surrounding areas well-known and welcoming to children & families with different physical/wellness needs
- ▶ Create a traveling physical activity box containing fitness ideas & resources that is available for day care groups, centers, mom groups, parents
- ▶ Create an at-home resource catalogue of fitness activities that can naturally be integrated into the day

### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Develop an early family fitness program, with different locations & different times
- ▶ Create a Walking Club (e.g., walk across America)
- ▶ Implement community partnerships to promote healthy development, including prenatal care, developmental milestones, and health insurance, specifically:
  - Strongly encourage all community providers to include a physical activity component in every new program developed for children
  - Create a community-wide wellness partnership to address fitness & wellness needs, including particular housing areas and seeking funding to address wellness needs

### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Have a physical activity “contest” similar to reading clubs that have rewards for increased activity, maybe have a free rewards card to get local businesses involved
- ▶ Town-hosted walk/run monthly
- ▶ Investigate possibility of YMCA in town
- ▶ Research online self-monitoring fitness tracking programs & link to BOE / town websites

## FAMILY SUPPORTS



*“Stable, caring relationships are essential for healthy development. Children develop in an environment of relationships that begin in the home and include extended family members, early care and education providers, and members of the community... Numerous scientific studies support these conclusions: providing supportive, responsive relationships as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress.”<sup>8</sup>*

Our youngest children rely on their families for everything – food, clothing, shelter, safety, education, support, and love. When our families have a hard time themselves, who do they lean on so they can maintain the stability and support for their children? The family supports that we have in our community – information, parent education, financial assistance, transportation – have an enormous impact to help families so that families can, in turn, raise their children. Boosting these family supports is a major strategic focus toward our population result.

To help move us toward our population result, this section articulates:

- How we are doing on our most important indicators
- What are the stories behind the curve
- What strategies and activities will turn the curve

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<sup>8</sup> “inbrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development,” published by the Center on Developing Child at Harvard University  
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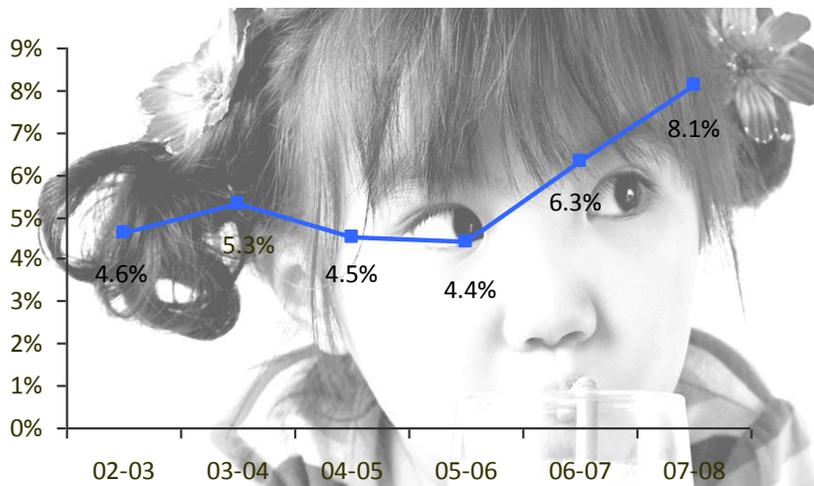
Colchester has chosen two major headline indicators to track our results for family support. The first headline indicator is the percent of Colchester children eligible for free & reduced price lunch. The second headline indicator is the percent of Colchester children in grades K-3 that have a discipline record. What is happening to these two indicators of supports that are needed for Colchester families and, ultimately, the happiness of Colchester’s young children? Read on to find out!

## FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

There is much discussion about the correlation between money and happiness and the ‘economics of happiness.’ While most researchers agree that there is no direct correlation between wealth and happiness, research does indicate that, up to a certain threshold, increases in income that remove someone from poverty result in increased happiness.<sup>9</sup> As the Center on Developing Child states, “Chronic stress can be toxic to developing brains. Toxic stress experienced early in life and common precipitants of toxic stress – such as poverty, abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, or exposure to violence – can have a cumulative toll on an individual’s physical and mental health. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and other problems.”<sup>10</sup>

## PERCENT OF COLCHESTER CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE/REDUCED PRICE LUNCHES

Source: Colchester Public Schools District Profiles

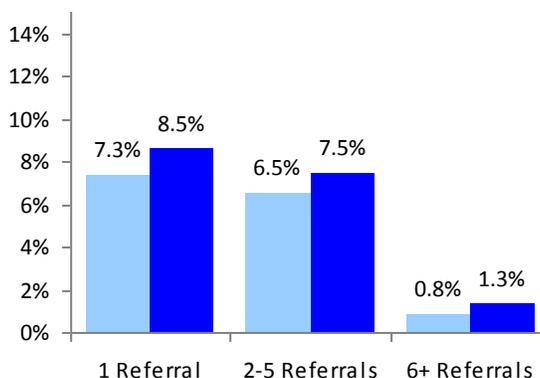


## DISCIPLINE RECORDS

Research shows links between family economic stress and children’s behavior problems. Studies show that levels of depressive symptoms, impulsive behavior, and antisocial behavior were higher among children who experienced either type of economic stress compared to those who did not.<sup>11</sup> Children with discipline referrals are displaying actions that may suggest that additional family support is needed.

