



**Achieve  
Hartford!**



# School Governance Councils in Hartford



**Evaluation of  
School Governance Council  
Implementation**

***Year 2: 2010-2011***

**November 2011**

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Ali Gutermann '13  
Andrew Weiss '13  
Begaeta Nukic '11  
Harry Melendez '11  
Jack Palley '13  
Ylan Nguyen '12

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221 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106

[www.achievehartford.org](http://www.achievehartford.org)

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## Evaluation of School Governance Council Implementation Year 2: 2010-2011

Guided by a policy adopted by the Hartford Board of Education in May 2009, the Hartford Public School District (the District) has spent the past two years implementing School Governance Councils (SGCs) at nearly all of its schools. As a key element of the District's 2008-2011 Strategic Operating Plan, SGCs represent the District's effort to institutionalize community and parental involvement within each of its schools, and to create accountability for delivering a high-quality education to students throughout the school community.

Because of the potential of these councils to impact student achievement - as well as the significant investment made by the District to support these councils - Achieve Hartford! has conducted an independent evaluation of SGCs in Hartford as part of its efforts to monitor school performance and inform the community. This report represents Year 2 of the evaluation and, similar to Year 1, addresses both policy compliance aspects of SGC implementation as well as the overall functionality of SGCs according to research-based principles of site-based management. Building on Year 1, this year's evaluation also introduces short case studies of three SGCs, specifically highlighted to point out some of the best practices and lingering challenges prevalent among Hartford SGCs, which are progressing in varying stages of development.

### Executive Summary

Implementation of SGCs in Hartford continues to be very positive, as our research indicates a very high rating of SGCs among members and a high completion rate of SGC responsibilities. However, many SGCs were still struggling to recruit a sufficient number of parents according to Board policy, and some reported room for improvement regarding the sharing of authority.

Highlights of Year 2 implementation include the following:

- 12 schools launched SGCs in 2011-2012 for a total of 40 out of 47 schools (Adult Education included) and 378 total SGC members in Hartford
- 100% of new SGCs participated in up to five trainings.
- Each of the five content-specific trainings attracted more than 50 SGC members.
- 85% of SGCs completed the majority of their responsibilities, with 29 schools completing 100% of duties assigned to them.
- SGC members in Year 2 felt more prepared to analyze student data and school budgets than what was reported last year, as measured by our annual survey.
- Only 63% of SGCs reached 50% parent membership as required by Board policy.
- For those SGCs that could attend the school budget training, only an average of 1 parent from each SGC was able to attend.

In only its second year of SGC implementation, 40 out of 47 Hartford Public Schools operated school governance councils, the vast majority of which represent strong decision-making bodies with members who are informed and empowered to affect positive change at their schools. While small areas for improvement exist, Year 2 represented another year of highly successful implementation of SGCs throughout the city.

## Summary of Year 2 Implementation

### New Schools Added

In Year 2 of SGC implementation in Hartford, all 28 SGCs that operated in Year 1 continued their operation, while an additional 12 schools implemented SGCs, bringing the total to 40 out of all 47 schools in Hartford, when you include Adult Education.

#### Schools with new SGCs in the 2010-11 school year included:

1. Annie Fisher STEM
2. Betances Early Reading Lab
3. Burr Elementary
4. Clark Elementary
5. Dwight/Bellizzi Asian Studies Academy
6. Maria Sanchez Elementary
7. Martin Luther King
8. Mary Hooker Magnet
9. McDonough Expeditionary Learning\*
10. Milner Core Knowledge
11. Rawson Middle Grades Academy
12. Weaver Journalism & Media Academy

### Updated Evaluation Criteria

Last year, Hartford SGCs focused on accomplishing only three of the seven responsibilities outlined in the Board's Policy:

1. Analysis of student achievement data & revision of the School Accountability Plan
2. Development and approval of the school budget
3. Creation of a school compact

This year, SGCs were also expected to take on the remaining four duties:

4. Principal recommendation (in the event of a vacancy)
5. Advising the principal on programmatic and operational improvements
6. Promotion of the school in respect to the school choice process
7. Advising the principal on the parent survey and parental involvement issues

### New Training Model

In direct response to needs made public by many SGC members last year, the District decreased the length of new SGC orientation training, increased the amount of training opportunities specifically focused on the budget and school accountability plan, and added new training resources.

Whereas SGC training last year consisted of three days of team building and one day of content, this year's trainings included one day of team building and four days of content:

- Team Building for new SGC members led by Leadership Greater Hartford (LGH)
- Review of SGC Roles & Responsibilities
- School Budgeting (five offerings)
- School Accountability Plans (two offerings, one provided by LGH)
- School Compact (two offerings, one provided by LGH)

In addition to these 5 training sessions, the following resources were provided:

- Comprehensive SGC Handbook describing key concepts, duties, and deadlines
- Training session just for SGC principals on how to effectively execute their role
- Networking session for SGC parent members and all school PTO members

\* The District reported that McDonough Elementary actually launched an SGC in 2009-2010, though no data was available to confirm.

