

27%

Renters in Connecticut – over 100,000 – that spend over 50% of their income on housing.

23%

The percentage of students in urban districts who switch districts during a school year. 58% of these children switch schools because of housing issues.

12%

The increase in family homelessness between 2009 and 2011.

824

The number of children who were homeless on a single night in January 2011.

## Housing & Educational Success: Closely Connected

A home, at its core, is shelter from the elements.

A home is also security or, as Maya Angelou has told us, “the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

But for children, their families and their future, a home is the foundation of opportunity. If it is affordable, of high quality and well-situated, a home can be the springboard to educational success and economic independence.

If it is overcrowded, unaffordable, substandard and located in an overburdened school district and a community with few services, a home will provide little, if any, support.

In Connecticut, the achievement gap between white and minority children is the largest in the nation based upon the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009). In national tests given to 4th and 8th graders, results showed that low-income students in Connecticut performed at dramatically lower levels than non-low-income students – sometimes up to three grade levels behind. And while the achievement gap is not exclusively an urban problem, children at the wrong end of the achievement gap too often live in tenuous circumstances.

- Of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns, 10% of the housing stock is affordable in only 31 communities that tend to have the most overburdened school districts, with neighborhoods that typically lack access to fresh foods, community services, youth programs and other needs. Those families, and their children, are barred by the high cost and limited supply of housing from choosing communities that boast many services children and their families require, and schools with enough resources to serve individual needs.
- Of Connecticut's 1.4 million households, 27% of the 412,000 that rent their homes earn so little – half the median income or less – and pay so much in rent – half that income or more – that they have very little left over for food, clothing, healthcare, transportation and other needs.



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They are, therefore, left to make do. They send their children to school between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., where devoted and experienced professionals attempt to enhance their education. Then, between 3 p.m. and 9 a.m., they return to environments where the concerted efforts made during the school day often receive little reinforcement: homes that are often overcrowded, plagued by allergens and other healthcare hazards, located in neighborhoods that are unsafe or lack services, and yet so costly that their parents must work long hours to make ends meet rather than remain home to supervise homework and recreation.

Overall, housing quality, affordability and location can significantly impact school performance. Families who are homeless, or frequently move, may be forced to transfer their children from school to school in mid-year, increasing the likelihood of classroom and social difficulties. Insecure housing situations can lead to emotional and behavioral problems, and substandard housing can cause physical maladies.

To provide all Connecticut households with a wider array of educational choices that can work best for their children's individual needs, and to offer the benefits of diversity and an integrated student body, Connecticut has established the Open Choice program, magnet schools and charter schools in addition to its neighborhood schools. Those options tend to be oversubscribed, however, and none provide the other benefits that often accrue to families that can live in those school districts or neighborhoods 24/7. **A more comprehensive answer will be affordable homes and high-resource schools in both cities and suburbs so parents can choose the educational and community options that work best for their children's particular needs. Not suburb, or city, but both.**

A wide range of research and reporting has been done on the connections between housing and school performance, and housing and the well-being of students.

## Housing and School Performance

- School and residential changes make it more likely a student will be retained in a grade and can reduce the chances that a student will graduate. *Erik Eckholm, To Avoid Student Turnover, Parents Get Rent Help: The New York Times (June 2008)*
- Students who transferred schools at least twice were half as likely to be proficient in reading as their stable peers. *Phillip Lovell, Julia Issacs, The Impact of the Mortgage Crisis on Children: First Focus (May, 2008)*
- Mobile students are more likely to underperform in reading and mathematics, and exhibit negative behavioral traits. *Phillip Lovell, Julia Issacs, The Impact of the Mortgage Crisis on Children: First Focus (May 2008)*
- Poorer, lower-performing school districts have the most mobility. In the 2006-2007 school year, the most affluent districts' average stability rate was 95.2% while the average in the poorest districts (including Waterbury, Norwich, New Haven, New Britain, Hartford and Meriden) was 77.2%. *Peter Prowda, CT Dep't of Education Research Bulletin: District Reference Groups (2006)*