## PERCENT OF K-3 STUDENTS WITH AT LEAST ONE DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

Source: Colchester Elementary School / Colchester Public Schools



<sup>9</sup> Gilbert, D. T. (2006). *Stumbling on happiness*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>10</sup> “inbrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development,” the Center on Developing Child at Harvard University

<sup>11</sup> Takeuchi, D. “Economic Stress in the Family and Children’s Social and Behavioral Problems.” *Journal of Marriage & Family* 1991

# STORY BEHIND THE CURVE FAMILY SUPPORTS

**What is a ‘story behind the curve’?** The graphs on the previous page each have a curve to them, which shows the trend moving in a particular direction. By taking time to think about the ‘story behind the curve,’ we work to identify why these trends are happening in Colchester. What is creating these conditions? What is the root cause of the problem? If we understand what is causing these conditions to happen, we can take action that will best address the cause. To learn the story behind the curve, we used quantitative data, as well as qualitative data through input from 1,026 Colchester stakeholders through a community survey, focus groups, and conversations.

**“Unfortunately, poverty does exist in Colchester.”**<sup>1</sup> There are an estimated 416 Colchester residents living well below the federal poverty level,<sup>2</sup> 324 individuals who are looking for jobs but are unemployed,<sup>3</sup> 405 requests for assistance through Infoline,<sup>4</sup> 593 children in town enrolled in HUSKY A,<sup>5</sup> and 163 households with no vehicles in a town where public transportation is extremely limited.<sup>6</sup>

**Research shows links between family economic stress and children’s behavior problems.** Studies show that levels of depressive symptoms, impulsive behavior, and antisocial behavior were higher among children who experienced either type of economic stress compared to those who did not.<sup>7</sup>

**“Before and after school programs that are educationally based expose kids to other concepts and activities, and assist working parents with childcare.”**<sup>1</sup> As of 2007, 79% of the working age population (age 16+) was part of the labor force, often creating two-parent working households.<sup>8</sup> Further, of all survey respondents, 619 (68%) supported before- and after-school programs, with specific comments about gearing the programs toward working parents and making them available to all children.

**“We thought we were middle class, but we are now on the verge of needing financial help.”**<sup>1</sup> The global economy has taken its toll on Colchester.



**“We have great programs that people don’t know about.”**<sup>1</sup> There is no central location for information and resources in Colchester.

**“For my family, parent education would... apply to us at this time and I think it would be great to see courses offered.”**<sup>1</sup> Colchester parents are actively seeking information on child development, school programming, and health.<sup>9</sup> However, the number of parent education programs has fallen in Colchester, from 11 programs in 2006 to only six programs in 2008.<sup>10</sup>

1. Quotes are statements made by Colchester stakeholders through the community survey, focus groups, and documented conversations with Leadership Work Group members
2. DemographicsNow 2007
3. CERC Town Profile 2009
4. Infoline 211 2008
5. CT Kids Link Covering Data 2008
6. DemographicsNow 2007
7. Takeuchi, D. “Economic Stress in the Family and Children’s Social and Behavioral Problems.” *Journal of Marriage & Family* 1991
8. School Readiness Needs Assessment from 2006
9. The Success of Colchester’s Children: Are we doing all we can? February 2009
10. DemographicsNow 2007

**So we need to...**

3. Create a central source of information for Colchester’s families with young children
4. Improve out of school time programs and access to these programs

## STRATEGY 3

Create a central source of information for Colchester's families with young children



### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Develop a process to conduct a focused outreach effort to provide information to people in underserved or hard-to-reach populations of the community and provide new connections to services (conduct process in Year 2)
- ▶ Develop and publish a local resource guide, including links to community providers
- ▶ Raise awareness of Infoline 211's resources for families (e.g., publicize on websites, printed versions)
- ▶ Enhance the "welcome wagon" to extend information about services and resources to families and children who are new to Colchester
- ▶ Publicize babysitting swap board

### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Establish a "community expo" of services and resources available
- ▶ Educate local leaders (e.g., local government, churches, community members) about the services & resources that are available

### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Create a full-time social service department that provides community members with a private, responsive, respectful environment to address urgent needs
- ▶ Conduct a community needs assessment survey to assess unmet needs (including those of grandparents caring for grandchildren) & publish needed resources