- Creation of an online, self-guided budget training via a partnership between Leadership Greater Hartford (LGH), Hartford Public Schools, UConn, and Metro-Hartford Information Systems, released in February 2011
- Optional SGC process coaches assigned to individual SGCs (trained by LGH)
- Content experts available to SGCs or individuals upon request (trained by LGH)

## Training Utilization

While the five content-specific trainings were not mandatory for SGC members this past year, Achieve Hartford! chose to analyze the training attendance data collected by the District to understand how trainings were utilized by new and 2nd-year SGCs. The first two trainings were specifically designed for SGCs that were newly implemented this year, though new members within 2nd-year SGCs were welcome to attend as well.

Trainings	% of SGCs attending	% New SGCs attending	Total members trained	Avg % each new SGC	Avg # new SCG parents trained	Avg % new SGC parents trained
<b>Team Building</b>	35%	92%	75	61%	3	63%
<b>Roles, Responsibilities</b>	33%	83%	60	47%	2	43%
<b>Budget</b>	43%	75%	62	42%	1	25%
<b>School Acct'ly Plan</b>	63%	92%	87	41%	2	26%
<b>School Compact</b>	40%	75%	53	38%	2	30%

### Highlights:

- 28 of the 40 SGCs attended at least one training
- All 12 new SGCs attended trainings
- Six out of 12 new SGCs attended all five trainings, along with one 2nd-year SGC:
  1. Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi
  2. Betances Early Reading Lab School
  3. Burr Elementary
  4. Core Knowledge Academy at Milner
  5. Mary Hooker Magnet School for Environmental Sciences
  6. Sanchez School
 + Kennelly School (2nd-year SGC)
- The following 12 schools did not attend any of the five content-specific trainings:
  1. Achievement First
  2. America's Choice at SAND
  3. Annie Fisher Montessori
  4. Bulkeley Lower/Upper High School
  5. Classical Magnet School
  6. Global Communications
  7. Hartford Magnet Middle School
  8. Journalism and Media Academy
  9. Naylor School
  10. Noah Webster Micro Society School
  11. Parkville Community School
  12. Sport and Medical Sciences Academy
- The School Accountability Plan training was the most widely attended training
- For those SGCs that could attend the school budget training, only an average of 1 parent from each SGC was able to attend

## Membership Makeup

### Policy Provisions

While four schools - America's Choice at SAND, Betances Early Reading Lab School, Core Knowledge Academy at Milner and Latino Studies Academy at Burns - were subject to State SGC policy in regards to membership this past year, the other 36 SGCs in Hartford were governed by the Hartford Board of Education's SGC policy, which stipulates the following:

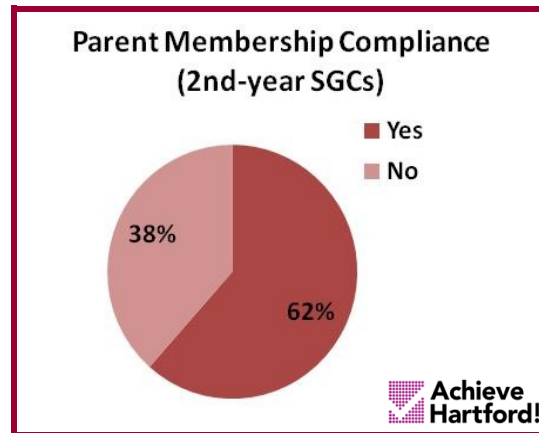
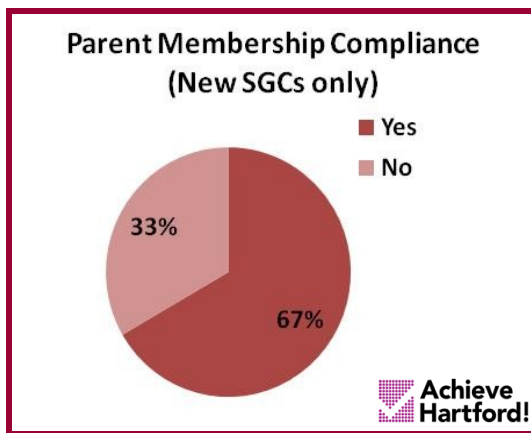
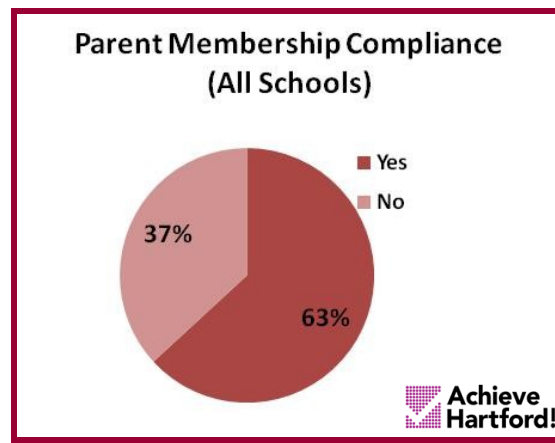
- SGC membership shall not exceed 12 members
- Parents or legal guardians should comprise at least half of the membership of each SGC
- The remaining members may be selected from among teachers, school staff, community members, school partners, and students (in the case of high schools)