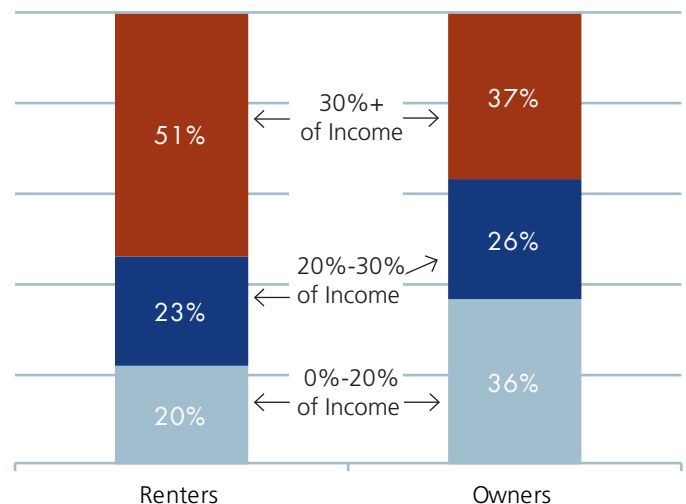
- 58% of mobility cases are related to residential moves, 42% to school problems, suggesting housing cost reduction can allow low-income families to stay in their homes. *Virginia Rhodes, Kids on the Move (2005)*

## Housing and Student Well-Being

- People who spend more than 30% of their income on housing are 31% more likely to have fair or poor health and more than twice as likely to suffer depression. *James Dunn, Home is Where the Health Is: The Star (August 2008)*
- 1.1 million of 1.4 million housing structures in CT built before 1979 are likely to have lead paint that causes reading disabilities, hyperactivity, ADD, and behavioral problems. *Connecticut Commission on Children, Childhood Lead Poisoning (July 2008)*
- In substandard housing, broken pipes and leaking roofs create moisture, mold, rodent and insect infestation and, thus, subject children to asthma. *J. Peng, R. Rodriguez, S. Hewes, Asthma in Connecticut 2008: A Surveillance Report (2008)*
- 61% of CT homes were built before 1970, when asbestos was used in paints, tiles, and other materials. It is mostly present in 1930-'50 homes where low-income residents often live. *Connecticut Commission on Children, Childhood Lead Poisoning (July 2008)*
- Family homelessness rose 12% between 2010 and 2011 (CT Coalition to End Homelessness, CT Point In Time Count). Homeless children get sick more than non-homeless children (they receive inadequate nutrition, healthcare and safe/secure environments). They are more likely to suffer from emotional or behavioral problems. *Hart-Shegos and Associates, Homelessness and Its Effects of Children: Family Housing Fund (August 2008)*

## Percent of Income That CT Renters & Owners Paid Towards Housing Costs in 2010

Source: American Community Survey 2010 1-Year Estimates



50% of renters and 35% of owners in Connecticut spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs. These households have less money for other necessities, like food, clothing and healthcare.



## Major Studies

Recent studies have shed brighter light on the potential of housing policy to reduce the education achievement gap:

### **Integrating Affordable Housing in High-Resource, Low-Poverty School Districts Can Reduce the Achievement Gap**

*Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, MD* by Heather Schwartz.

The study tracked 850 children whose families were randomly assigned to public housing apartments throughout hundreds of neighborhoods in Montgomery County, Maryland. Among the nation's 20 wealthiest counties and the 16th largest school district, the County has implemented a housing policy that provides low-income children access to its low-poverty schools. Households earning incomes below the poverty line have lived in affluent neighborhoods and sent their children to schools where the vast majority of students come from middle- or upper-class families. Finding: public housing students in the lowest poverty schools substantially outperformed their public housing peers in higher poverty schools by the end of elementary school. Even more important, these students were catching up to non-poor students in the district – cutting an initial achievement gap in half by the end of elementary school.

