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YOUR LETTERS

In Education, More At Stake Than Economics

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The achievement gap between Hartford and the rest of the state is real, and when you add in a 2009 graduation rate of 42 percent, you have a picture that represents exactly what President Barack Obama's Race to the Top program is driving to change [editorial, Jan. 5, "Race To The Top Of The Class"].

We agree with The Courant that we should capitalize on the opportunities that Race to the Top provides. The Courant has highlighted the economic need to improve Hartford's performance, but it is also a moral and social imperative.

Although Hartford's performance is among the state's lowest, we have seen real improvements over the last two years, including a 13-point increase in the graduation rate and gains on Connecticut Mastery Test scores that are the highest among the state's larger cities. These improvements are the result of varied efforts of which everyone should be proud. Many such efforts are aligned with Race to the Top requirements and have — in places — overturned a business-as-usual mentality. Improved use of data, student-based financing methodologies and, yes, some financial incentives to teachers for improved school performance are already being incubated here.

Hartford has a long way to go, but we have local evidence that innovative approaches that contribute to raising student achievement — the very basis for the Race to the Top program — are having an impact.

James L. Starr, executive director, Achieve Hartford!, Hartford

•Achieve Hartford! Is an organization that focuses on student achievement and school reform in the Hartford Public Schools.

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