## STRATEGY 4

Improve out of school time programs and access to these programs

### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Create high school / elementary school mentorship program for after school academic help and enrichment
- ▶ Extend existing after-school programs pick-up times or investigate staggered timing options to help with transportation issues
- ▶ Create self-sustaining after-school and vacation programs through community partners (e.g., fee for service, Parks & Rec, youth services, churches, schools, PTOs, teens with community service requirements, high school child care class) including monitoring of evaluation outcomes

### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Create or expand the existing scholarship funds to help affordability of community-wide after-school programs
- ▶ Develop master list of philanthropic organizations that support these types of programs, and identify and write grant applications for these programs
- ▶ Create new options for family activities, especially with skill-building components (e.g., letter boxing, compass skills, organized walks)

### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Explore the possibility of self-funded after-school transportation
- ▶ Establish quiet games before-school with breakfast at school
- ▶ Establish a single “grants person” in town to research opportunities available
- ▶ Create a neighborhood-based program for dense population areas within the community
- ▶ Get late buses to service neighborhood as well as daycare drop-offs
- ▶ Create a community carpooling system to help with transportation

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



*“Effective early childhood programs generate benefits to society that far exceed program costs. Extensive analysis by economists has shown that education and development investments in the earliest years of life produce the greatest returns. Most of those returns, which can range from \$3 to \$16 per dollar invested, benefit the community through reduced crime, welfare, and educational remediation, as well as increased tax revenues on higher incomes for the participants of early childhood programs when they reach adulthood.”<sup>12</sup>*

How we educate children in early care and education settings – whether at home, with licensed providers, or elsewhere – makes a tremendous difference in how successful these children are in life.

To help move us toward our population result, this section articulates:

- How we are doing on important indicators
- What is the story behind the curve
- What strategies we will use to turn the curve
- What activities will occur

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<sup>12</sup> “Early Childhood Program Effectiveness”, published by the Center for Developing Child at Harvard University.  
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# INDICATORS EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

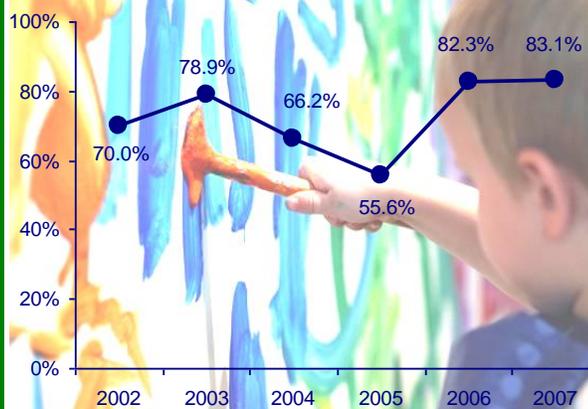
Colchester has chosen two major headline indicators to track our results for the success of Colchester’s children. The first headline indicator is the percent of children entering kindergarten with a preschool experience. The second headline indicator is the percent of Colchester children who achieve at or above a ‘goal’ score on the CMTs by grade three. What are these indicators showing about the success of our children? Read on to find out!

## PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

If 90% of a child’s brain development occurs in the first five years of their life, what types of enriching educational experiences are our children receiving? While the trends have bounced around, the percent of our children entering kindergarten with a preschool experience is increasing. This is an optimistic trend for our community.

## PERCENT OF COLCHESTER CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN WITH PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY SCHOOL, OR HEAD START EXPERIENCE

Source: Colchester Strategic District Profiles



## THIRD GRADE CMT SCORES

By third grade, our children take the Connecticut Mastery Tests in writing, math, and reading. Over the past three years, our students’ scores have improved – showing an optimistic picture for our young children’s success.

## PERCENT OF COLCHESTER SCORING AT LEAST GOAL ON THIRD GRADE CMT

Source: [www.cmtreports.org](http://www.cmtreports.org)



# STORY BEHIND THE CURVE EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

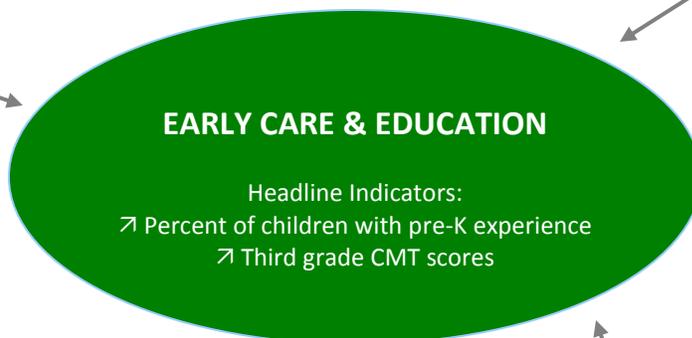
**What is a ‘story behind the curve’?** The graphs on the previous page each have a curve to them, which shows the trend moving in a particular direction. By taking time to think about the ‘story behind the curve,’ we work to identify why these trends are happening in Colchester. What is creating these conditions? What is the root cause of the problem? If we understand what is causing these conditions to happen, we can take action that will best address the cause. To learn the story behind the curve, we used quantitative data, as well as qualitative data through input from 1,026 Colchester stakeholders through a community survey, focus groups, and conversations.