### Compliance with the 50% Parent Membership Requirement

Based on data received from the District, each SGC's total membership information is displayed in **Insert A** of this report. Highlights from the data include the following:

- On average, each SGC in Hartford had 10 members in 2010-2011
- While some schools had a very high number of parents, only 63% of SGCs in Hartford were able to meet the 50% parent membership requirement
- 100% of magnet schools were in compliance, as relates to membership
- Only 48% of neighborhood schools were in compliance
- New SGCs averaged a higher compliance percentage (67%) than 2nd-year SGCs (62%)

A summary of parent membership compliance is represented in the graphs below:



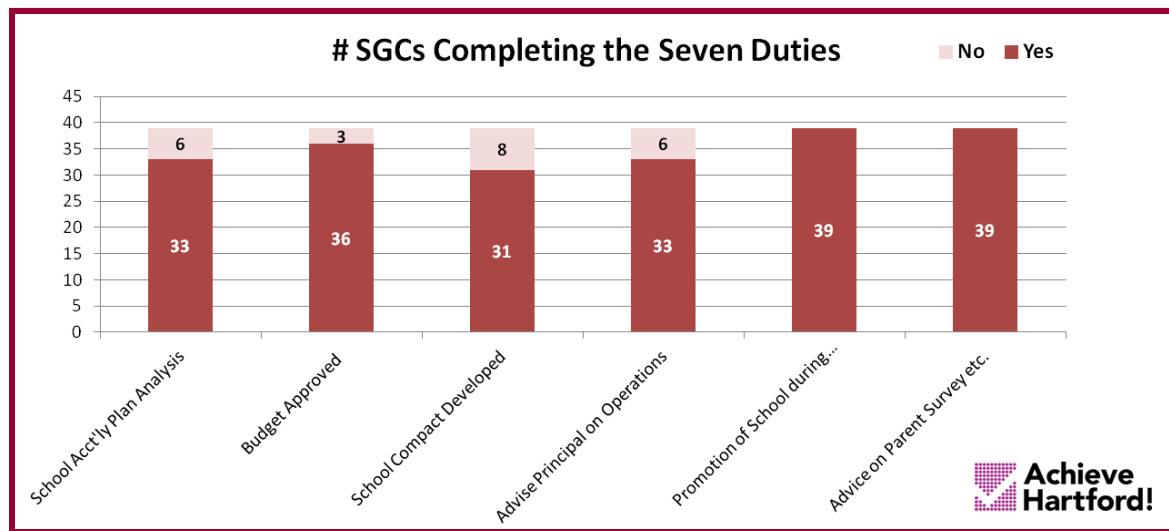
**Note:** Adult Education, which serves older students, and the Latino Studies Academy at Burns, which was reconstituted halfway through the year, are not included in this data.

## Accomplishment of SGC Duties

The seven main duties of SGCs in Hartford are:

1. Analysis of student achievement data in preparation of the School Accountability Plan
2. Development and approval of the school's budget
3. Creation and development of the school compact
4. Advise the principal on programmatic and operational improvements
5. Promotion of the school with respect to the choice application process
6. Advise the principal on conducting a parent survey and on parental involvement issues
7. Principal recommendation (in the event of a vacancy)

As we have reported, Hartford maintained 40 School Governance Councils in Year 2. The chart below illustrates progress of 39 SGCs (excluding Burns) across six of seven duties, based on data received from the District.



The seventh task of “principal recommendation” is not included because it only applied to the 10 SGCs that faced a principal vacancy this past year. It should be noted that in all cases where the SGC was able to influence the hiring process, its role was critical. Indeed, in one case, the SGC’s recommended candidate was not the applicant preferred by the District, but nonetheless received the appointment.

While 29 of 39 SGCs were able to complete all six duties and 85% of all SGCs completed most of their duties, six schools in particular struggled to complete half of their responsibilities.

