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Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of New Haven and New Haven Public Schools Selected as Inaugural Member of The Bridges Collaborative, A Nationwide Initiative to Advance Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Education

The first-of-its-kind collaboration connects 55 school and housing groups from 21 states, covering 3.5 million children; Represents the most significant grassroots effort focused on school integration in decades

[New Haven, CT] — Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of New Haven (ECC/HANH) and New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) announced today the selection to join the inaugural cohort of [The Bridges Collaborative](#), a first-of-its kind grassroots initiative to advance racial and socioeconomic integration and equity in America's schools. The Bridges Collaborative, which officially launches this week, is coordinated by The Century Foundation (TCF), a national think tank that has helped steer the conversation on school integration for decades.

The collaborative is unique in the world of K-12 education for its size, diversity, and mission. ECC/HANH and NHPS are joining 53 other organizations—including 27 school districts, 17 charter schools, and 11 housing organizations—which together represent more than 3.5 million children nationwide. Together, the collaborative spans more than 20 states and includes representatives from three of the five largest school districts in the country, along with other organizations of varying size, geographies, and student demographics. Other members of the cohort from the State of Connecticut include Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), Elm City Montessori, Hamden School District, and Hartford School District.

Currently, ECC/HANH serves 5,406 residents under the age of 18, many of whom attend New Haven Public Schools, but also include those in early childhood programs, regional magnet and local charter schools, and all young adults working towards a GED certificate. As a HUD-designated Moving to Work

(MTW) agency, ECC/HANH was able to create ECC Believes!—an educational, “cradle to career” initiative designed to assist students in achieving academic excellence, to support parents as they engage in their children’s education, and to help avail postsecondary opportunities to ECC’s young people (HANH 2014). This new partnership with The Bridges Collaborative aligns with the agency’s push for all students to achieve academic success and to provide instrumental resources and supports for all residents to fulfill their goals.

“Often, people see housing and public education as separate and unrelated entities—but this is not the case. Our agency has always recognized the intersectionality and fought to desegregate both to create equitable opportunities and outcomes,” said ECC/HANH President Karen DuBois-Walton. “Joining this innovative collaborative with NHPS and other districts/agencies in Connecticut could very well be the beginning of a bridge that will connect and create a statewide impact that catalyzes the change that has been needed for far too long.”

NHPS district has over 20,000 students in its 44 schools and the largest magnet program in Connecticut. 7,365 students attend 20 different magnet schools with nearly 3,000 of those students coming from suburban towns. This also makes NHPS the district with the highest suburban enrollment within the state. NHPS district joining the collaborative alongside ECC/HANH will create a comprehensive cover from having both the education and housing side represented in this endeavor.

NHPS seeks to gain practical insight into collaborative efforts and leverage best practices around school integration, student diversity, and community perception of our schools. “We believe this collaborative will benefit our district as we pursue equitable outcomes for all students in our district; and work to eliminate multiple barriers of access to high quality schools and learning opportunities while reducing racial isolation fueled by neighborhood housing opportunities and school zoning,” said Assistant Superintendent Keisha Hannans.

This unprecedented effort comes at a pivotal moment for the cause of school integration. Research has repeatedly [demonstrated the myriad positive benefits](#) for students who attend diverse and integrated schools, including higher test scores, higher graduation rates, and a host of positive social and civic outcomes. Despite the clear benefits, however, progress on integration has been extremely limited in recent decades—although those [trends are beginning to change](#), especially with growing awareness on the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on students and schools.

Over the next two years, the collaborative will serve as a hub for practitioners from across the country, providing school and housing leaders the opportunity to learn from one another, build grassroots momentum, and develop successful approaches for integration. The initiative is led by [Stefan Louis Lallinger](#), who most recently served as a Special Assistant to the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education and is a former school principal in New Orleans. Lallinger’s grandfather, Louis Redding, was a lawyer who argued the landmark school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, before the Supreme Court in 1954.

“Never before has there been an organization like the Bridges Collaborative. The sheer breadth and depth of knowledge and experience represented by the 55 groups in this cohort sends a clear message: we will deliver the high-quality, integrated school experience that the next generation deserves,” said **Stefan Lallinger, Director of the Bridges Collaborative at TCF**. “COVID-19 and the racial reckoning we’re experiencing underscore that the fight for racial and economic justice is far from over. To have any shot at winning that fight, we must first tackle the rampant inequities and segregation in our nation’s education system. That’s exactly what the Bridges Collaborative was built for.”

For more background, see the following resources:

- [Bridges Collaborative Information Packet](#)
- [Bridges Collaborative FAQ](#)

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About Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of the City of New Haven (ECC/HANH): We, at Elm City Communities, believe public housing is the foundation from which the American Dream will survive and thrive for generations to come. Our vision is a New Haven where every resident has a safe and decent home that they can afford and opportunities to fulfill their goals. Since becoming a HUD-designated Moving To Work (MTW) agency in 2000, Elm City Communities has become an incubator of innovation and an economic engine in New Haven, Connecticut. As a result, Elm City Communities has increased affordable housing choice, provided an array of self-sufficiency programs, created across the board cost savings measures, and spurred millions of dollars of indirect economic activity through redevelopment projects and job creation. Through the development and operation of affordable communities of choice and by providing opportunities for greater self-sufficiency in New Haven, we offer a lifeline to the American Dream.