**“I love the program [my daughter] is in, I just don't know how much longer I will be able to afford to send her there.”**<sup>1</sup> The average 50-week cost of infant & toddler care in Colchester is \$8,300 for home-based care and \$10,050 for center-based care. The one-year resident undergrad tuition at UConn is \$6,816.<sup>2</sup> One in four caregivers identify cost as a major barrier to accessing the best care for their children.<sup>3</sup>

**“I would like information to help parents prepare their young children for school. My daughter started kindergarten this year and is already behind because she did not attend a daycare.”**<sup>1</sup> Parents have specifically expressed interest in information on child development and health.<sup>3</sup>

**Colchester does not have a Head Start program.** Head Start programs provide low-cost options for parents.

**Colchester has 22 kindergarteners, 6 first-graders, and 29 second-graders who require intensive literacy assistance to achieve DIBELS benchmark levels.**<sup>4</sup>



**“We need to work on getting good, qualified daycares in Colchester.”** Existing licensed programs appear to serve about 300 children from birth to age five, while Colchester has more than 1,100 children in this age group.<sup>2</sup> One out of every four parents (27%) identified slot availability as a barrier to quality pre-school experiences.<sup>3</sup>

**Achievement on CMT scores shows significant disparities, particularly with lower reading and writing skills for boys, for children receiving free & reduced price lunches, and for special education students.**<sup>5</sup>

1. *Quotes are statements made by Colchester stakeholders through the community survey, focus groups, and documented conversations with Leadership Work Group members*  
 2. *The Success of Colchester's Children: Are we doing all we can? February 2009*  
 3. *Colchester School Readiness Needs Assessment 2006*  
 4. *Colchester Public Schools 2008*  
 5. *www.cmtreports.org*

**So we need to...**

- 5. Promote and increase opportunities for quality, enriching early learning experiences
- 6. Expand reading & writing opportunities



## STRATEGY 5

Promote and increase opportunities for quality, enriching early learning experiences

### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Develop an early learning resource list and include early learning information in the “welcome wagon” for new town residents, senior center, and other community-wide locations
- ▶ Increase use of the library as a family resource
- ▶ Establish a regular newspaper column/article to share information about early learning
- ▶ Disseminate information using public access TV
- ▶ Build awareness and membership of day care / home provider associations
- ▶ Establish a widely representative committee to explore the possibility of establishing a set of Colchester standards for preschool and daycare accreditation by reviewing existing early care standards as a possible starting point

### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Seek funding for and widely distribute booklet to assist parents in choosing preschool/daycare
- ▶ Create a family resource center or early childhood center or a particular location that houses current resources for parents & professionals
- ▶ Educate community members on Care4Kids eligibility requirements
- ▶ Work in partnership with behavioral health providers & pediatricians to provide “just in time” education of resources to families in need
- ▶ Pending the results of the Year 1 activity to explore the possibility of standards, if warranted use a widely representative committee to draft a proposed set of standards for Colchester including different types of standards for different care settings

### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Pending the results of the Year 2 activity regarding Colchester standards, if warranted develop monitoring procedures & funding, including the monitoring body, tools, and processes, develop incentives to participate and meet the standards (i.e., seal of approval), and widely communicate Colchester standards, monitoring, and incentives
- ▶ Increase providers that accept Care4Kids



## STRATEGY 6

### Expand reading & writing opportunities

#### INITIAL ACTIVITIES (can begin immediately)

- ▶ Create a book swap at multiple locations, ensuring all students have the opportunity to benefit
- ▶ Work with Cragin Memorial Library to develop strategies to improve participation in summer reading program
- ▶ Incorporate writing into summer programs
- ▶ Create a “Colchester Reads Together” program where volunteers read to children, with participation incentives

#### SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES (1-2 YEARS)

- ▶ Create a group to introduce early literacy skills for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- ▶ Create a reading or writing mentorship between seniors or high schoolers and children
- ▶ Create a book club or a writing club for kids
- ▶ Create an active “outdoor adventure” summer reading program through Parks & Recreation
- ▶ Provide parents with information (workshops, packets) regarding reading/writing formats & procedures used in school
- ▶ Expand author visits to introduce books and encourage writing for children and adults
- ▶ Create or provide information about current opportunities for parents for whom English is their second language or who are illiterate
- ▶ Work with local pediatricians to implement the Reach Out & Read program which provides a book with each well-child visit

#### LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES (3-5 YEARS)

- ▶ Create a volunteer group that coordinates reading & writing activities in town
- ▶ Create a mobile library including diverse cultural books and diverse types (e.g., poetry)
- ▶ Build inventory of books that showcase diversity and offer opportunities for foreign language readers
- ▶ Conduct contests for reading & writing with community involvement (encouragement, recognition)
- ▶ Showcase student writing and illustrations (publish, display, show in schools)
- ▶ Provide access to school libraries in the summer
- ▶ Increase number of recorded books available with printed book package to help readers with consonances
- ▶ Create traveling books with props
- ▶ Promote letter campaigns for causes related to other academics (social studies, economics, history)
- ▶ Reading on school buses in am/pm as a planned program

# IMPLEMENTATION

**What do we mean by ‘implementation’?** The implementation part of this plan details how we put this plan into practice. In other words, this section describes how we will carry out the plan and transform it from a list of strategies to real, everyday applications. Our survey respondents had several very important questions, suggestions, and offers regarding implementation, including those quoted below.

“I am very interested in seeing the end result of this plan especially as I am expecting in February... I hope that a very strong plan is in place to implement the strategies that are developed.” - **Community Survey Respondent**



“Will the Town of Colchester be expected to absorb the cost of the programs?” - **Community Survey Respondent**

“Our nation, state and community seem to be entering a time where everyone is going to need to tighten our belts.” -**Community Survey Respondent**

“If we focus on a few select issues, we might make progress.” - **Community Survey Respondent**

“Mentoring programs? I’d like to volunteer.” - **Community Survey Respondent**

Specifically in response to these questions and to lay out what will be needed to implement these plans, this section includes:

- What PARTNERS are needed and what they have committed to work
- What PERFORMANCE MEASURES we are considering
- What DATA we intend to start to collect
- What FINANCES are needed to accomplish these results
- What GOVERNANCE structures we will adopt to hold ourselves accountable

## PARTNERS IMPLEMENTATION

The success of this plan will depend on deep cooperation and coordination of partners. The following organizations have already said that they would be a partner in the *Healthy, Happy and Successful Early Childhood Blueprint*.

Each partner has identified contributions that they are already able to make to the effort. Further, we share an open dialogue with each partner listed below throughout implementation to expand their involvement as resources and efforts allow. Further, each partner has acknowledged that, as part of this plan, we as a community will be collecting a common set of performance measures. These measures will help us understand how much we did, how well we did it, and if anyone is better off as a result of our efforts. We all have agreed to work together to develop these measures and collectively do our part to collect and report on the measures that we agree upon.



The following organizations have already signed on as partners in this effort as of June 2009:

- ▶ William W. Backus Hospital
- ▶ Business Network International (BNI) – Colchester Hayward Chapter
- ▶ C.A.S.T.L.E.
- ▶ Colchester Business Association
- ▶ Colchester Board of Education
- ▶ Colchester Board of Selectmen
- ▶ Colchester Clergy Association
- ▶ Colchester Counseling Associates
- ▶ Colchester Early Childhood Program
- ▶ Colchester Elementary School PTO
- ▶ Colchester Land Trust
- ▶ Colchester Parks & Recreation
- ▶ Colchester School Readiness/Discovery
- ▶ Colchester Youth Services
- ▶ Cragin Memorial Library
- ▶ Fox Ridge Child Care
- ▶ Glastonbury Family YMCA
- ▶ S+S Worldwide
- ▶ Schuster Outsourcing
- ▶ Today's Child Care Association
- ▶ TVCCA
- ▶ UCFS
- ▶ Wee School Preschool

## PARTNER COMMITMENT DETAIL

For the partners that have already signed on to this effort, the chart below provides some detail regarding the type of partner commitment that they are able to make at this time. Of course, as implementation occurs, we are committed to an open dialogue with all partners – both existing and new – to expand and refine partner involvement as resources and efforts allow.

	Type of Partner Commitments				
	Outreach & Communication	Service Delivery	Research & Policy Change	Fundraising & grant writing	Other
<b>School-Related</b>					
Board of Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
School Readiness/Discovery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Town-Related</b>					
Board of Selectmen					
Parks & Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Youth Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Community Organizations</b>					
William W. Backus Hospital	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Business Network International (BNI) – Colchester Hayward Chapter					
C.A.S.T.L.E.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Colchester Business Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Colchester Clergy Association					
Colchester Counseling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Colchester Early Childhood Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Colchester Elementary School PTO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Colchester Land Trust		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Cragin Memorial Library	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Fox Ridge Child Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Glastonbury Family YMCA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
S+S Worldwide					
Schuster Outsourcing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Today's Child Care Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
TVCCA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
UCFS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Wee School Preschool	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

# PERFORMANCE MEASURE GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTATION

**What is a performance measure?** Performance measures evaluate how well a program, agency, or service system is working. These measures help us understand how much we did, how well we did it, and if anyone is better off as a result of our efforts.