These schools were:

1. CommPACT at MD Fox (2/6 completed)
2. Core Knowledge Academy at Milner (3/6 completed)
3. High School Inc. (3/6 completed)
4. Journalism and Media Academy (3/6 completed)
5. Law and Government Academy (3/6 completed)
6. Mary Hooker Environmental Sciences (3/6 completed)

Despite 39 of 39 SGCs reporting having advised their principals on the 2010-11 School Climate and Satisfaction Surveys, 77 percent of parents district-wide did not participate in the survey, leaving room for improvement in SGC outreach efforts.

## Performance Relative to Site-Based Management

Site-based management is defined as the delegation of decision-making authority to individual schools in a way that enables shared decision-making among the principal, teachers, parents, community members and students<sup>1</sup>. Provisions within Hartford's SGC Policy reflect a serious effort by the District and Board of Education to make SGCs in Hartford models of effective site based management. In addition to membership requirements that encourage shared decision-making, Hartford's SGC policy stipulates the following:

- All members are equal partners in decision-making and all decisions are made by consensus or a two-thirds majority vote where consensus is not achieved and a vote may be required.
- The co-chairs shall set meeting agendas, preside over meetings of the Council, etc.
- The principal shall be a non-voting member of the Council

To evaluate whether SGCs are functioning well with true shared decision-making taking place, Achieve Hartford! administered a survey to more than 160 SGC members, conducted informal interviews with various SGC members, and put together three case studies to represent the status of site-based management taking place in Hartford.

### Survey Design & Results

The survey questions were designed to assess the following concepts that our research indicates are essential to effective site-based management:

- The degree to which SGC members feel well-prepared to take on their duties
- The degree to which authority is being shared among members of the SGC
- How well the SGC functions as a team
- The role of student achievement as a factor in decision making

### Highlights

While the average responses for each rated survey question are displayed in **Insert B** of this report, key takeaways - categorized by the research criteria that guided the development of our questions - are noted in the table below:

Key Element	Criteria for Success	Key Takeaways
<b>Council Preparedness</b>	Councils understand their role in policy making and have received sufficient training to fulfill that role. <sup>2</sup>	Council members reported that their knowledge was sufficient enough to recommend changes to both the budget and school accountability plan.
<b>Real Authority</b>	People at the school site must have "real" authority over resources and policies that affect teaching and learning. <sup>3</sup>	Council members reported that their contributions to the budget were meaningful and that parent and principal co-chairs shared authority.
<b>Team Dynamic</b>	Effective councils have an internal dynamic that is cooperative, collaborative, and values the voice of each member. <sup>4</sup>	Council members reported feeling very comfortable sharing their opinions during meetings, believing that their SGC functioned well as a team, and that members have an equal voice during meetings.
<b>Focus on Student Achievement</b>	In order to improve school performance, a council's attention should be focused towards that end. <sup>5</sup>	Council members reported considering the impact on student achievement in every decision they made and feeling confident that actions taken by their SGC would improve student achievement.

Responses to the rated survey questions once again painted an overall positive picture of SGCs in Hartford. When we compared answers from Year 1 to Year 2, we found that for three questions in particular, positive change took place this year. In Year 2, SGC members:

- agreed more strongly that there was flexibility in the budget to make meaningful change
- agreed more strongly this year that they were sufficiently prepared to tackle the budget and to analyze data as it relates to the School Accountability Plan.



Of note, when comparing the results of rated questions between Year 1 and Year 2, we found that, on average, the responses from principals were slightly higher than the average council member response. This tells us that principals in Hartford may have felt more optimistic about the level of capacity of their SGC and how well their SGC is functioning than their fellow council members.

Responses to the survey's open-ended questions brought out a slightly more balanced view of SGC operations. On the positive side, the open-ended questions highlighted how very empowered SGC members felt in their ability to advise the principal on a great deal of programmatic and budgetary issues that range from gaps in after school programming to student discipline to more strategically utilizing paraprofessionals. In addition, council members praised the opportunity they were given to advise the principal on issues related to parental involvement, and reported their opinions being sought after often.

On the areas for improvement side, the open-ended questions brought to light two particularly compelling insights related to site-based management:

1. Council members from one SGC to another reported a drastically different experience in their level of involvement in the budgeting process. While some SGCs went through their budget line-item-by-line-item over two full meetings, others reported being rushed through their budget with little to no opportunity to ask questions.
2. In regards to the SGC's responsibility to influence the promotion of their school during the choice process, many council members reported a lack of opportunity to influence the promotion of the school.

### **Case Studies**

As part of this year's evaluation, Achieve Hartford! met with SGC members from a number of schools to more fully understand the factors that result in the varying levels of capacity among SGCs in Hartford.