### **Location, Opportunity Alone Don't Help: Services Must Be Integrated to Ensure School Success**

*Does Moving to Better Neighborhoods Lead to Better Schooling Opportunities? Parental School Choice in an Experimental Housing Voucher Program* by Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt

The study looks at HUD's Moving To Opportunity program and how the conditions of life for poor families facilitate or constrain their ability to engage new opportunities. Policymakers have assumed the opportunity for neighborhood change could spark families' escape from poverty and improve educational opportunities. The case examples demonstrate why officials need to integrate interventions that target schooling in conjunction with housing, mental health services, and employment assistance.

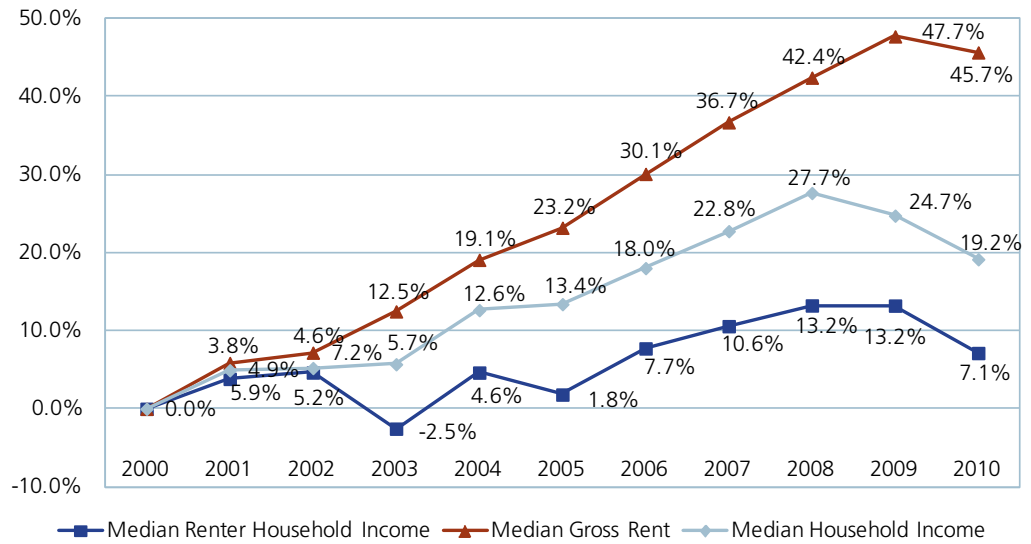
### **Supportive Housing Services Can Enhance Stability in Children's School and Home Life**

*The Role of Supportive Housing in Homeless Children's Well-Being: An Investigation of Child Welfare and Educational Outcomes* by Saahoon Hong and Kristine N. Piescher

Data on Minnesota children in homeless families found supportive housing services enhance children's school attendance and academic achievement, reduce child protective services involvement, and improve outcomes for those children compared to homeless peers.

## Growth in CT Median Gross Rent Compared to Median Renter Income, 2000-2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



Median household income rose by 46% in Connecticut over the last decade, but renter median income rose by just 7% while median gross rent rose by 19% during that same period of time.

### **The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education: A Research Summary** by Maya Brennan

The brief focuses on research suggesting stable, affordable housing not only provides children with enhanced opportunities for educational success but produces better outcomes.

### **Impacts on Health, Stress, School Performance, Support for Education**

*Annotated Bibliography: The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education* by the Center for Housing Policy

This bibliography looks at whether mobility affects home life and school performance, which strategies help families move to communities that have stronger school systems and support for education, whether affordable housing can reduce stress that leads to poor educational outcomes, and whether well-constructed and -managed affordable housing can help families avoid health hazards that adversely impact learning.

Not everything is known about the housing-education link. The MacArthur Foundation has funded a study that will look at "The Influence of Economic Integration on Social Networks." While experts agree low-income households derive benefits from living in economically-integrated neighborhoods and attending low-poverty schools, can social networks – the complex web of individuals' social relationships – shape outcomes among public housing residents? Can economically diverse networks increase access to information and opportunities and improve health and educational performance? This project will test whether adults and children living in economically-integrated public housing have more socioeconomically integrated social networks and whether economically-integrated public housing is associated with differences in health and educational outcomes.