**Why did we develop guidelines?** While we know that we need to develop a full set of performance measures for Colchester as part of this initiative and are eager to do so, it seems premature to develop the performance measures before our partnership agreements and implementation structure are in place, because our partners need to be part of deciding the final performance measures. Therefore, we have developed a set of guidelines. As part of our partner agreements, all of our partners have acknowledged that, as part of this plan, we as a community will be collecting a common set of performance measures. Our partners have agreed to work with us to develop a collective set of measures. Our partners have also agreed to do their part to collect and report on the measures that we all agree upon.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR LOCAL POLICY CHANGE ACTIVITIES

Type of Action	Accountability Questions	Performance Measure Guidelines
Local Policy Change	<i>Who is our customer?</i>	Colchester families with young children
	<i>How much did we do?</i>	# policy changes researched # policies revised
	<i>How well did we do it?</i>	% of policies revised that needed revision % of revised policies that align with research % of revised policies implemented
	<i>Is anyone better off?</i>	% improvement due to policy implementation

The following are examples of performance measures for local policy change activities in our plan:

**Example #1: Change policies to increase children’s walking to school**

- How much did we do? # policies changed to allow children to walk to school
- How well did we do it? % of revised policies revised that needed revision  
% of revised policies that align with research
- Is anyone better off? % increase in children walking to school after policy change

**Example #2: Research best practices of other local systems that have been successful**

- How much did we do? # other similar community policies researched
- How well did we do it? % of policy revisions researched
- Is anyone better off? % of policy recommendations that are consistent with research

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

Type of Action	Accountability Questions	Performance Measure Guidelines
<b>Communication &amp; Outreach</b>	<i>Who is our customer?</i>	Colchester families with young children (or soon to have young children)
	<i>How much did we do?</i>	# times information was distributed # resources available at virtual central locations # resources available at physical central locations # people receiving information
	<i>How well did we do it?</i>	% increase in website hits % increase in utilization of existing services
	<i>Is anyone better off?</i>	% increase in awareness of existing services % of population newly connected to services they need

The following are examples of performance measures for communications & outreach activities in our plan:

**Example #1: Publicize Infoline 211’s resources for families on partner websites**

- How much did we do? # websites containing new links to Infoline’s resources
- How well did we do it? % increase in website users who view Infoline information
- Is anyone better off? % increase in user’s awareness of Infoline resources (brief survey)

**Example #2: Provide family education about health insurance coverage options**

- How much did we do? # people receiving information about health insurance options
- How well did we do it? % of people who need health insurance receiving info about options
- Is anyone better off? % of population with new healthcare coverage due to these efforts

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM ACTIVITIES**

<b>Type of Action</b>	<b>Accountability Questions</b>	<b>Performance Measure Guidelines</b>
<b>Service Delivery System</b>	<i>Who is our customer?</i>	Colchester families with young children
	<i>How much did we do?</i>	# new or improved slots offered
	<i>How well did we do it?</i>	% of participants that are newly participating % utilization of new opportunities
	<i>Is anyone better off?</i>	% of families that are satisfied with program/event % of families that believe the program/event is beneficial % of families that returned for another program/event

The following are examples of performance measures for service delivery system activities in our plan:

**Example #1: Create a traveling physical activity box containing fitness ideas & resources**

How much did we do? # boxes created  
 How well did we do it? % of time boxes are being used (checked out of library)  
 % of Colchester families who are exposed to these physical activity ideas  
 Is anyone better off? % of box users reporting that they learned an activity that they can incorporate into their daily life

**Example #2: Publicize summer reading program & its value to improve participation**

How much did we do? # people reached by publicity  
 How well did we do it? % of people reached by publicity that have not participated before  
 Is anyone better off? % increase in summer reading program participation

**Example #3: Create self-sustaining out of school programs through community partners**

How much did we do? # self-sustaining programs created  
 # self-sustaining slots added  
 How well did we do it? % of slots that are filled  
 Is anyone better off? % of participants satisfied with the program  
 % of participants returning for a future program

# DATA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

A **data development agenda** is a list of areas where we need new or improved data. While we never have all the data we need, we must continually work together to collect better data. Below are the areas where additional data would be useful during implementation of the plan.