Three schools were identified as SGCs being in different stages of development and - based on informal conversation with SGC members from across the district - being representative of the status of other SGCs in Hartford. The three schools identified for case studies were:

- University High School of Science & Engineering
- Kennelly School
- Core Knowledge Academy at Milner

Phone and in-person interviews were conducted to complement the data collected from surveys and the membership data provided by the District. The goal of each case study was to illuminate both challenges and best practices from which other SGCs can learn in order to increase an SGC's capacity going forward. The following four pages summarize findings from each study.

**University High School of Science & Engineering (UHSSE)**

*Success through Process*

With 10 SGC members that include staff of the University of Hartford, three suburban parents and two Hartford parents, the SGC at UHSSE in 2010-2011 was functioning at an extremely high level of capacity. Interviews with three SGC members revealed what lies at the heart of their success: great process. Not only did UHSSE provide other SGCs with best practices via their innovative principal selection process, but the numerous small processes they utilized are exemplary in ensuring their SGC operates smoothly.

Small Processes

- An extremely focused and timed agenda prepared by SGC co-chairs for every meeting ensured that meetings rarely, if ever, exceeded the time allotted.
- Information sharing between SGC members ensured that those who miss a training still learned the major lessons and takeaways.
- Meeting minutes were documented in detail so people who missed a meeting could catch up.
- A formal voting process (Robert's Rules of Order) ensured that all were involved in decision making.
- Each SGC duty had a timeline attached to it to ensure it was fulfilled efficiently.

Larger Processes

- UHSSE created its own SGC operating manual to explain exactly how it should operate. This ensures that as membership changed, no one had to recreate procedure.
- In order to choose a new principal, UHSSE created its own selection process to supplement the work done by the District's Talent Office. The process involved SGC members observing and participating in discussion during first round interviews, as well as an incredibly well-executed "Town Meeting" forum, which featured more than the following components:
  - A school-wide student survey conducted and culled for the top 8 questions
  - One teacher and one parent moderating the forum
  - Written summary of each candidate's resume given to the audience
  - All questions typed, with parents, students and staff as question readers
  - Rating cards given to the audience to assess candidates
  - Highly structured SGC interviews of each candidate, with candidates preparing answers to some questions beforehand
  - Separate group (staff, students, parents) discussion of each candidate at the conclusion of the forum, with group ratings submitted to the SGC
  - Consolidation of SGC interview and group ratings, and a vote by the SGC for one candidate name to be forwarded on to HPS

**Takeaway:**

Having well thought out processes in place is absolutely essential to both operating an effective SGC and to sustaining that level of effectiveness over time. The Hartford Public School District invested heavily in ensuring that all SGCs have access to "process coaches," provided by Leadership Greater Hartford, to empower SGC members and assist the SGC in creating a collaborative culture<sup>6</sup>. The philosophy at work was simply that good process leads to effective governance.

Good process was common among all of the most effective SGCs, according to our observations in the field. It extended from the way in which SGC members were selected to the way in which meetings were scheduled, and from the way in which meetings were run to the way in which SGC responsibilities were carried out.

## **E.B. Kennelly Elementary School**

### *Principal-Led Success*

In its second year, Kennelly's 12-member school governance council was one that both teachers and parents clamored to get a seat on. With Principal Dart's departure this summer and many SGC members' term limits expiring, the challenge facing Kennelly next year is two-fold:

1. To seamlessly transition a new principal and new members into SGC operations; and
2. To take an SGC that has been functioning well thus far to a whole new level of capacity.

Interviews with three Kennelly SGC members highlight the impressive status that Kennelly's SGC – and many others in Hartford – have achieved, but must still enhance in order to reach the optimum level of site-based management.

#### Great Marketing

- Principal Peter Dart recognized the confusion that both teachers and parents had in distinguishing the responsibilities of the SGC from those of the School Improvement Team and other school committees. To address this, he created a "Decision-Making Continuum," which spelled out how to lodge - and resolve - concerns, depending on the issue.
- Seeking to establish the authority of Kennelly's SGC, Principal Dart placed the largest issues under the purview of the SGC, immediately increasing the level of interest that both teachers and parents had in participating on the SGC.
- While certain changes set in motion by the Kennelly SGC were well-known to the school community, it bears mentioning that many of the decisions made by the SGC must be better communicated. Oftentimes, the school community was completely unaware of what the SGC is working on, though very interested.

#### High Expectations

- To give the SGC the reputation it deserves, the SGC derived a pact for all members that required two things: (1) maintain 100% confidentiality on budget decisions impacting school staff, and (2) make decisions based on what is in the best interest of the school and not based on any special interests.
- The impact of this commitment was seen when a parent voted for budgetary and programmatic changes at Kennelly that led to resources being taken away from her own child's classroom. Likewise, teachers voted to eliminate positions in one area in order to make room for new positions in reading, where students struggled.
- Further, with all SGC meetings set at the beginning of the year, all council members were expected to maintain 100% attendance.

