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Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) Selected as Inaugural Member of The Bridges Collaborative, A Nationwide Initiative to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education

(Hartford, Conn.) Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) announced today that it was selected 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. CREC is joining 55 other organizations—including 27 school districts, 17 charter schools, and 12 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.

CREC's core values — Demand Equity, Expect Excellence, Embrace Collaboration, and Act with Courage — are embodied in its everyday work for children and families. In the spring of 2020, CREC adopted a statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion:

“CREC is an intentionally diverse social justice organization whose members work to acknowledge, respect, and empathize with people of all different identifiers, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, education, age, ability, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, language, nationality, and religion. We commit to affirm and honor the lived experiences of others, to willingly challenge inherited beliefs and ideologies, and consequently learn, grow, and serve.”

Driven by this statement and the core values, CREC's commitment to increasing access to integrated schools is continually demonstrated in work with students in the 16 CREC Magnet Schools and the partnership with 27 districts in the Hartford Region Open Choice Program. CREC Magnet Schools and Open Choice serve over 10,000 urban and suburban students from various ethnic, socioeconomic, and racial backgrounds.

“CREC is thrilled to be joining this impressive group of organizations working around the country to ensure that all of our students benefit from the promise of public education,” said CREC Executive Director Greg Florio. “This year has not been easy for our students. We know that any effort to achieve successful school integration will not occur in a vacuum, which is why we are especially excited about the opportunity to connect with, engage and learn from other national school leaders. We are doing this for Connecticut's children and our community's future.”

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 minimal 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

integration approaches. 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 56 groups in this cohort sends a clear message: we will deliver the high-quality, integrated school experience that the next generation deserves," said Lallinger. "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](#)
- [About CREC](#)
- www.choosecrec.org

A full list of the inaugural members of the Bridges Collaborative is below.

Inaugural Members of Bridges Collaborative (56 total)

Arizona

- Tucson Unified School District

California

- Citizens of the World Charter School
- City Charter Schools
- High Tech High
- Larchmont Charter
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Oakland Unified School District
- Yu Ming Charter Schools

Colorado

- Colorado Springs School District 11
- DSST Public Schools
- Roaring Fork School District

Connecticut

- Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
- ELM City Communities (The Housing Authority of the City of New Haven)
- New Haven Housing Authority (Elm City)
- Elm City Montessori
- Hamden School District
- Hartford Public Schools
- New Haven Public Schools

Florida

- Miami Dade Public Schools

Illinois

- Housing Choice Partners

Indiana

- Enroll Indy

Kentucky

- Jefferson County Public Schools

Louisiana

- Housing NOLA
- Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle Orléans

Maryland

- Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP)
- City Neighbors
- Howard County Public Schools
- Montgomery County Public Schools

Massachusetts

- Boston Collegiate Charter School
- Cambridge Public Schools
- The Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity (METCO)
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Minnesota

- HousingLink

Missouri

- City Garden Montessori
- Urban Strategies, Inc.

New York

- Compass Charter School
- KIPP Beyond Middle School
- Prospect Charter Schools
- The Renaissance Charter Schools
- NYC Department of Education
- NYC Community School District #1 (Manhattan)
- NYC Community School District #13 (Brooklyn)

North Carolina

- Central Park School for Children
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools
- Wake County Public Schools
- Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School District
- Inlivan (Charlotte Housing Authority)

Ohio

- Shaker Heights Public School District

Pennsylvania

- Philadelphia School District

Rhode Island

- Blackstone Valley Prep

Texas

- Dallas Independent School District
- Fort Worth Independent School District
- Dallas Housing Authority
- Inclusive Communities Project (ICP)
- NestQuest Houston

Virginia

- Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services

Wisconsin

- Milwaukee Public Schools

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*The **Capitol Region Education Council** was established in 1966. Working with and for its member districts, CREC has developed a wide array of cost-effective and high-quality programs and services to meet the educational needs of children and adults in the region. CREC brings nearly five decades of experience in education, regional collaboration, and operations to provide innovative strategies and products that address the changing needs of school districts and their students, corporations, non-profits, and individual professions. CREC regularly serves 36 towns in Greater Hartford, offering more than 120 programs to more than 150,000 students annually. CREC manages more than 35 facilities throughout the area, including 16 interdistrict magnet schools and two magnet programs. More information about CREC and CREC's award-winning schools is available at www.crec.org.*