<u>Strategic Focus Area</u>	<u>Data Development Agenda</u>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>% of Colchester children with health insurance</li><li>% of Colchester children regularly attending well-child visits to pediatricians</li><li>% of Colchester children receiving regular dental care</li><li>% of Colchester children who are obese</li></ul>
Family Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>% of Colchester residents using social services</li><li>% of Colchester residents aware of local programs &amp; services offered</li><li># of Colchester children with non-parent caregivers (e.g., grandparents)</li><li>% of Colchester children with computer and internet access</li><li># minutes Colchester children spend using a computer each day</li><li># minutes Colchester children spend watching television each day</li></ul>
Early Care & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li># of unmet need for early care &amp; education services in Colchester &amp; barrier</li></ul>

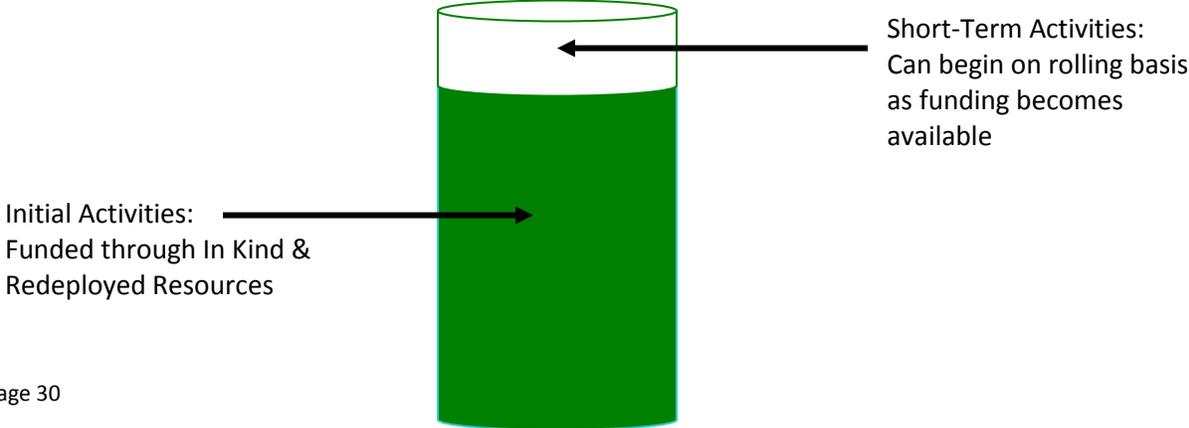
**Colchester’s Financial Values.** In order to understand the financing for this plan and its viability, one must first understand the financial values that are at the very core of our town. Colchester is a community that is extremely reticent to raise costs in the community. The local budget process is extraordinarily challenging and has sometimes requires numerous attempts – often lasting well into the summer – to pass a budget, and maintaining extremely minimal changes to the mill rate. The 2005-2006 budget included a 0.73 mill increase, the 2006-2007 budget included an 0.72 mill increase, and both the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 budgets included no mill increases at all.

At the same time, though, Colchester has the spirit of a town that can do a lot with very little. As one example, Colchester has seen a rapid population increase in the 1990s and early 2000s, which resulted in a dramatic growth in the student population. The senior class alone grew from 85 to 265 students. In response to this need, Colchester has built three new schools in 13 years. Because of this extraordinary investment in school communities, Colchester ranks at the top of the state in expenditures for school building debt service, spending an average of \$400 more per pupil than similar communities. Yet, Colchester currently ranks 166 of 169 in the State in per-pupil expenditures for educational programming and operational expenses, 23<sup>rd</sup> of 24 in its DRG, and Colchester spends \$1,200 less per student than the DRG average. Colchester has a history of pulling together to accomplish things that are important and strategically using limited resources to make meaningful improvements for its residents.

**This Plan’s Financing.** This plan was developed during challenging economic times. While it made for some difficult conversations, it also caused us to truly sharpen our focus on the no- and low-cost actions that we can take. As a result, the financing plan emphasizes:

- ▶ Focus on no-cost and low-cost activities first
- ▶ Capitalizing on the talented and untapped volunteer pool in town
- ▶ Partnering with organizations whose missions & resources are a direct fit with these efforts
- ▶ Reallocating existing resources when possible

We are very aware that our plan of actions is ambitious. Further, we are aware of the economic times in which we live and the widespread strains that exist on local, state, federal, and private funding streams. In order to ensure that our action agenda continues to drive the plan (rather than the financing driving the plan) but in recognition of our financial situation, we have divided this plan’s actions into three separate categories. The first category is “initial activities” which we can begin immediately and require no additional funding; we can use what we have already. The second category is “short-term activities” which are low-cost items that will require new funding and as such, we recognize in a very practical sense that their timing will be dictated by when the funding is available. The third category is “long-term activities” for which the funding picture is not yet clear because their exact nature will depend on the work that is accomplished in the first two years.



## DETAIL FOR SHORT-TERM FINANCING PLAN

Below is a chart that provides additional detail for the financing needed for our short-term actions. These actions do not need to begin until the funding becomes available. We are pleased to show that several of the short-term actions already have committed funding, as evidenced by the star (★) that is next to the anticipated source in the right-hand column.