#### Moving from GOOD to GREAT

- With the Principal still setting the agenda (it is reviewed by the parent co-chair), the SGC was still entirely dependent upon its principal to determine its areas of focus.
- Similarly, when it came time to analyze student data, the SGC was entirely dependent upon the principal's selection and breakdown of data. Principal Dart and SGC members agreed that a new level of accountability for school outcomes could be reached if SGC members had the time and capacity to organize data and set the agenda each month.
- Additionally, while the District-provided budget training was praised, Kennelly SGC members felt more training still was needed to effectively address budget concerns.
- Lastly, with a lack of knowledge among SGC members of education pedagogy and practice, some SGC members felt that a new area of training should be created in order to bring parents and community members up to speed on effective education practices at the school and classroom level – not to make them experts, but to help them better understand academic issues and ask the right questions.

**Takeaway:**

Kennelly's SGC was a great example of the importance of communicating to the entire school community exactly what an SGC is and does. Only through effective, savvy communication can an SGC gain the reputation that every school wants its SGC to have - a reputation that can impact how easy or hard it is to attract highly committed members each year.

Achieve Hartford! believes that the level of success that the Kennelly SGC has achieved thus far is indicative of the status that many SGCs in Hartford have achieved. They have a highly committed group of teachers and parents willing to put their own interests aside for what's in the best interest of their school; they have a highly committed principal who believes wholeheartedly that having a high-capacity SGC will make the job easier in the long run and the school better by every measure; but, at the same time, they have council members who do not yet have the level of capacity they need in order to drive the direction of their SGC. Meeting agendas, budget discussions, and key data questions continued to be led by the principal.

The reality in Hartford is this: Unlike UHSE's SGC, where members maintained a high level of comfort with budgets and data, most SGCs in Hartford had members whose capacities to analyze student performance data and school budgets were limited. These SGC members will continue to be in need of great training provided by the District, and in need of principals who can invest time bringing them "up to speed" on what they need to know in order to contribute fully, and for their SGC to reach the optimum level of site based management.

Higher Capacity ... Growing Capacity ... **Unknown Capacity**

**Core Knowledge Academy at Milner**  
**The Parent Recruitment Challenge**

In its first year of SGC operation, Milner had a good number of parental involvement events from which to draw parents in order to fill its SGC. But, with a PTO that had members and good meeting attendance but almost no one willing to take on leadership roles, Principal Richardson knew it might be tough to recruit parents to sit on a governance council. As it turned out, it was even tougher than he thought. Surveying parents at the school's first open house in the fall led to seven interested parents, exactly the number needed to be in compliance with the State's SGC policy - a policy to which they and three other SGCs in Hartford are bound. Meetings got started even before the mandatory January start date, but by January, with a few meetings already under its belt, the council had already lost six of its seven parents, who did not remain active on the SGC. Administrators and teachers faithfully completed the school compact and submitted its budget on time, but did not maintain a "real" SGC. With no shortage of parental involvement at the school, Milner was a great example of the challenge that some schools face in convincing parents to serve on the SGC. The problem - and some potential solutions - are explored below.

**Parent Support Resources at Milner**

- A fully-staffed Parent Resource Center on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor
- GED and ESL classes offered to parents every week
- A "Parent Institute" program that teaches parents about what their students are learning and how to support their learning at home
- A half-time parent coordinator (Catholic Charities) and a full-time Family Resource Aide
- Multiple events throughout the year, including Back to School Night, Bingo, Coffee Time with the Principal, Open House, Dinner and a Movie, etc.

**Parent Involvement Outcomes**

- Well-attended parent teacher conferences
- Great attendance during open houses, talent shows and student presentations
- Great use of Adult Ed and ESL classes
- Large (40 member) PTO with well-attended meetings

### Underlying Issues to Address

- Parents may have lacked the comfort and confidence level needed to take on a leadership role – whether as an officer in the PTO or as a member of the SGC
- Families are very transient and thus may not have been fully invested in the school, as demonstrated by the many parents each year that leave the Milner neighborhood (Only 12 of the 45 8<sup>th</sup> graders this past year at Milner had attended Milner in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- The formality of an SGC could also be a turn-off to parents, who were used to being parents, not “governors” of the school
- While love for their children may draw parents to all the other family-related events at Milner, perhaps parents need more than intrinsic motivation to commit the time asked of them in a leadership capacity.

### Possible Solutions

- Create a stronger pipeline. Asking parents to go from “parents” to “governors” may have been too big a jump. Milner should think about creating a parent training program that lives somewhere in the middle of these responsibilities, focusing on such topics as “How to interpret my student’s report card” and “How to spend \$5,000 in Title I money.”
- “Piggy back” on popular events. Identify those events that have a high chance of attracting parents and give parents a taste for governance responsibilities by adding a discussion at the end of the event on “How Milner compares to other Hartford Schools.”
- Compensate parents for their time. Gift cards have been powerful incentives to parents in the past at Milner, especially around Christmas, and could be used strategically.
- Change the name. By substituting another word for “governance” in the SGC label, a different perception could be created that could resonate with parents.
- Use Title I dollars strategically. Think of a way to use Title I dollars at Milner to encourage not just parent participation at events, but parent planning of events, so as to address the need for parental leadership at Milner.