Students who transferred schools **at least 2 times** were **50% less likely** to be proficient in reading as their stable peers.

Homeless children are **3 times more likely** to suffer from emotional and behavioral problems compared to peers.

## Promising Trends Toward A Game Plan

Governor Malloy has declared 2012 The Year of Education, with an agenda designed to improve teacher training and evaluation, curricula, school resources and other aspects of educational quality. He has also proposed an unprecedented investment in affordable housing: new capital, rental assistance, supportive services and a streamlined policymaking apparatus on top of such existing programs as HOMEConnecticut, which can serve as a planning and zoning tool for mixed-income housing in suburbs.

Equally important, efforts by Governor Malloy and his education commissioner to focus on the achievement gap have included attention to housing quality, affordability and location by the Achievement Gap Task Force. The Governor's efforts to enhance mass transit promise not only a reduction in costs – housing near transit costs less, is cheaper to heat, and reduces transportation costs from an average 19% of household budgets to 9% – but will provide access to jobs and housing/school district choice.

How can housing and education advocates close the achievement gap? Educators can be aware of their students' housing and home situations: do they live in overcrowded conditions? Are their families overburdened by housing costs? Are their communities considering housing proposals that can provide new, affordable housing choices, and that deserve support?

Programs such as HOMEConnecticut and other housing investments made by Governor Malloy will allow creation of affordable homes in many more communities with high-resource schools and a wider array of neighborhood services – by providing incentives that will spark higher density zoning, planning and development of homes for teachers, police, firefighters, nurses and other residents those communities need. But not all households living in cities with substandard homes and overburdened schools will want to leave. Their families, friends and community connections are in the city.

Therefore, housing advocates need a dual strategy: enhance urban schools and create a wider array of safe, secure, affordable housing options close to transit and other vital services in cities.

The new and enhanced Busway and transit lines provide the foremost opportunity to do this. Areas around stations can accommodate housing density – a vital ingredient in affordability – and be transformed into communities that attract workers and families interested in low-cost housing and transit in walkable, green, sustainable neighborhoods. That development can increase property values, attract new businesses and residents and, thus, grow the grand list of a city, providing new revenues to enhance city life, school resources and attract young families.

In addition, existing state and local revenues and resources can be strategically targeted to tipping-point neighborhoods to add value and, thus, attract new residents, businesses and services. Finally, housing stock can be improved by using preservation dollars recently proposed by Governor Malloy to upgrade existing homes; enforcing strong anti-bligh laws that improve housing conditions or cause transfer of homes to responsible owners; using land trusts to take possession of problem properties and transfer them to committed developers; and continuing investment in healthy homes programs that also enhance energy efficiency.

The convergence of housing and school performance – combined with development innovations and inspired leadership – offer a path toward closing the achievement gap. Coordinated policy can allow communities to capitalize on that opportunity.

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About the



The Partnership for Strong Communities is a statewide non-profit policy organization focused on fostering vibrant communities, eliminating homelessness and creating a range of affordable and supportive housing options. We believe a home is the foundation for strong neighborhoods, economic opportunity, healthy people, and educational success.

The Partnership connects key state and federal policymakers, local officials, corporate leaders and non-profit organizations so that public and private resources can be wisely used to affect positive changes in policies that make our communities better places to live and work.

The Partnership staffs two statewide campaigns: Reaching Home, which advocates for solutions to end homelessness; & HOMEConnecticut, aimed at creating more affordable housing throughout the state.

About the



The Partnership hosts practitioners, business executives and government leaders at our Hartford-based home, the Lyceum Resource and Conference Center. The Lyceum is the premier location in Central Connecticut for board meetings, trainings, seminars, and social events.

Purchased and renovated by the Melville Charitable Trust in 2004, the building now serves as a home for conferences, educational programs, discussions, and the exchange of ideas aimed at creating stronger communities.

Learn more at  
[www.LyceumCenter.org](http://www.LyceumCenter.org)