Budget Item	New Costs	Amt Committed	Amt Needed	Anticipated Sources
<b>Overall Implementation</b>				
Governance	\$30,000	\$23,323	\$6,677	\$23,323 is anticipated through ARRA Federal Stimulus Funds toward Early Childhood Coordinator
Strategic Planning	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	Not yet identified
<b>Strategy 1: Improve local systems &amp; policies</b>				
Technical research	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	In kind contribution / Volunteer
Health education	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	★ UCFS
<b>Strategy 2: Increase physical activity</b>				
Educational tools (e.g., activity box, catalog)	\$800	\$300	\$500	S+S Worldwide
Printing	\$500	\$0	\$500	Not yet identified
<b>Strategy 3: Create central source of information</b>				
Data collection	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500	Not yet identified
IT Support for website	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	★ Town of Colchester
Blueprint Web Site	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	★ Town of Colchester
Information packages	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	Volunteer
Printing	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	Not yet identified
<b>Strategy 4: Improve out of school time programs</b>				
Mentorship program (space, transportation, staffing, supervision)	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	Not yet identified
New program development	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	★ Park & Recreation
<b>Strategy 5: Enriching early learning experiences</b>				
Printing	\$500	\$0	\$500	Not yet identified
Library services survey	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	★ Cragin Memorial Library
<b>Strategy 6: Expand reading &amp; writing</b>				
Book swap	In Kind	In Kind	\$0	Volunteer
Technical review of summer program curriculum	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000	Volunteer
Incentives/prizes to encourage reading/writing	\$500	\$0	\$500	Local business sponsorship
			<b>TOTAL</b>	
			<b>\$26,177</b>	

★ = Funding is Committed

## Why do we need a governance structure?

Governance means oversight. Governing bodies have the responsibility to oversee, provide direction, and coordinate implementation of certain activities. Governing bodies also have a responsibility to verify whether and to what extent results have been achieved. In most cases, the governing body is straightforward. For example, for non-profits, the Board of Directors has a governing responsibility for the initiatives of that organization. In the case of community planning, though, the governing entity is not always clear. It is difficult to identify because the plan includes cross-sector initiatives from a wide variety of agencies, institutions, and interests within the community. No one agency can achieve the outcomes on its own. Therefore, in this section, we look at what the options are for governance and submit a proposed structure that will provide the most efficient and effective shepherd for this community-wide plan.

## What types of governance structures exist?

Typically, the governance structure can be formed three different ways: (1) through a connection to local government, operating as an agency of that authority; (2) as a separately-standing legal entity with the ability to accept funds; or (3) as an informal organization without explicit legal standing, where a collaborative group accepts responsibility for oversight of the plan.

## Proposed Governance Structure

Over the past seventeen months, the Leadership Work Group has met monthly and worked very closely to develop this plan. The group has developed into a lively, active, committed, and diverse collaborative of stakeholders who have each brought a very important perspective to the plan. Through consensus-based decision making, the Leadership Work Group determined that, at this time, an informal governance structure be developed from this Leadership Work Group and including new partners that may wish to become more involved. The advantages of this informal structure are that it provides latitude and it is not burdened with costs associated with forming and operating a legal entity, nor is it burdened with paperwork and reporting requirements that often exist with formal structures. This will let us dedicate our time and resources to the most important work at hand, improving the lives of our children. This structure requires a fiscal agent (which is readily available within our network of partners) and also requires public accountability to ensure that the informal system is, in fact, carrying forward the plan.

The responsibilities of the governance entity will include:

- ▶ Convening partners
- ▶ Coordinating agreement on a set of outcomes
- ▶ Coordinating implementation
- ▶ Providing direction
- ▶ Measuring progress in meeting set of results
- ▶ Engage, educate, and regularly inform the community about progress being made to improve results

## Public Accountability

As part of this governance responsibility, the group commits to ongoing reports to the public on an annual basis to regularly provide information about the performance, results, and continuously seek input and feedback on this community-wide effort to improve the health, happiness, and success of our youngest citizens.





**"I am happiest when  
I have my birthday."  
-Connor, age 7**

**"I feel successful because  
I can do the monkey bars."  
-Kalie, age 3**

**"I am being healthy when  
I eat red peppers."  
-Rhiannon, age 4**

**"I feel successful when  
I hit the baseball hard."  
-Jeremy, age 5**

**"I am happiest when I play with friends."  
-Morgan, age 9**

## **All of Colchester's Youngest Citizens are Healthy, Happy, & Successful Children**

**"I feel successful when I do  
a great job on my report card."  
-Jakob, age 8**

**"I am happiest when  
I'm riding my dirt bike."  
-Kyle, age 7**

**"I am being healthy  
when I brush my teeth."  
-Leah, age 5**

**"I am happiest when my mom gives me hugs and kisses."  
-Arieanna, age 5**

**"I feel successful when  
I do my worksheet."  
-Mallory, age 5**

**"I am being healthy  
when I drink milk."  
-Victoria, age 7**