### Case Study Takeaways

Observations from these three case studies and from informal conversations with SGC members reveal two things:

- 1. Some SGCs were more empowered and higher functioning than others; and**
- 2. So much of an SGC’s success was dependent upon the principal.**

Site-based management is about people coming together to make informed governance decisions that will improve the quality of education at their school. To be able to contribute fully, SGC members must be present; they must be well-prepared; they must share authority with their principal; and they must be able to work well as a team. The principal plays a key role in all of these areas, and just as not all SGC members maintain the same level of capacity to take on their responsibilities, not all principals maintain the same level of capacity to cultivate a high-functioning SGC.

Our three case studies revealed three principals who all believe in the power of a high-capacity SGC to impact student achievement—and who invested significant amounts of time in cultivating a high-capacity SGC. While it is clear to us from our observations that most principals had a real desire to educate, empower and share leadership with their SGC members, not all principals fully bought into this. Because an empowered SGC requests more data and more budget scenarios from the principal, perhaps some principals prefer not to have an empowered SGC. Or, perhaps their school is running well enough without an empowered SGC, in their eyes. Regardless of the rationale, if the District believes that high-functioning, empowered SGCs lead to and help sustain high student achievement, they must address the varying levels of empowerment that exist among SGCs, and they must do this not simply by training SGC members, but also by training principals.

## Commentary and Recommendations

In 2010-2011, the second year of implementation, 40 out of 47 schools in Hartford operated SGCs, with a total of 378 members, while the District increased its capacity to support SGCs by:

- Hiring an SGC Coordinator and tasking her with the creation of an SGC Handbook, the systematic collection of data related to policy compliance, the internal evaluation of SGCs which included a ranking system, clear communication related to expectations of SGCs, and the facilitation of trainings and networking sessions.
- Investing in a variety of training mechanisms and tools to help SGC members - old and new - build their capacity to contribute to the improvement of their schools.

As a result of this, Year 2 of SGC implementation yielded impressive results, which included:

- SGC members feeling more prepared to analyze student data and school budgets this year
- 85% of SGCs completing the majority of their responsibilities
- 100% of new SGCs participating in at least four trainings
- Greater than 50 participants at each of the five content-specific trainings
- SGCs providing very high levels of site based management within almost all 40 schools

Areas of improvement will continue to center around the recruitment of parents (only 63% of SGCs reached compliance levels) and the fact that some SGC members still do not feel they are empowered to affect real change at their school. The following table represents recommendations for improving SGC implementation in Year 3 and beyond, categorized into five important areas:

<b>Data Tracking</b>	While there is now a process for data collection in place at central office, a system should be put in place whereby SGC co-chairs submit membership data and data on the completion of duties electronically after every meeting so that the District can gauge the performance of SGCs at multiple times throughout the year.
<b>Communication</b>	At the school level, publicizing council member make-up, contact information, meeting times and locations, and agenda items would be helpful for stakeholders within the school community to engage with SGCs and monitor progress.
<b>Recruitment of Parents</b>	The District should focus resources and technical assistance at those schools that continue to struggle to attract parents. The recruitment of parents will only become more difficult when State policy provisions requiring seven parents take effect.
<b>Principal Training</b>	Because school leaders are so key to the success of SGCs, the District should create a training that emphasizes empowering SGC members to take leadership roles. The training should be led by principals who will motivate their colleagues in this regard.  Because school budgets still represent an area that SGC members want more training in, the District should create a training of principals to demonstrate the best way to bring SGC members "up to speed" on the budgeting process in Hartford.
<b>School Promotion</b>	The District should encourage principals to utilize their SGCs to a much higher degree in order to strategize and execute successful school marketing campaigns. Parents on the SGC are uniquely attuned to the best techniques for engaging new families.

While areas for improvement persist, the vast majority of 2010-2011 SGCs were strong decision-making bodies, with members empowered to effect positive change at their schools. Given statewide implementation of SGCs, Hartford's early success provides a number of best practices. With so many parents and community members taking part in substantive ways, Hartford is on course to establish a national model for district-wide implementation of SGCs.

### Endnotes

1. Reynolds, Larry J. 1997. *Successful Site-Based Management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
2. David, Jane L. 1994. "School-Based Decision Making: Kentucky's Test of Decentralization." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (9): 706-12 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20405209>.
3. Wohlstetter, Priscilla. 1995. "Getting School-Based Management Right: What Works and what Doesn't." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 77 (1): 22-6 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20405479>.
4. Parker, Kirsten, and Kenneth Leithwood. 2000. "School Councils' Influence on School and Classroom Practice." *Peabody Journal of Education* 75 (4, Educational Accountability Effects: An International Perspective): 37-65 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1493052>.
5. Wohlstetter, Priscilla, Roxane Smyer, and Susan Albers Mohrman. 1994. "New Boundaries for School-Based Management: The High Involvement Model." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 16 (3): 268-86 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/116440>.
6. [www.leadershipgh.org/programs/consulting-training/schoolgovernance.html](http://www.leadershipgh.org/programs/consulting-training/schoolgovernance.html)

**2011 SGC Membership Level Compliance**

School	# of Members as of June 2011	# of Parents	% Parents	Compliance (Yes/No)
1 Adult Education Center	9	n/a	n/a	n/a
2 America's Choice @ SAND	6	2	33%	No
3 Annie Fisher Montessori	6	3	50%	Yes
4 Breakthrough	8	5	63%	Yes
5 Breakthrough II	10	6	60%	Yes
6 Bulkeley Lower/Upper	7	3	43%	No
7 Classical Magnet	8	4	50%	Yes
8 CommPACT at MD Fox	5	1	20%	No
9 Culinary Arts Academy	8	3	38%	No
10 Engineering and Green Technology	5	2	40%	No
11 Global Communications	9	5	56%	Yes
12 Hartford Magnet Middle School	12	6	50%	Yes
13 High School Inc.	13	5	38%	No
14 Kennelly Elementary	12	6	50%	Yes
15 Kinsella Magnet for Performing Arts	14	8	57%	Yes
16 Latino Studies Academy at Burns	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
17 Law & Government Academy	10	5	50%	Yes
18 Naylor Elementary	9	5	56%	Yes
19 Noah Webster MicroSociety	12	6	50%	Yes
20 Nursing Academy	10	5	50%	Yes
21 Parkville Community School	9	4	44%	No
22 Pathways To Technology	9	5	56%	Yes
23 Rawson Elementary	8	3	38%	No
24 Simpson-Waverly Elementary	8	4	50%	Yes
25 Sport and Medical Sciences Academy	13	8	62%	Yes
26 University High School of Science & Engineering	10	5	50%	Yes
27 West Middle Elementary	14	6	43%	No
28 Wish Elementary	7	3	43%	No
29 Annie Fisher STEM	14	8	57%	Yes
30 Asian Studies Academy at Dwight/Bellizzi	12	7	58%	Yes
31 Betances Early Reading Lab	11	6	55%	Yes
32 Burr Elementary	10	5	50%	Yes
33 Clark Elementary	13	8	62%	Yes
34 Core Knowledge Academy at Milner	13	6	46%	No
35 Journalism & Media Academy	8	3	38%	No
36 Maria Sanchez Elementary	10	5	50%	Yes
37 Martin Luther King	15	7	47%	No
38 Mary Hooker Environmental Sciences	6	4	67%	Yes
39 McDonough Elementary (Now Expeditionary Learning)	8	4	50%	Yes
40 Rawson Middle Grades Academy	7	2	29%	No
<b>Average</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>63%</b>	

**Notes:**

The last 12 SGCs listed are those that are "new," launched in 2010-2011.

\*Data from the Latino Studies Academy at Burns is not included because the SGC was reconstituted half-way through the year.



## 2011 SGC Site Based Management Survey Results

Scale of "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree)

### **Council Preparedness**

My knowledge of the school budget was sufficient enough for me to recommend changes.

1 2 3 4 5

My knowledge of student achievement data was sufficient enough for me to recommend changes to the School Accountability Plan.

1 2 3 4 5

### **Real Authority**

There were enough decisions to be made in our school's budget for SGC members to contribute meaningfully.

1 2 3 4 5

Our parent co-chair shares authority with the principal and sets meeting agendas.

1 2 3 4 5

### **Team Dynamic**

I am comfortable with sharing my opinions at council meetings.

1 2 3 4 5

SGC members have an equal voice during meetings; no one person or people dominate(s) the conversation.

1 2 3 4 5

As a whole, I believe that my school's SGC functions well as a team.

1 2 3 4 5

### **Focus on Student Achievement**

My SGC considers how every decision made by the council will impact student achievement.

1 2 3 4 5

I am confident that because of actions taken by our SGC, student achievement at our school will improve.

1 2 3 4 5

### **New Questions**

Our SGC has communicated progress made to parents, staff, students, and other stakeholders at our school.

1 2 3 4 5

Having a coach assigned to our SGC has been helpful.

1 2 3 4 5

Scale of "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree)