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**DISCOVERY INITIATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS  
TO STATE POLICY CHANGE**

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**Prepared for the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund by**

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The analyses and conclusions in this report solely reflect the perspective of the authors.

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## INTRODUCTION

Between 2002 and 2009 the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund (the Memorial Fund) engaged over 50 Connecticut communities and a number of statewide and regional organizations in the Discovery initiative. The goals of Discovery were to achieve specific objectives for early care and education and young children and to sustain attention to and influence policy related to early childhood issues.

The initiative's key strategy was to develop the capacities of a statewide network of communities and advocacy organizations to achieve early childhood education policy changes. Specific ways in which the Memorial Fund implemented this strategy included:

- Supporting a large number of communities across the state with a combination of relatively small grants and an array of technical assistance resources focused on building collaboration, encouraging parent engagement, and promoting community change.
- Supporting the early childhood work of a number of statewide and regional organizations and focusing on building capacity and supporting collaboration among four core statewide advocacy organizations and between these organizations and local communities.<sup>1</sup>
- Providing support for state agencies and initiatives through staff leadership and collaborative funding partnerships with state agencies.

The Memorial Fund – in the Discovery initiative and in its other investments and activities – operates within a broader social, economic, and political environment. Progress toward improvement in the early care and education system and the development and school success of Connecticut's young children depended not only on the specific contributions of the Discovery initiative and the Memorial Fund, but also on what happened in the environment. This became particularly evident as the 2008-2009 recession took hold, severely reducing the State's revenues and forcing substantial cuts in the State budget. In this economic and political environment, sustaining political and public commitment to early childhood services and system infrastructure became critical.

This paper presents an assessment of the contributions of the Discovery initiative to state-level policy change from 2002 through 2009, with a special focus on the 2007 to 2009 period. It was during this latter period that the initiative focused particularly on leveraging the State's commitment to early care and education and increasing the capacity of community and statewide organization grantees and other partners to work together on an early care and education agenda.

The first section outlines the framework used to guide this assessment and is followed by a description of the capacity building supports offered to the Discovery community and core statewide grantees and the Memorial Fund's approach to building the capacity of the state. The third section provides a brief description of the context in which early childhood policy change

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), Connecticut Parent Power, Connecticut Voices for Children (CVC), and the Early Childhood Alliance.

was pursued. The rest of the paper applies the framework in examining the contributions of the Discovery initiative to state level policy outcomes. Data for this analysis came from two major sources – in-depth interviews conducted in 2009 and 2010 with legislators, statewide grantee organization staff, and other advocates and stakeholders involved in early childhood policy work, and a comparison of the legislative climate related to early childhood issues between 2007 and 2009, based on patterns of committee and floor votes in the General Assembly. (See Appendix E and F, respectively, for details on these sources and data collection methods.)

### **Framework for Assessing Capacity-Building Contributions to Policy Change**

Evaluation of advocacy capacities and activities usually focuses on individual organizations; however, the concepts from that research can also be applied to broader advocacy strategies, such as that of the Discovery initiative. The figure on the next page illustrates an overall framework for evaluating advocacy using concepts from advocacy evaluation research, organized under “capacities,” “strategies,” and “results.”<sup>2</sup>

Advocacy capacities include the organizational infrastructure, staff skills and expertise, and networks or relationships needed to successfully carry out advocacy activities. Successful advocacy strategies include activities to build coalitions, provide information, develop relationships with decision-makers, and mobilize broad support. In the short-term, advocacy results can include increased awareness and support for a policy position; longer-term results include changes in public funding and policies that bring about wide-spread changes in practice and contribute to improved conditions. The arrows between the “capacities” and “strategies” boxes and between the “strategies” and “results” boxes in the figure illustrate that certain key capacities are necessary to successfully develop and implement strategies that are effective in producing the results. In any given situation, all three – capacities, strategies, and results – are influenced by contextual and historical factors, as illustrated at the top of the figure. It is also possible to strengthen capacities and support strategies in ways that increase their likelihood of success in reaching desired advocacy results through interventions, as illustrated at the bottom of the figure.

This paper uses the framework developed from the advocacy evaluation literature, as illustrated here, to organize Discovery evaluation findings and to guide an overall assessment of the success of the initiative’s capacity-building approach with its statewide grantees.

The Discovery initiative’s overall theory of change<sup>3</sup> predicted that what the Memorial Fund did to support communities, state organizations and public entities would contribute to changes in Connecticut’s early care and education system and ultimately improve children’s development and early school success. In particular, Discovery was intended to contribute to development of policies necessary to bring to scale across the state early childhood programs and practices that

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<sup>2</sup> Brief definitions of each concept shown in the diagram and indicators that have been suggested or used, along with references, are provided in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://discovery.wcgmf.org/toc.html>.

are known to support children’s development and early school success. The Discovery initiative’s support of four statewide advocacy organizations was an intervention intended to contribute to state-level policy change.

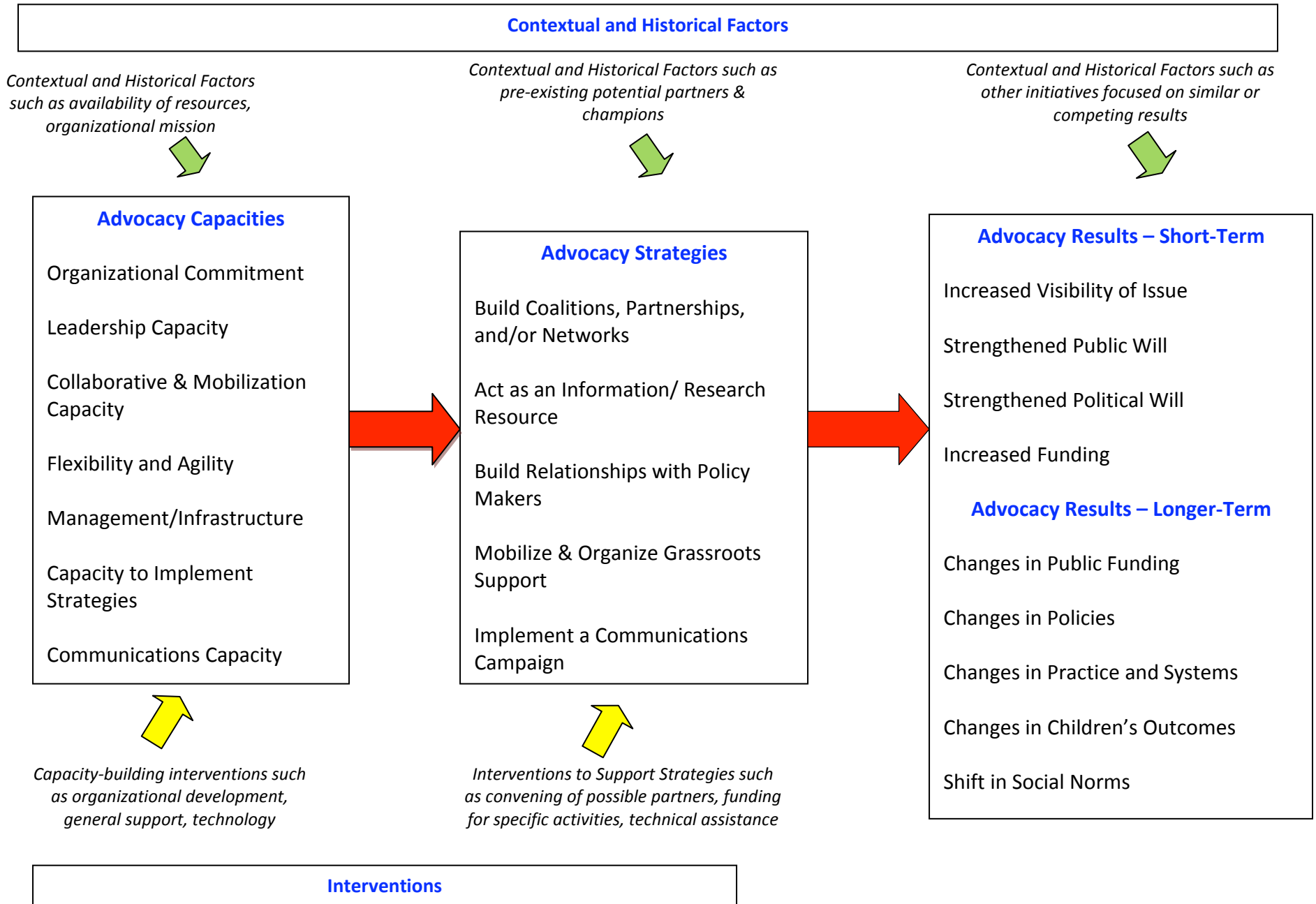
The initiative supported the development of organizational capacities – such as staff skills and technology – and collaborative relationships among core statewide organizations<sup>4</sup> involved in research, advocacy, and policy analysis related to early care and education. These organizations were expected to build stronger relationships with each other and with the initiative communities and carry out collaborative projects as well as projects that used their specific organizational skills and capacities. These capacities, relationships, and projects were then expected to enable stakeholders to mobilize and advocate effectively for specific policy actions and to develop a critical mass of advocates and engaged constituencies (including parents) and political momentum and champions needed to sustain attention to early childhood issues and continue to influence policy change.

The evaluation documented the contribution of the Discovery capacity-building approach to strengthening the individual statewide advocacy grantee organizations and their collaborative relationships with each other and with Discovery communities across Connecticut. Together the core statewide organizations implemented a range of advocacy strategies that included mobilizing parent and community support for early childhood issues, providing information to both legislators and their constituents about these issues, and building and supporting champions. The success of these strategies was evident in broadening of legislative interest and support for early care and education between 2007 and 2009 and in sustaining state investments in both early childhood infrastructure and direct services in a very difficult fiscal environment.

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<sup>4</sup> While other statewide and regional organizations have been provided with grants from the Memorial Fund during the Discovery initiative, special attention going beyond grants to include technical assistance from both consultants and staff was given to four organizations: Connecticut Association for Human Services, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut Parent Power, and Connecticut Voices for Children. These organizations are described in more detail in Appendix B.

**FIGURE ILLUSTRATING CONCEPTS DERIVED FROM ADVOCACY EVALUATION RESEARCH**



## BUILDING CAPACITY FOR STATE POLICY CHANGE IN THE DISCOVERY INITIATIVE

Based on lessons learned from the Memorial Fund's experience in the Children First Initiative and the evolving interest in early childhood education across the state, the Discovery initiative began in 2001.<sup>5</sup> At that time, 49 communities<sup>6</sup> – all of which were eligible for state School Readiness Program funding<sup>7</sup> -- and 8 statewide and regional organizations were invited to participate.

The Discovery initiative investment was to conclude at the end of 2007. However, in 2006, the Memorial Fund Board of Trustees invited the staff to consider extending the initiative and increasing its funding to take advantage of the favorable political climate and momentum around early childhood issues. As a result, the Discovery initiative was extended through 2009 and the Memorial Fund's investment in the initiative nearly doubled from the original investment of \$16 million. This resulted in a period of enhanced funding for core statewide organizations to collaborate, for Discovery communities to engage in regional as well as local work, and for the Memorial Fund to intensify capacity building efforts, engage in funding partnerships with other funders, and provide matching funding to the state to expand and support parent engagement and community planning.

Capacity building support for communities and statewide grantee organizations has been a key aspect of the Memorial Fund's strategy in the initiative. Community grantees were offered training and support focused on building collaboration, encouraging parent engagement, and promoting community change. In addition to workshops, individual consultants, and resource materials, each community was assigned an individual to serve as liaison with the Memorial Fund, providing ongoing feedback, encouragement, and guidance in accordance with the initiative's principles and goals.<sup>8</sup>

Capacity building at the state level followed a different path. A variety of capacities at the state level were developed and strengthened through the Memorial Fund's support of an array of statewide and regional organizations with varying approaches to bringing about change in early childhood policies and practices. These capacities included policy research and data collection,

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<sup>5</sup> To learn more about Discovery, download the Discovery Fact Sheet from the Discovery website at [http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/resources/sps\\_resource\\_866.pdf](http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/resources/sps_resource_866.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Five more communities were added in 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Priority school districts are those determined to be most in need, based on indicators such as population, poverty and standardized test scores. Municipalities are designated as competitive if they either have (or had) at least one school with more than 40% of its students eligible for free or reduced price lunch or are ranked in the bottom 50 communities in the state in town wealth (and are not a priority district).

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the role of liaisons in the Discovery initiative, see evaluation publications on [www.wcgmf.org](http://www.wcgmf.org).

policy analysis, development and replication of best practices, communication, mobilization, and legislative advocacy.

Early on in the initiative, the statewide and regional grantees<sup>9</sup> were provided with support to build their organizational capacities and support the work in communities. Memorial Fund staff worked closely with the statewide grantee organizations to support their work, provide advice, foster relationships among them and with other funders and organizations, and to develop strategies with them for moving their work forward. Grantee organizations were also provided with additional funding for evaluation, technology upgrades, staff training and networking opportunities. In interviews conducted in 2006, grantees reported an increase in their internal capacity to do their work due to Memorial Fund support. This included increased numbers of staff with critical skill sets and expertise and enhanced skills among existing staff, as well as improved technological infrastructure and strengthened internal governance and strategic planning.

Where there was a gap in state-level capacity, the Memorial Fund looked for opportunities to foster that capacity and provide “incubator” support. For example, recognizing the need to foster community level dialog about issues that can divide communities, in 1994 the Memorial Fund enlisted Public Agenda, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to help the public move beyond opinion to an informed judgment about public issues, to find out what Connecticut citizens thought about public education. Public Agenda’s survey of 1,400 citizens generated a report, *The Broken Contract*, that was cited in over 200 newspaper stories and editorials for months after its completion. The survey revealed that the general public and educators were not all on the same page about education and, that in fact, were talking past each other. The Memorial Fund, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and Public Agenda began a series of dialogues as a result of the discontent documented in *The Broken Contract*. Subsequently, the Memorial Fund partnered with Public Agenda and the Connecticut League of Women Voters to develop a continuing program in Connecticut -- Community Conversations.<sup>10</sup> The Memorial Fund supported the implementation of Community

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<sup>9</sup> Initially, the evaluation focused intensive data collection on the group of statewide and regional grantees whose work was considered core to the Discovery initiative theory of change and objectives (based on Memorial Fund staff assessment). This included a group of 14 organizations, all of whom were included in the stakeholder group for interviews in the fall of 2005 and all responded to a questionnaire late in 2006; 13 of the 14 were interviewed again early in 2007. A list of these organizations can be found in Appendix C. During the 2007-2009 period, the evaluation was primarily focused on the four “core” statewide grantees that were central to the Memorial Fund’s state-level policy development strategy.

<sup>10</sup> To learn more about Community Conversations, visit the website at <http://www.ctconversations.org/>. See also [http://www.edfunders.org/downloads/GFENewsletters/News\\_Fall08\\_Nee.pdf](http://www.edfunders.org/downloads/GFENewsletters/News_Fall08_Nee.pdf) for the Memorial Fund Executive Director David Nee’s article published in the *Grantmakers for Education Fall Newsletter*. This article offers a description of the history of the Memorial Fund’s work with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Public Agenda and the League of Women Voters in Connecticut to create the Community Conversations Model and an assessment of the impact the Conversations have had in communities across the state.



Conversations through the Connecticut League of Women Voters.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 2002, a group of Discovery communities began thinking about how to engage parents across the state in state level advocacy. This thinking led to the formation of Connecticut Parent Power. The Memorial Fund provided both funding and technical assistance consultation to assist in its formation and initial organization. Finally, recognizing a need for a unified voice among the early childhood advocates, the Memorial Fund convened a group of Connecticut early childhood advocates and stakeholders and provided funding and support to Connecticut Voices for Children for the start-up of the a group of stakeholders that would become the Early Childhood Alliance.

In the early years of the Discovery initiative, the statewide organizations had been primarily focused on building their internal capacity and infrastructure, operational capacity and collaborative capacity. Particularly the “younger” organizations – Parent Power and the Early Childhood Alliance – were still establishing their role in the wider network of advocacy organizations and dealing with leadership and governance issues. CAHS and CT Voices were working to reduce duplicative efforts and strengthen working relationships with one another.

By the end of 2006, statewide grantees reported (in interviews with the evaluation team) stronger internal capacities and more connections to each other that allowed them to work together “at a higher level.” A favorable political environment for early care and education had created opportunities for them to work together as part of the Governor’s Early Childhood Education Cabinet workgroups and the associated Early Childhood Research and Policy Council. Memorial Fund Executive Director David Nee co-chaired the Research and Policy Council and worked closely with the organizations. At the beginning of 2007, grantees reported that, through their and other’s efforts, Connecticut now had a stronger capacity for early childhood data collection and policy research and a growing capacity for mobilizing around these issues. Even so, despite reporting closer relationships with other grantees and a clearer sense of how their work was connected, grantees believed that more collaborative work was needed.<sup>12</sup>

Following the 2007 legislative session, legislator interviewees and stakeholders identified areas of weakness in the capacity to advocate effectively on early childhood issues. Two particular areas were the need to engage a broader base of organizations in the work and to organize grassroots supporters – voters and parents – around a clear set of priorities, both of which were seen as critical to sustaining the attention of policymakers. Further, grantee organizations were still struggling to coordinate their message to policymakers and to develop the capacity to mobilize for action as a group.

Recognizing this, and wanting to take advantage of the favorable policy climate for early childhood issues, the Memorial Fund increased its investment in capacity development with the

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<sup>11</sup> Community Mediation, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to making democracy work fairly, inclusively and vibrantly for all, is the current manager of Community Conversations. Their website can be found at <http://community-mediation.org/>.

<sup>12</sup> See evaluation report *Discovery Contributions to Recent Policy Results, The View From State-Level Grantees and Stakeholders*, April 2008 at [http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/resources/sps\\_resource\\_1367.ppt](http://www.discovery.wcgmf.org/resources/sps_resource_1367.ppt).

four statewide advocacy organizations that had become the core of the Memorial Fund’s state-level mobilization strategy: Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (the Alliance), Connecticut Parent Power (Parent Power), and Connecticut Voices for Children (Voices). Each was offered individualized technical assistance in a number of areas<sup>13</sup> beginning in 2007 and additional funding for 2008 and 2009 to work on both organization capacity building and cross-organization collaboration among themselves.

The four organizations responded with a set of coordinated strategies that would guide their work over a two year period. In addition to core support for each organization, the Memorial Fund provided almost \$462,000 over two years to the four organizations to undertake five distinct projects jointly. These projects included:<sup>14</sup>

- ***Enhancing Parent-Provider Participation in State Decision-Making on ECE:*** Designed to link parents and early childhood service providers with state agency decision-makers on various aspects of policy and programs on early care and education.
- ***Linking Select Discovery Communities to Statewide ECE Advocacy and Policy:*** Intended to develop a connection between 10 to 15 Discovery communities and core statewide organizations either to build on the Discovery communities’ nascent interest or existing skills in state and local policy advocacy.
- ***Public Leaders Education Program:*** Designed to offer an annual seminar/educational exchange for public leaders (legislators, mayors, superintendents) and parent leaders on some key aspect of early care and education.
- ***Monitoring the Performance of State Government:*** Intended to produce a “Report Card.” measuring of state government in adopting strong policies or delivering on its early care and education commitments.
- ***Early Childhood Alliance Coordination/Participation in Special Projects:*** Supported the role of the Early Childhood Alliance as the “glue” that binds the state advocacy network.

### **Memorial Fund Investment in Other State-Level Policy Strategies**

In addition to supporting the work of its statewide grantee organizations, the Memorial Fund undertook other strategies focused on state policy.

In 2008 and 2009, the Memorial Fund supported a communications campaign that was spearheaded by the Alliance. The key components of this campaign included: candidate and legislator outreach, fostering citizen advocacy, strengthening communications among statewide advocacy organizations, and building public awareness about early childhood issues. Some key

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<sup>13</sup> This technical assistance fell into the following categories: communications, strategic planning, organizational development, governance, diversity of fund development, community engagement, and board and staff diversity.

<sup>14</sup> From the Joint Projects summary provided at the Statewide Grantee Mid-Point review meeting on June 21, 2008.

activities of the campaign were supporting communities in developing skills to write opinion pieces and letters to the editor and reach out to their elected officials, focusing media attention on early childhood issues, and organizing legislator tours of early childhood facilities, candidate forums, advocacy days, and advocacy award events.<sup>15</sup>

This work built upon the public opinion research work commissioned by the Memorial Fund and conducted by Hart Research Associates and American Viewpoint. This research provided a perspective on voter support for early education issues and insight on effective early childhood message framing. A toolkit for communities, as well as strategies that would later become part of the Alliance's ongoing communication efforts came out of this research work.

The Memorial Fund has also contributed to changes in public and philanthropic funding through its partnership with the State,<sup>16</sup> as well as its involvement in state and national funding partnerships. Its "challenge" grants to the state for parent leadership and local comprehensive early childhood planning have been matched in two consecutive budget seasons. This private-public partnership has resulted in increased funding for parent leadership and community plans in close to half of the Discovery communities. The Memorial Fund has been active in the Early Childhood Funders Affinity Group for several years. This group, coordinated by the CT Council for Philanthropy, frames the collective and individual interest in early childhood among a variety of funders. In 2010, The Network of Community Foundations formally established an 11-member Public Policy and Advocacy Committee to advance issues of common interest, most notably in early childhood.

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<sup>15</sup> This work set the stage for future communications activities. For example, in 2010, the Alliance launched the "I Care About Kids and I Vote" campaign, which created and distributed materials aimed at educating the public and candidates about the importance of equipping children with the tools and resources necessary for learning. These materials included billboards, yard signs, window signs and fact sheets. To learn more about the campaign, visit <http://icareaboutkids.org>.

<sup>16</sup> By the start of the 2007 session, the Memorial Fund had developed relationships with state agencies and leaders, other local and national funders and was viewed as a long-term proponent of early childhood, an information resource on the topic, and a trusted partner. Executive Director David Nee, in his role as the co-chair of the Research and Policy Council, had been working with a Council committee made up of community and state agency representatives about how public and private resources could be collectively allocated to community capacity building. This exploration led to an offer to the State of Connecticut – the Memorial Fund would allocate \$900,000 in 2007-2009 for local planning and \$600,000 for parent leadership training if the state would match this investment, dollar for dollar, in new funds. The State accepted this offer and engaged in a public-private partnership with the Memorial Fund.

## CONTEXT FOR POLICY CHANGE DURING THE DISCOVERY INITIATIVE

Prior to the Discovery initiative, from 1994 through 2001, the Memorial Fund worked with seven Connecticut communities in the Children First Initiative (CFI), with the goal of improving outcomes for children from birth to age eight. The Memorial Fund's Executive Director, David Nee, was invited to testify before the General Assembly's Education Committee as it contemplated the need for and cost of a school readiness program. The testimony relied entirely on information from Children First communities' research and experience which made clear to the legislators the need for early care and education. This joint effort led to the development of Connecticut's school readiness program. The School Readiness Program is jointly funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Social Services, and is administered by the SDE.<sup>17</sup>

A key piece of the 1997 school readiness legislation was the creation of School Readiness Councils (SRC) in each community that receives school readiness funds from the state. The Council members are appointed by the chief elected official and the superintendent of schools and are required to represent the broad community. The SRCs have the authority to make recommendations to the chief elected official and school superintendent on issues relating to school readiness, including the award of contracts for community-based School Readiness programs and the allocation of quality enhancement funding for early care and education providers. Though the School Readiness legislation was groundbreaking, growth of the program was slow or level from 1999 through 2005.<sup>18</sup>

When M. Jodie Rell became Governor in 2004, early childhood issues were at the forefront of her agenda and early on she sought legislation to establish the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet ("the Cabinet"), which began its work in July 2005. The Cabinet was charged with conducting a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the School Readiness program in consultation with the Departments of Social Services and Education, developing budget requests for the early childhood program, promoting consistency of quality and comprehensiveness of early childhood services, and advising the Commissioner of Education on policies and initiatives to meet school readiness goals. In 2006 *Ready by 5 and Fine by 9*,<sup>19</sup> an early childhood investment framework with ten early childhood priorities for the state, was released by the Cabinet.

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<sup>17</sup> To learn more about Connecticut's School Readiness program, visit the State Department of Education website at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Readiness/sroverview.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> See *Connecticut Early Care & Education Progress Report, 2009*, prepared by Cyn Oppenheimer, Connecticut Voices for Children, for an analysis of the decline in state funding in inflation-adjusted dollars.

<sup>19</sup> On the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet website at [http://ctearlychildhood.org/images/customer-files/ready5\\_fine9.pdf](http://ctearlychildhood.org/images/customer-files/ready5_fine9.pdf).

To support the work of the Cabinet, Governor Rell established the Early Childhood Research and Policy Council (“the Council”) in February 2006. The Council was charged with developing a multi-year investment plan based on the work of the Cabinet. The Governor appointed Memorial Fund Executive Director, David Nee, as one of three co-chairs to the Council. The Council provided research, policy papers, and policy analysis, and the work culminated in the development of the state's first Early Childhood Investment Plan based on the Investment Framework provided by the Early Childhood Education Cabinet.<sup>20</sup> The Council delivered the summary of their recommendations to Governor M. Jodi Rell on December 8, 2006, which informed budget discussions during the 2007 session.

The period leading up to the 2007 legislative session was a time of great excitement for early childhood advocates. They were encouraged by the increased awareness of and strong and growing political support for early childhood issues. Governor Rell’s support of school readiness issues and the establishment of the Early Childhood Cabinet and Research and Policy Council and their priorities for early education were seen as very positive developments in the state. The focus of high level leaders, inside and outside of state government, on this issue was viewed as a tremendous opportunity.

The 2007 legislative session delivered a major “win” for early childhood advocates. A substantial increase in new funding for early care and education—more than \$50 million for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 – was the result of a joint advocacy effort that included Discovery communities and core statewide organizations. Funds authorized for the School Readiness program were expected to create 2,000 to 2,400 new slots in 2008 and 2009. Further, the state took up the Memorial Fund’s offer of matching funds to support local capacity building and the development of community comprehensive early childhood plans, as well as the Parent Trust Fund, which provided funds for community-based parent leadership training.

By 2009, the devastating financial crisis was leaving large holes in state budgets across the nation and Connecticut was no exception. The task for early childhood advocates in 2009 was to protect the gains realized in the 2007 session. Though pieces of the infrastructure were cut back or eliminated during the 2009 session, particularly the Early Childhood Cabinet and the Research and Policy Council, core funding for essential early childhood programs was protected.

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<sup>20</sup> Connecticut’s Early Childhood Investment Plan (Part 1) is available on the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet website at [http://ctearlychildhood.org/Content/Connecticutand 39 s Early Childhood Investment Plan Part I .asp](http://ctearlychildhood.org/Content/Connecticutand%2039%20s%20Early%20Childhood%20Investment%20Plan%20Part%20I%20.asp).

## DISCOVERY INITIATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO STATE-LEVEL RESULTS

The framework outlined at the beginning of this paper includes four types of short-term changes that can be expected from effective advocacy strategies: increased visibility of issues, strengthened public will, strengthened political will, and changes in public and philanthropic funding. This paper concentrates on Discovery's contributions to the visibility of early childhood issues and increased political support.

During the course of the Discovery initiative and particularly between 2007 and 2009, when increased support was provided for the core statewide advocacy organizations to work together and with communities, there was strong evidence of increased visibility of early childhood issues and increased political support for these issues.<sup>21</sup> The Memorial Fund and the Discovery initiative made major contributions to these results according to key advocates, legislators, and other stakeholders that were interviewed as part of the evaluation. This chapter is focused on the work of statewide grantees and communities that has contributed to these two areas.

### Contributions to Increased Visibility of Early Childhood Issues

*"There is an understanding of the importance of ECE and what it can mean to a child's academic performance and future life."*

Business Leader, interviewed in 2010

#### **Evidence of increased visibility:**

- *Legislators believed that early care and education would continue to be an area of focus for the state in coming years.* During interviews conducted during the 2009 session,<sup>22</sup> legislators were asked if early care and education would continue to be a prominent area of focus in the state among policymakers in coming years. Though the fiscal situation in the state was grim, and many believed that Connecticut will struggle with economic recovery longer than other states, the legislators who responded to the question believed that early care and education would continue to be an area of focus for the state.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As noted in the earlier section on the political and economic context in which the Memorial Fund operates, there were also changes in public and private funding and policies.

<sup>22</sup> Interview highlights can be found in Appendix D.

<sup>23</sup> Five (5) of the interviewed legislators unequivocally stated that early childhood will continue to be a prominent area of focus for the state in the future. However, others saw challenges in keeping early care and education at the top of the list of priorities. Six (6) additional legislators thought early childhood would continue to be a focus

- *Many legislators selected by the Alliance as “Children’s Champions” used this designation in their marketing materials.* The Alliance annually gives 50-60 legislators Children’s Champion awards, with special recognition given to a smaller group of legislators and a Legislator of the Year award. Core statewide organizations and Discovery community leaders used this award as a way to strengthen their relationships with their legislators. Statewide grantees saw the rising popularity of this event as indicative of legislators’ recognition of early childhood issues as important and the Alliance as credible. As one statewide grantee said, “The Alliance strategy of ‘champions’ day’—legislators love it and it is a very smart strategy...They have their pictures taken and write a press release in their local paper. It has longer-term ramifications—it gives mileage to the legislators and holds them accountable.” A one-time review of legislator websites showed that 27 legislators had posted press releases about their “Children’s Champion” designation and the event honoring them.<sup>24</sup>
- *Statewide grantees’ activities, events, and materials generated interest in and focus on early childhood issues.* Statewide grantee events and materials received online coverage through the *CT Mirror*, blogs, and *CT NewsJunkie.com*. The Alliance tracked dozens of newspaper articles in the *Hartford Courant*, *West Hartford News*, *ReminderNews*, *New Haven Independent*, *Norwich Bulletin*, *Bridgeport News*, *People’s Press*, *North End Agent* and *Hamden Journal*. The statewide organization staff also provided television and radio interviews.<sup>25</sup>
- *The Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement report on Connecticut’s Achievement Gap recommended the creation of a single early childhood agency to include early intervention, early care and early education functions.*<sup>26</sup> The Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement, a bipartisan group of business and philanthropic leaders, was appointed by Governor Jodi Rell in March 2010. The Commission’s mandate was to recommend specific ways to help close the achievement gap. In the months to follow, the Commission held six public hearings across the state, met with more than 150 educational experts and practitioners, convened over 40

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area for the state, but expressed concern that Connecticut would struggle with economic recovery longer than other states and other issues would take precedence.

<sup>24</sup> This review of legislator websites was conducted in 2010. Press releases associated with the Children’s Champion event had titles such as, *House Speaker Donovan Recognized for Working to Protect Connecticut Children: CT Early Childhood Alliance Calls Him Legislator Of The Year*, *Rep. Themis Klarides Given “Children’s Champion” Award by Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance*, and *Kirkley-Bey Recognized as “Children’s Champion for 2<sup>nd</sup> Year in a Row.”*

<sup>25</sup> Early Childhood Alliance July 2010 Six Month Progress report to the Memorial Fund.

<sup>26</sup> *A Report from the Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement: A Plan to help close Connecticut’s Achievement Gap* released in October 2010 can be found at [http://www.ctachieve.org/pdf/commission\\_report.pdf](http://www.ctachieve.org/pdf/commission_report.pdf)

commission and subcommittee meetings, visited Connecticut schools and traveled to three other states to learn about successful reform efforts and reviewed research studies and policy papers. Statewide grantees viewed it as significant that this group, with strong business community representation, underscored the connection between the achievement gap and early care and education.

**Strategies and capacities contributing to increased visibility:**

While Discovery statewide grantees employed a variety of strategies during this time to increase the visibility of early childhood issues, they pointed to three strategies in particular that demonstrate how their increased leadership capacity, communications capacity, and capacity to adapt to the changing policy environment, fostered by support from the Memorial Fund, have contributed to greater visibility for early childhood issues.

- ***Effectively engaging a core group of communities in state-level advocacy activities***

The time that community collaborative groups had to commit to state-level work and their comfort with and skill at organizing were barriers to their participation in state-level Discovery activities prior to 2007. Also, prior to 2007, communities struggled to find the connection between their local work and the work of the statewide grantees.

After 2007, the core statewide organizations altered their approach to working with Discovery communities. They focused on finding ways to support the local level work and on aligning their activities with what was most important to the Discovery communities. They also developed strategies to make community members feel more comfortable engaging with legislators. The Alliance, in particular, engaged communities in advocacy activities, such as Advocacy Day at the State Capitol, Read Across America, legislative tours of early childhood facilities, Week of the Young Child events, and Children’s Champion events to honor legislators supportive of children’s issues. Twenty of the Discovery communities engaged consistently in these events.<sup>27</sup> The Alliance supported their participation by providing materials, transportation, sometimes t-shirts or other “props” and staff support.

The core statewide organizations also found ways to build the capacity of communities to engage in advocacy with their legislators independently. Providing support to help communities connect and interact with their legislators, “kits” for writing opinion editorials, talking points, communications materials and advocacy training made mobilizing for local-level advocacy less burdensome for the Discovery collaborative groups, some of which operated with minimal staff support. Where communities have greater advocacy capacity,

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<sup>27</sup> The communities who consistently engage in these efforts are Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Danbury, Enfield, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Northeast School Readiness (which includes Killingly, Plainfield, and Putnam), Southeastern Children First (which includes Groton, New London, and Norwich), Torrington, the Valley communities of Ansonia, Shelton and Vernon, and West Hartford. From the Early Childhood Alliance July 2010 Six Month Progress report.



opportunities to deepen and sharpen their skills have been offered, such as advanced training on community organizing and leadership training.<sup>28</sup>

Statewide grantee organizations also made efforts to link communities with other constituent groups. For example, the Providers' Caucus, convened by CAHS, gave participants background information on policy deliberations and the possible impact of the policies, so that providers, as a group, could develop an informed response.<sup>29</sup> Representatives from six communities<sup>30</sup> consistently attended Providers' Caucus meetings, sharing their community planning activities and bringing information back to their local collaborative groups.

- ***Actively using the media as part of the overall communications strategy***

As part of the Alliance's communications strategy, the statewide grantees and other members aggressively sought opportunities to raise awareness about and increase the visibility of early childhood issues. This strategy included providing stories to the press and publishing on their website, giving interviews, sharing information about events, and holding press conferences.

- ***Linking early childhood to issue areas with "traction" and federal funding opportunities***

As budget issues overwhelmed the state in 2008 and 2009, early education advocates struggled to keep the issue at the forefront. One approach was to use their relationships with legislators and status as credible resources on children's issues to become members of groups seeking new resources or deciding how existing resources should be spent. One example of this tactic was the inclusion of Connecticut Voices for Children and the Connecticut Association for Human Services, along with Discovery community representation, on House Speaker Christopher Donovan's Task Force on Children in the Recession. This group, that included over a dozen legislators, released a report with a section on early care and education. The Task Force recommended keeping enrollment in the Care4Kids child care subsidy program open or, if enrollment had to be capped or reduced or eligibility changed, that notice be provided to families; this recommendation was enacted by the state legislature in 2009.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Early Childhood Alliance July 2010 Six Month Progress report; CT Parent Power 2009 Year-End Report.

<sup>29</sup> Connecticut Association for Human Services, July 2010 Six Month Progress Report to the Memorial Fund.

<sup>30</sup> The six communities are East Hartford, Hartford, New Haven, New Britain, Torrington and Wallingford.

<sup>31</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report of House Speaker Christopher Donovan's Task Force on Children in the Recession, Submitted January 2010.

Another example was the involvement of statewide grantee organizations in discussions about how ARRA<sup>32</sup> funds would be used. Ultimately, advocates were able to organize a joint hearing with the Education and Human Services Committees to offer testimony and ideas for how the funds could be used to support the Care4Kids program.

A third example was the involvement of CAHS and Connecticut Voices staff in a small working group charged with putting together recommendations for the incoming governor. This gave the organizations the opportunity to include early childhood among other key priorities that would be presented to the new Governor.

### **Contributions to Strengthened Political Support for Early Childhood Issues**

*“The coalition in the legislature grows every year and is stronger than it was two years ago.”*

State Representative interviewed during the 2009 legislative session

#### **Evidence of strengthened political will:**

- *Based on an index of legislative climate<sup>33</sup> related to early childhood issues that examined the pattern of votes on relevant bills in committee and on the floor of the Connecticut General Assembly, there is broader and deeper support at all levels among Assembly members. The percent of all legislators on committees related to early childhood<sup>34</sup> consistently voting in favor of relevant bills<sup>35</sup> increased substantially between 2007 and 2009 (from 66% to 88%). The percent of favorable votes from legislators on the Appropriations Committee who also served on committees considering relevant bills increased substantially between 2007 and 2009 (from 53% to 84%). Substantially higher percentages of legislators in leadership positions voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2009 than in 2007 (from 47% to 82%).*

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<sup>32</sup> American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

<sup>33</sup> A description of the Discovery evaluation methods related to the state-level policy study can be found in Appendix E and of the legislative climate index data collection methods and analysis can be found in Appendix F. Detailed findings from the analysis of the index data are also in Appendix F.

<sup>34</sup> In 2007 there were 163 legislators serving on these committees; in 2009 146 legislators served on comparable committees.

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix F for the list of search terms used to identify “relevant” bills introduced in the Connecticut General Assembly in 2007 and 2009. The specific bills reviewed are also listed in Appendix F, at the end of the table of analysis findings.

- *Using the same index, the support for early childhood issues among legislators from Discovery communities grew between 2007 and 2009, a pattern also reflected in reports from the collaborative groups themselves about their work with their local Assembly person.* In reports from the Discovery communities as of late 2006, only 9 out of the 47 collaborative groups reported directly engaging with their local legislators to convey their positions and recommendations on early childhood issues. In the spring of 2010, an informal poll of community coordinators and liaisons identified 20 Discovery communities that had been active in working with their state legislator on policy issues.

The percent of legislators from Discovery communities on committees considering relevant bills<sup>36</sup> who voted in favor most of the time increased substantially between 2007 and 2009 (from 69% to 87%). Substantially higher percentages of legislators from the Discovery communities voted in favor of relevant bills that were brought to the floor in 2009 than in 2007 (from 69% to 78%).

- *Core funding was protected for essential early childhood programs during the 2009 session.* Funding for programs such as School Readiness, Department of Social Services-funded early childhood centers, family resource centers, and Care4Kids were preserved while funding for many other state programs was severely cut. In fact, Care4Kids, the state child care subsidy program, received an increase in funding. Additionally, the Children in the Recession Task Force was able to advance and pass legislation that benefits young children, specifically around the Care4Kids child care subsidy program.
- *Overall, legislators who were interviewed in 2009 perceived a stronger base of support for early care and education among legislators than existed in 2007.* In 2007, the interviewed legislators expressed the belief that a more diverse set of champions within the state and within the legislature should be cultivated. One legislator indicated the need to constantly cultivate new relationships in the legislature, particularly with new members and noted that advocates should recognize that “the relationship building is continuous.” In 2009-10, legislators were asked if they have seen new champions emerging in the past two years. Three of eight legislators who spoke to this question identified freshman legislators as a new set of champions for the issue.<sup>37</sup>

Using the legislative climate index data, the percent of new legislators (in the legislature one year or less at the time in the relevant session) who were on committees related to

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<sup>36</sup> In 2005 there were 126 legislators from Discovery communities serving on these committees; in 2009 112 legislators from Discovery communities were on comparable committees.

<sup>37</sup> Two freshman legislators were interviewed. Both were engaged in work in Discovery communities (one participated in a community planning process and one was a member of a community parent group) and one was named a “2009 Children’s Champion” by the Alliance.

early childhood and who consistently voted in favor of relevant bills increased substantially between 2007 and 2009 (from 72% to 95%).<sup>38</sup>

### **Capacities and strategies contributing to strengthened political will:**

Capacities among the four advocacy organizations to pursue coordinated strategies, build coalitions and partnerships, and more actively engage constituents translated into strengthened political support for early childhood issues. Staff in these organizations deemed the following strategies particularly effective.

- ***Creating strategic connections with legislators***

Building on a core base of support for early childhood in the legislature, the core statewide organizations prompted the creation of a legislative caucus to discuss issues and develop and coordinate legislative initiatives. Caucus meetings also provided opportunities to share with legislators advocates', parents', and providers' perspective about how proposed legislation would affect providers and families. Representative Beth Bye, a long-time champion of early childhood, led these meetings.

Additionally, several of the communications strategies targeted legislators, such as the Children's Champion Awards for legislators. As described earlier, legislators were nominated as "Children's Champions" and the awards were presented at an event attended by legislators and state and community advocates.<sup>39</sup> Also, the Alliance and Parent Power organized what became an annual Advocacy Day that has brought hundreds of parents, providers and advocates to the Capitol to meet with their legislators.<sup>40</sup> Almost 500 children, parents, teachers and early care and education advocates converged on the State Capitol for the 2009 advocacy day to urge lawmakers to protect programs for young children. The Alliance also coordinated legislative tours of early childhood programs. All of these activities were designed to build relationships between legislators and early childhood supporters.

The core statewide organizations also regularly reached out to candidates and all legislators to share research and information. During election seasons, they organized and publicized candidate forums, where legislators could hear from constituents and present their positions on various issues.

- ***Reinforcing messages with networks and building communications systems***

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<sup>38</sup> In 2005 there were 18 freshman legislators serving on these committees; in 2009 21 freshmen legislators were on comparable committees.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to page 10 of this report for more detail on the "Children's Champion" nominations and event.

<sup>40</sup> For more information on the 2009 Advocacy Day, see "Advocacy Day Brings Light to Early Care Issues" story on the Alliance website at <http://earlychildhoodalliance.com/node/4518>,

In addition to strengthening relationships among themselves, the four core statewide organizations worked to build coalitions, primarily with the Discovery communities and early childhood providers. A key aspect of the strategy for keeping parents, communities and providers engaged was the use of electronic communication and social networking. The Alliance used a combination of monthly meetings, a weekly memo, and regular policy updates to keep followers interested in early childhood issues informed. CAHS has maintained an early childhood listserv that reaches hundreds of advocates in Connecticut. Both the Alliance and Parent Power made use of social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These tools were used to reinforce messages and educate supporters on the issues, share requests for action, and foster communication with legislators.

- ***Positioning the statewide organizations as a resource for research and information***

This strategy had been effectively implemented since the Children First Initiative positioned the Memorial Fund staff and grantees as credible resources for information and data on early childhood issues. Continuing during the Discovery initiative, Connecticut Voices for Children provided well regarded policy research that was used by other advocates and some legislators. This research helped advocates to understand the decision-making process and potential implications of particular policies and budget decisions. CAHS also provided data and policy analysis, including the annual CT KIDS COUNT Data Book. This project, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provides comprehensive data on how well Connecticut's children are doing at the state and local levels. The strengthened relationships among the four core statewide grantees, fostered during Discovery, resulted in broader dissemination of these policy research materials than in the past.

## SUMMARY

The Discovery initiative contributed to building the capacity among a core set of statewide advocacy and policy research organizations to implement effective strategies in collaboration with each other, with communities, and with other partners. With support from the Memorial Fund, the four core organizations focused on building political will through information, communication, and mobilization of key constituency and stakeholders groups, including parents and early care and education providers. The evaluation documented evidence of the success of these strategies in increasing the visibility of early childhood issues, and political support particularly among legislators.<sup>41</sup>

The longer-term results identified in the advocacy evaluation framework presented earlier are systemic and ongoing changes in policy, systems, investments, social norms, and, ultimately, children's outcomes. These results will take many years to fully realize. However, during the Discovery initiative thus far, there have been specific policy actions laying the foundation for creating and sustaining the long-term results. The summary of short-term results below indicates that progress was made toward long-term improvements in early care and education in Connecticut.

***Changes in public funding:*** Public funding for early care and education increased dramatically in the 2007 legislative session, and those gains were maintained in 2009, even as most other programs suffered dramatic cuts. This suggests that had the economic downturn not occurred, Connecticut might have experienced continued expansion of the early care and education programs.

Additionally, the Memorial Fund's challenge to the state to match funds for community planning and parent education was taken up in the two successive budget sessions. However, in 2009, there was a great deal of uncertainty about whether the state would provide matching funds. Various iterations of the proposed budget did not include allocations for the match. However, the final budget provided the matching state funds, thanks to the community and statewide grantee advocacy efforts. The expected long-term result would be to see more public-private partnership arrangements and more stable arrangements, where advocacy resources would not need to be expended to maintain funding levels.

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<sup>41</sup> As described in this paper, the advocacy efforts of the core statewide organizations and their partners through 2009 focused on influencing decision-makers, rather than building broad support among voters at large. After the 2009 legislative session, some stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation were concerned that, without broad-based public support, support for early childhood issues in the legislature will wane, particularly in the face of ongoing budgetary stress. Shaping public will through state-wide communication campaigns, however, was recognized to be a daunting task, considering the resources this effort would demand. The work of the Discovery initiative community collaborative groups, particularly those working on community-wide plans, appeared to have contributed to greater visibility, interest, and support for early childhood issues; as such, they may be better positioned to build public support from the grassroots.

**Changes in policies:** The Discovery collaborative groups and core advocacy organizations successfully shepherded bills through the legislature, such as a bill related to Care4Kids, and an earlier bill requiring public schools to document their parent engagement strategies and activities. These efforts indicate the increased capacity of Discovery grantees, both communities and core statewide organizations, to build legislator support, understand the policy environment, and navigate the committee and legislative processes. In future legislative sessions, the communities and the core statewide organizations appear to have the experience and capacity to continue to advance early childhood policy priorities.

**Changes in practice and systems:** The continued spread of parent leadership training was a key practice initiated during Discovery. Though not the focus of the initiative, Discovery also contributed to the development and spread of innovative programs such as ChildFirst, a system of care model to decrease the incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among high-risk young children and families. Local early childhood system development was initiated during the community planning processes supported by the Memorial Fund-state partnership grants in many Discovery communities. The Memorial Fund’s 2010-2014 strategic directions are focused on systems change, and the relationships and accomplishments from Discovery through 2009 provided a strong foundation for moving forward with this work.

*“There are things that make me optimistic. I was part of a press conference organized by the Alliance, where people who worked directly with children in all different settings--childcare, after school, even healthcare providers--came together. I feel optimistic that the education and healthcare communities are working together better than ever and they have a vision for the work...”*

State-Level Early Childhood Advocate interviewed in 2010

## APPENDIX A

### **ADVOCACY CAPACITIES, STRATEGIES, AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTS AND INDICATORS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Discovery initiative evaluation is examining the influence of initiative capacity-building strategies on community and state-level attention to early childhood issues and ability of stakeholders to continue to pursue policy and practice changes in support of children's early success in school. One of the initiative's strategies has been to support several state-wide advocacy organizations to work in collaboration toward these goals. We reviewed the existing literature on evaluating advocacy efforts to identify concepts and indicators that might be applied to the Discovery initiative evaluation.

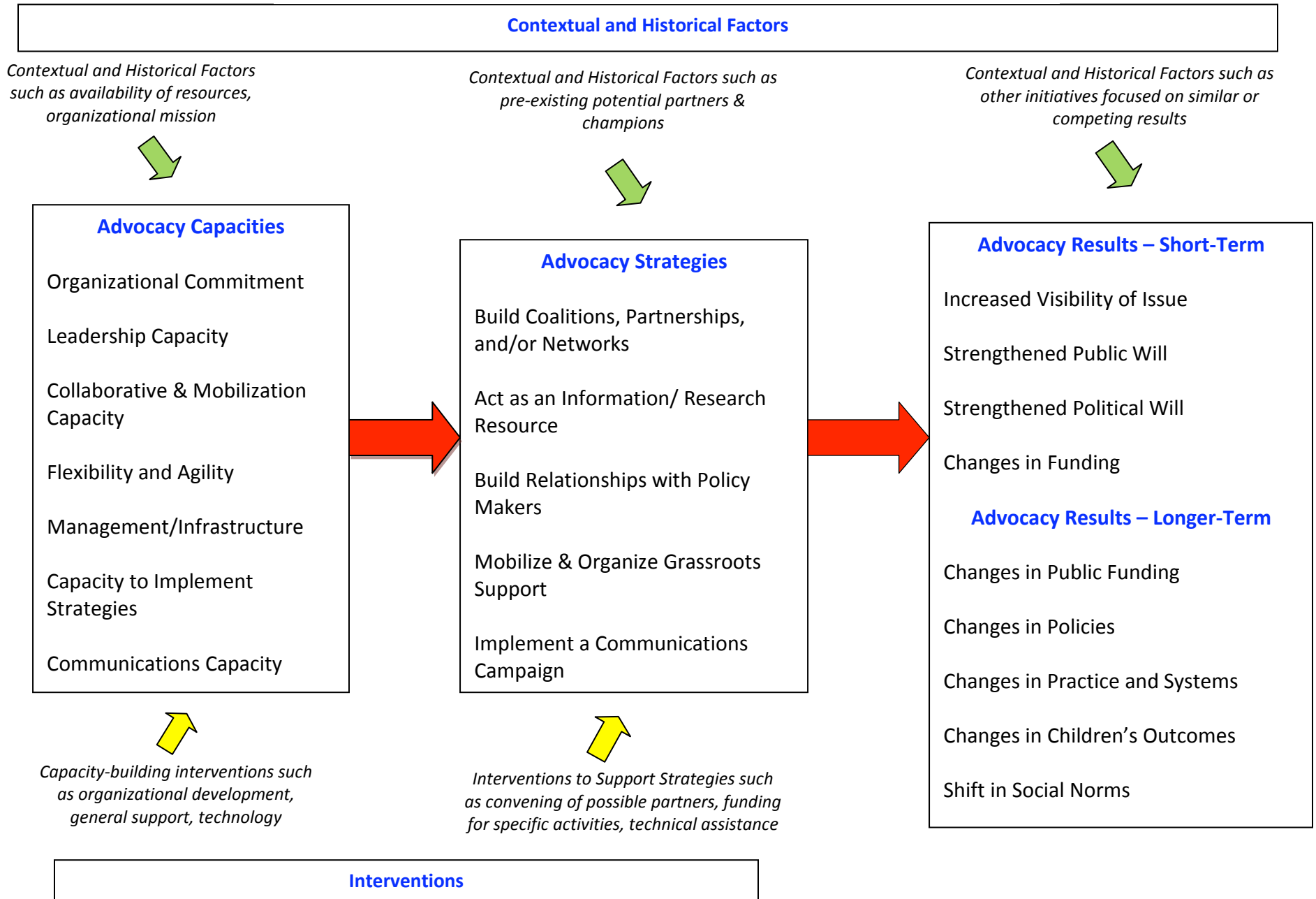
The material below represents an analysis of the advocacy evaluation literature. The graphic provides an overall framework and shows the concepts used in the literature, organized under "capacities," "strategies," and "results." The graphic illustrates the links between capacities and strategies and between strategies and results, based on the analysis of the findings from advocacy evaluations. The graphic also indicates that advocacy capacities and strategies are affected by contextual and historical factors and can be influenced by interventions.

Following the graphic are brief definitions of each concept shown in the graphic and indicators that have been suggested or used, based on the literature review. A bibliography of sources used is provided at the end of this document; references for the definitions and indicators are noted by the number(s) in parentheses, which correspond to the numbered sources in the bibliography.

While much of the existing evaluation and research literature on advocacy focuses on individual advocacy organizations, the Discovery evaluation applied appropriate measures of advocacy capacities, strategies, and results to the collective work of the Discovery initiative's statewide grantees, rather than to the capacities, strategies, and results of individual organizations.



**FIGURE ILLUSTRATING CONCEPTS DERIVED FROM ADVOCACY EVALUATION RESEARCH**



## **Advocacy Capacities**

### ***Organizational Commitment***

Organizational commitment refers a level of engagement in advocacy activities that indicates that advocacy is a strategic priority for the organization (1).<sup>42</sup> This commitment is expressed in terms of resources for staff and activities, clarity of purpose around advocacy priorities and positions, and the establishment of an organizational culture that is supportive of advocacy success (10).

Evidence that an organization has a commitment to advocacy may include:

- A defined role for advocacy in the organizational structure and staff that are devoted to advocacy and who receive support to build advocacy skills (1)
- A written agenda that identifies advocacy priorities, includes constituents in the development of the agenda, and is available to the constituent network (1).
- Board commitment to advocacy as evidenced by the organization's mission statement and strategic plan (1).

### ***Leadership Capacity***

Leadership capacity refers to the ability of an organization to motivate and persuade, build consensus, broker compromises, and persuade individuals outside of the organization toward a course of action (10).

Evidence of the development of leadership capacity may include:

- A committed and engaged board, strong relationships with community leaders, credibility in the community, and leadership that is distributed among staff and volunteers (10).
- The ability to convene and engage representatives from many different agencies and groups (representatives should have the authority to commit resources and/or to influence policy) and facilitate the development of a vision statement that is endorsed and used by highly visible leaders and different components of the system (13).

### ***Collaborative or Mobilizing Capacity***

Organizational leadership capacity and collaborative capacity are closely aligned. The ability to build and sustain broad-based coalitions of residents, institutions and others toward a collective vision is a key component of effective advocacy efforts. For an organization to be an effective

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<sup>42</sup> A bibliography of sources used is provided at the end of this document; references for the definitions and indicators are noted by the number(s) in parentheses, which correspond to the numbered sources in the bibliography.

collaborator, it must have the skills to address power differentials and to deal with issues of race, class and culture (12).

Evidence of collaborative capacity may include:

- Ability of the organization to join or form strategic alliances with other groups or organizations and align advocacy efforts with partners (11 and 15).
- The establishment and growth of diverse networks of individuals and organizations that the organization can call upon to help advocate on key issues, the ability to communicate with and provide materials to the networks, the ability to document the action taken by the networks (1).
- The establishment of a procedure for sharing information and coordinating efforts with stakeholders that have similar advocacy objectives, seeking stakeholders who are not traditional allies, participating in, establishing, supporting and seeking support from formal coalitions (1).

### ***Flexibility and Agility***

Flexibility and agility or “adaptive capacity” (10) refers to the ability to monitor, assess, and adapt the organizations work successfully to changing environments, inside and outside of the organization. Activities commonly associated with organizational adaptive capacity include evaluating programs and services, monitoring and measuring progress and community needs, planning, collaborating, partnering, and strategizing (5, 6, and 10). This capacity requires an understanding of the pace of change and how champions and leaders are positioned on each issue (11 and 15).

Evidence of this capacity may include:

- The ability to analyze the policy environment overall and in relation to specific issues, and identify a range of advocacy options and strategies, weigh the options, and select appropriate strategies based on its analysis of the policy environment, the organization’s own capacity and resources, and the potential for support from other advocates (1).
- The flexibility to be able to make quick changes in strategy (1).

### ***Management and Infrastructure***

Management and infrastructure refers to an organization’s ability to organize resources in a way that is both efficient and effective at accomplishing the mission (10 and 11).

Evidence of this capacity may include (10, 11, and 12):

- The existence of a strong governance structure, systems, and procedures.
- Effective internal systems for fiscal management; organizational stability.

- Clear roles for staff, staff development opportunities, organizational capacity building, team building and oversight.
- The ability to manage and share knowledge internally and externally.
- The existence of a purposeful communications system.

### ***Capacity to Implement Strategies***

Technical capacity to implement strategies refers to the ability to implement all key organizational and programmatic functions in a comprehensive manner. At the center of technical capacity are the skills, tools, equipment, technology, and other resources necessary to support and underpin the other essential capacities. The skills related to this capacity include fundraising skills, strategic skills, technology and networks, facilities development and maintenance, materials information, marketing capability, a knowledge of advocacy, mobilizing or organizing tactics, legal knowledge, and understanding of policy change process, issue expertise, political knowledge and skills, strategic use of data, and evaluation aptitude (5, 10, and 11).

Evidence of capacity to implement strategies may include:

- The ability to conduct research, policy analysis and legislative law, build and maintain coalitions, lobbying, and the ability to get and use data and requests for the organization's products or information or invitations to act as experts (3).
- An understanding of legislative, administrative and/or judicial processes, rules and committees, budgeting and appropriations processes and stakeholders (1).
- The ability to monitor legislation and regulations, analyze the impact of proposed legislation, regulations and/or administrative policies and develop proposals (1).
- A consistent presence in the legislative bodies of its targeted jurisdictions, and the ability to build and maintain working relationships with legislators from all major parties, contacts in government agencies, judges, and those in a position to influence decision-makers (1).
- A process for identifying positions of candidates on a broad range of issues, promoting voter registration and informing its constituents/networks of candidates' positions on issues (1).
- A process for educating viable candidates and newly elected officials, on key issues (1).

### ***Communications Capacity***

Communications capacity refers to the ability to share information and promote advocacy messages (11 and 12). Particular skills that are seen as critical include: the knowledge of what messages resonate with target audiences and the ability to keep the messages in front of those audiences, the ability to engage the media, and engage the right messengers, and the ability to make simple, personal, evidence-based arguments and respond to opposing arguments (11 and 15).

Evidence of this capacity may include:

- The development of a clear message for each issue, written policies and procedures to guide media work, a media plan, and the cultivation of spokespeople (1).
- A process for monitoring media coverage and identifying opportunities for providing stories related to its advocacy priorities (1).
- Relationships with key personnel in print and broadcast media, and varied strategies for different types of media (1).

### **Advocacy Strategies**

#### ***Build Coalitions, Partnerships, and/or Networks***

Successful advocacy often requires coalition building to increase the strength, breadth, and depth of the advocacy messages. An effective coalition, partnership or network should be broad-based (11 and 15) and include unlikely partners (3) from diverse issue areas, viewpoints and geographic areas (7), and the membership should represent varied constituencies (3).

Evidence of effective coalitions, partnerships or networks may include:

- The policy agenda and efforts of the collaborators are aligned (shared priorities, shared goals, common accountability system) (11 and 12) and collaborators use common messages when talking about the issue (7).
- New and/or stronger organizational relationships developed with unlikely partners (3).
- There is joint implementation of strategies and messages (3).
- Communication between collaborators is improved (7) and they can articulate a shared purpose and the roles and responsibilities within the group (12).
- Formal interagency agreements or collaborative protocols exist between the groups and/or they share resources (12).
- Collaborative members engage in local/regional leadership efforts (11 and 12).

#### ***Act as an Information/Research Resource***

Advocacy organizations may need to navigate complex legislative, judicial, executive branch and election-related processes and help others to understand these processes (5). The strategies that organizations use to provide information include research, data collection, and policy analysis. The products of this work may include white papers, policy proposals or briefs, newsletters, and educational briefings or the organization may provide a watchdog function (7).

Evidence that these strategies have been successful may include:

- Wide distribution of the research or policy analysis products (3).

- Policy guidelines or proposals advanced by the organization are supported by other organizations or decision-makers (3).
- The organization briefs policy makers or candidates on their issue area (3).

### ***Build Relationships with Policy Makers***

Developing relationships with policy makers is necessary to reach policy goals. Policy can be set through administrative and regulatory action by the executive branch and its agencies and by the judicial branch as well as the local, regional, legislative and federal levels (7). Strategies associated with building relationships to move an advocacy agenda include: meeting with policy makers, educating them on the issue area, lobbying, and presenting to legislative committees (7).

Evidence that these strategies have been successful may include:

- Decision-makers will begin to echo the organization’s message in public, to the press, or in written materials and introduce proposed changes.
- Proposed changes will receive bipartisan support and move through the legislative or administrative process (7).

### ***Mobilize and Organize Grassroots Support***

Public awareness of and support of an issue, particularly by those affected by the policies related to the issue, is an important aspect of policy change. Activities associated with this strategy include outreach, community organizing and mobilizing, voter registration campaigns, broad-scale communications campaigns, and cultivating trusted messengers and champions (11).

Evidence that these strategies have been successful may include:

- New advocates, messengers, and “non-traditional” champions support the issue and encourage the support of others (3, 11, and 15).
- Previously unengaged constituencies are represented and take action on the issue (2 and 3).
- There is strong local community, resident, and/or “consumer” support for the issue and a greater number of individuals and groups that can be counted on for sustained advocacy or action on an issue (2 and 3).

### ***Develop and Implement a Communications Campaign***

Communications campaigns are key strategies for some advocacy organizations to increase visibility and create political momentum around their issue area. Strategies associated with communications efforts include issue message framing and development, electronic outreach,

outreach to the media through press releases, relationship development, and development of media partnerships (3, 10, 11, and 15).

Evidence that communications strategies have been successful may include (2, 7, 9, and 12):

- The quality and quantity of media coverage about the issue increases.
- The issue is discussed using the frame outlined by the communications campaign and opponents use the frame to refute the message.
- Media coverage accurately captures the messages and the coverage looks at complex aspects of the issue
- Media coverage is varied.
- Community leaders, influential people, and policy makers refer to the messages.
- The public has a greater awareness of the issue and familiarity with the organization's proposals for dealing with the problem.

### **Short-Term Advocacy Results**

#### ***Increased Visibility of an Issue***

For an issue to receive support, win champions, and become a priority for policy action, it must become "visible," that is, generally recognized as an issue that warrants attention.

Communication and public education strategies are often used to increase the visibility of an issue, as are strategies to build, expand, and/or join coalitions with diverse stakeholders.

Evidence of increased visibility may include:

- The issue is covered by the print, broadcast and electronic media on a regular basis and the coverage is of high quality. Media coverage is accurate and complete (2, 7, 9, and 12).
- Media coverage prompts written responses, such as opinion editorial or letters to the editor. Opponents refute the message, and policy makers or influential leaders echo the message in a public venue or in written materials (7).
- Increased media coverage results in greater awareness that a problem exists and the various proposals for addressing the problem. The issue is discussed or perceived differently, or seen as a higher priority (2 and 12).

#### ***Strengthened Public Will***

Strengthened public will builds on increased visibility of an issue. The "public" in public will usually refers to an entire population of citizens, residents, voters, etc. in a geographic area or affinity group. Occasionally, it can refer to a more specific audience such as advocates.

Evidence of strengthened public will may include:

- There is a broader audience with knowledge of the issue that is willing to speak out about and take an action on the issue (3 and 9).
- There are strong, stable organizations and networks to support action in favor of the issue area (9).
- The community has a shared definition of the problem, agree that it is a priority, and demand attention be focused on addressing the problem (12).

### ***Strengthened Political Will***

Political will generally, but not always, derives from a broad base of public support for an issue. Political will is necessary for policies to become adopted into law or regulation and to have the necessary resources to implement those policies on a broad scale with public funds.

Evidence of strengthened political will may include:

- There is a broader group of political leaders from diverse political parties and/or public administrators with knowledge of the issue, who publicly support and are willing to take action on the issue (3, 9, and 12).
- This group mentions the issue in speeches and debates (3, 8, and 9).
- There are members from diverse parties voting in support of, sponsoring and cosponsoring bills that address the issue (3, 7, and 9).
- Opposing policies are not winnable (8 and 9).

### ***Changes in Philanthropic Funding***

Private or philanthropic funding is often critical in supporting specific advocacy strategies, in building public and political will, and in trying out new program and policy models. Private funding is often effective at engaging public sector agencies and leveraging public resources on a limited basis.

Evidence of changes in philanthropic funding may include:

- There is new money available for issue area priorities because funders increase funding and/or other funders begin to provide funding (12).
- There are new funding arrangements (such as pooled, matched, or blended) that increase or streamline funding (12).



## **Longer-Term Advocacy Results**

### ***Changes in Public Funding***

Public funding, however, is generally needed to implement changes in policy and practice across an entire jurisdiction – whether in a school district, town, or state.

Evidence of changes in public funding may include:

- There is new money available for issue area priorities because public funders begin or increase funding for the issue area (12).
- There are new funding arrangements (such as pooled, matched, blended) that increase or streamline funding (12).
- Public agencies or entities provide staff resources for work on a program or strategy (12).

### ***Changes in Policies***

- New proposals or guiding principles developed that reflect issue area priorities (3, 9, 11, and 15).
- Policies formally introduced (bills, bonds, ballot measures, regulations, administrative policies) (3 and 9).
- Policies are formally established or blocked (3, 9, 11, 12, and 15).
- Policies are implemented or administered (3, 11, and 12).
- Funding is established to formally monitor or evaluate policies (3 and 9).
- Funding levels are sustained for policies or programs (3, 9, and 12).

### ***Changes in Practice and Systems*** (3, 9, and 12)

- Improved services (increased staff cultural, linguistic competence, improved service delivery schedule and locations, new services offered, services are more affordable and responsive to community needs).
- Improved systems (increased funding, coordination, relationship to community needs, ongoing evaluation, and access).

### ***Changes in Children's Outcomes***

- Improved social outcomes and conditions for children (3, 11, and 15).
- Improved developmental and physical outcomes for children (3 and 11).
- Improved academic outcomes for children.

### ***Shifts in Social Norms***

- Changes in public beliefs, attitudes and values related to the issue area (11 and 15).
- Decreased tolerance for a problem or condition (12).

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## APPENDIX B

### DESCRIPTIONS OF THE 4 “CORE” STATEWIDE GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

**Connecticut Association for Human Services:** Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) promotes family economic security strategies that empower low-income working families to achieve financial independence. CAHS’ mission is to end poverty and engage, equip and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future. CAHS plays a role as a catalyst and convener, bringing together diverse interests to work together on issues.

**Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance:** The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (the Alliance) is a group of organizations and individuals committed to improving developmental outcomes in the areas of learning, health, safety and economic security for children ages birth to eight. The Alliance seeks policy and practice change to ensure that all children born in Connecticut will enter kindergarten healthy, eager to learn, and ready for school success.

**Connecticut Parent Power:** Connecticut Parent Power (CT Parent Power) is a statewide parent-led advocacy organization engaging and mobilizing parents on behalf of Connecticut’s children. CT Parent Power supports parents in becoming increasingly effective advocates for children on state and national policy issues, inspires and develops leaders, and grows a statewide network of parents engaged in taking collective action.

**Connecticut Voices for Children:** Connecticut Voices for Children (Voices) is a statewide, research-based advocacy organization. Voices’ mission is to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut’s young people and their families by advocating for strategic public investments and wise public policies. Voices’ advances its mission through high quality research and analysis, strategic communications, citizen education, and development of the next generation of advocates.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED IN DISCOVERY EVALUATION IN 2005, 2006, AND 2007**

- Bridgeport Hospital Child FIRST Program
- Connecticut Association for Human Services
- Connecticut Center for School Change
- Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
- Connecticut Health and Development Institute (Early Childhood DataCONNECTIONS)
- Connecticut Parent Power
- Connecticut Voices for Children
- Danbury Children First
- Community Conversations (First supported by the League of Women Votes, then by Democracy Works, and now by Community Mediation, Inc.)
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Meriden Children First
- Parent Trust Fund
- United Way of Connecticut
- Yale Child Study Research Center

## APPENDIX D

### 2009-2010 LEGISLATOR INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

This document highlights some early observations from preliminary analyses about the political environment and legislative support for early childhood and early care and education issues in Connecticut. These observations are based on a set of interviews and surveys conducted in late 2009 and early 2010 with 17 legislators, with some comparisons to similar interviews conducted in late 2007 with a smaller group of 5 legislators. More information on how legislators to be interviewed were selected and relevant characteristics of the respondents is provided in the appendix.

The statements below are supported by detailed information included in endnotes. Except where noted, the statements below are based on the 2009-10 interviews.

*Legislators were split about evenly on how they felt early childhood issues fared during the 2009 session. Those who thought these issues fared well cited as evidence that program funding in this area survived funding cuts. Those that did not think early childhood issues fared well looked at reductions in political support and leadership in their assessment.<sup>1</sup>*

*Legislators believed that early care and education will continue to be an important issue for the state in the coming years, but were concerned that it may be overshadowed by other priorities and limited by budget constraints.<sup>2</sup>*

*Overall, legislators perceived a strong base of support for early care and education among policymakers. However, they did not see evidence of strong support from the general public.<sup>3</sup>*

*More of the legislators interviewed in 2009-10 stated that there is a cohesive vision for addressing the needs of young children in the state than did those interviewed in 2007. However, the specific steps and pathway for realizing that vision are not clear.<sup>4</sup>*

*Legislators reported hearing more from parents and parent groups about early childhood issues during the 2009 legislative session than in 2007. Legislators on committees that most directly deal with these issues were those hearing from parents.<sup>5</sup>*

*A few legislators identified new members of the Assembly as emerging champions; otherwise, no “new” champions were identified. However, support for early childhood issues within the legislature was reported to be stronger than in 2007.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Seven (7) legislators felt that early childhood fared “very well,” “well,” “OK,” or “better than expected” given the economic realities of the session. They cited lack of cuts to the readiness program, the preservation of various projects and initiatives, and the establishment of a new office of Early Childhood Planning and Coordination. Three

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(3) of these legislators felt that the Governor and both sides of legislature are committed to early childhood, and one (1) mentioned the strong advocacy effort around the issue.

Six (6) legislators felt that early childhood fared “not well,” or “badly.” They cited the dissolution of the Cabinet and their feeling that early childhood is slipping as a priority, with other issues getting more focused attention. Three (3) of these legislators commented on the lack of support from the Governor as a strong factor.

Four (4) legislators felt it was hard to say how the issue fared because the session was so difficult as a result of the budget situation. Two (2) of these legislators felt that early childhood is an issue area with strong support, but not enough to expand the program. One (1) legislator believes that not “anywhere near enough” is being done.

*“I think the early childhood programs that we have now are safe, but expansion doesn’t seem to be a possibility.”  
(Representative)*

<sup>2</sup> During the 2007 interviews, stakeholders were asked if early care and education would continue to be a prominent area of focus for the state in coming years. Though, overall, they thought it would, they foresaw challenges in sustaining legislative and policy interest in early childhood education issues over the next several years. Some raised the concern that there was so much focus on this issue during the 2007 legislative session that legislators might come away with a sense that they had already addressed this problem; these interviewed legislators predicted a shift to public safety and health issues.

These concerns were not realized in the 2009 session, based on the observations of legislators interviewed. Further, five (5) of the interviewed legislators unequivocally stated that early childhood will continue to be a prominent area of focus for the state in the future. However, others saw challenges in keeping early care and education at the top of the list of priorities. Six (6) legislators thought early childhood might continue to be a focus area for the state, but expressed concern that Connecticut will struggle with economic recovery longer than other states and other issues will take precedence.

*“Connecticut’s budget crisis and inability to raise revenues means that areas where most harm is done [by budget cuts and economic downturn] will be addressed before early care and education will be addressed.” (Senator)*

<sup>3</sup> Ten (10) of the legislators interviewed after the 2009 legislative session said that there was a strong base of support for early care and education issues, particularly within the legislature.

However, the legislators interviewed did not see a strong support for early childhood issues coming from the voting public. Four (4) legislators (including two (2) who reported a strong base of overall support) believed there had not been enough public support for early childhood issues or “push from the outside [of the legislature]” to affect policy decisions. Legislators pointed to the need to frame early care and education in the context of the achievement gap and show the link between early childhood investments and school outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> During the 2007 interviews, a common vision for the work was viewed as a necessary to maintain the focus on early childhood education issues. However, only one (1) legislator thought there was a cohesive vision for addressing the needs of young children in the state. Interviewed legislators felt that advocates for children and families were not promoting a common agenda, in part because they represented multiple perspectives (focus on infants and toddlers versus preschoolers, targeted versus universal services, early education versus health versus family support, etc.). Legislators perceived a competitive dynamic that made it difficult for advocates to promote a common policy agenda around young children.

By the time of the 2009-2010 interviews, this was no longer seen as a challenge. Almost half of the legislators who responded to this question (5 of 11) thought there was a cohesive vision for young children. Two (2) legislators

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saw progress toward a comprehensive vision, with strong agreement about the importance of early care and education, while four (4) legislators believed that no cohesive vision existed.

Legislators from both groups, those who believed that a clear vision for early childhood existed and those who did not, noted that the path to realizing this vision was unclear. The broad goals for the work was generally seen as widely understood, and the work of the Cabinet and Research and Policy Council was viewed as a foundation for those goals. However, no legislator who was interviewed believed that there was consensus on a clear plan for getting to those goals; those that do not see a common vision specifically pointed to differing viewpoints on what is needed, different “paths” to the overall goals.

*“Everyone knows what the goal is, but everyone is not taking the same road.” (Senator)*

<sup>5</sup> In 2007, interviewees were asked to identify the groups (such as parents, business, advocates, etc.) that they believed were best organized to work on ECE issues. Consistently, interviewees identified advocates and early childhood education providers as the drivers of the work around early childhood education and consistently mentioned the fact that parents did not yet have a strong voice on these issues.

In the interviews conducted in 2009-10, five (5) legislators specifically mentioned parents or parent groups when asked about groups working on behalf on early care and education issues; in addition, three (3) legislators who responded to the e-mail survey said they heard from parents in the communities they serve on early care and education issues. Two (2) legislators who were interviewed reported seeing a more diverse group of parents than in the past, including urban parents and charter school parents. Four (4) legislators reported that they did not see strong parent participation. The five (5) legislators who reported that parents were a group expressing strong support on early care and education issues served on the Select Committee on Children or the Education Committee.

*“On the Children’s Committee, we are hearing more and more from urban parents.” (Senator)*

<sup>6</sup> In 2007, the interviewed legislators expressed a need to cultivate a more diverse set of champions within the state and within the legislature. One legislator talked about the need to constantly cultivate new relationships in the legislature, particularly with new members, noting that advocates need to recognize that “the relationship building is continuous.”

In 2009-10, legislators were asked if they have seen new champions emerging in the past two years. Eight (8) legislators responded, naming groups or individuals champions who were not “new” champions. Three (3) legislators identified freshman legislators as a new set of champions for the issue.

Two freshman legislators were interviewed. Both are engaged in work in Discovery communities (one participated in a community planning process and one was a member of a community parent group) and one was named a “2009 Children’s Champion” by the Alliance.

*“The coalition in the legislature grows every year and is stronger than it was two years ago.” (Representative)*



## APPENDIX E

### DISCOVERY EVALUATION METHODS RELATED TO THE STATE-LEVEL POLICY STUDY

In 2005, 19 statewide and regional grantees were interviewed and asked to describe their connection to the Discovery initiative, the support they have received beyond funding, and the extent to which they collaborated with other statewide and regional, as well as community grantees. Interviewees were also asked to identify any changes they had seen at the state and local levels.

In the fall of 2006, a group of 14 statewide and regional grantees whose work was integral to the Discovery initiative was identified by Memorial Fund staff. These grantees encompassed a broad range of organizations involved in advocacy, research, and best practice development work (see appendix D for a list of these organizations).

Representatives from all 14 organizations responded to a questionnaire late in 2006, and thirteen were interviewed again early in 2007. Interviews with Memorial Fund staff and the technical assistance consultant about the work of these grantee organizations were also conducted in the spring of 2005 and the summer of 2007. The evaluation team also observed statewide and regional grantee events, reviewed grant applications and Memorial Fund materials related to these grantees, and reviewed information from the statewide and regional grantee's websites.

In 2007 the evaluation team interviewed 27 stakeholders, including: 5 legislators, 2 lobbyists, 3 state agency officials, 3 advocates, 1 business leader, 1 consultant, 9 state funders and 3 national funders. These stakeholders were identified by the Memorial Fund as key early care and education supporters. They were asked for their perspectives on the outcome of the 2007 legislative session and the current policy environment and the factors that have contributed to recent policy actions, as well as what they think needs to happen to sustain focus on early care and education issues and build on the outcomes of the recent legislative session.

In late 2009, the evaluation conducted interviews with 17 legislators. These were similar to the interviews conducted in late 2007 with a smaller group of 5 legislators and focused on the political environment and legislative support for early childhood and early care and education issues in Connecticut. A list of 47 legislators were identified based on 1) community nominations of legislators they either had relationships with or worked to cultivate relationships with; 2) legislators identified by the Early Childhood Alliance as "Children's Champions"; 3) legislators identified by the core statewide organizations as advocacy "targets;" and 4) the list of legislators Memorial Fund staff had met with in 2009.

After completing these interviews with legislators, the evaluation then interviewed, at the end of 2009 and the first part of 2010, a group of 15 stakeholders including 2 state agency officials, 2 advocates, 1 business leader, 3 consultants, 2 state funders, and 5 grantees (including 3 of the 4 core grantee organizations listed in Appendix A.)

## APPENDIX F

### LEGISLATIVE CLIMATE INDEX: DATA COLLECTION METHODS, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **General Description:**

The Discovery initiative's theory of change is based on the belief that lasting and widespread improvement in young children's early success in school requires increased availability and quality of early care and education services, closer connections between early education and elementary school experiences, and attention to overall child development from birth into the early grades. Two critical conditions in creating these results are the commitment of public resources to programs and services and the resolution of statutory, regulatory, and bureaucratic barriers to the effective use of those resources.

Some of these conditions can be met at the community level, but in general state-wide change requires state-level action. Some of those changes can be made through executive action by the governor and state agencies; however, legislative action is critical, particularly related to funding. Therefore, while some of the initiative's state-level focus has been on work with the executive branch (particularly, the Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the state Department of Education), advocacy efforts directed toward the state legislature have been a major strategy supported by the initiative.

The Discovery initiative evaluation documented and examined the contributions of the initiative on state policy action during the past two legislative sessions, primarily through interviews with selected legislators, advocates, and other stakeholders. The evaluation then supplemented this qualitative information and analysis with an index of overall legislative "climate" regarding early care and education and related issues. This index provides an overall quantitative measure at a given point in time and a way to measure changes over time.

#### **Approach:**

The approach used to develop this measure of legislative climate was to collect information available in the public record on actions and statements of all members of the Connecticut General Assembly during the 2007 and the 2009 legislative sessions. Ultimately, the index would include four types of ways that legislators could indicate interest in and support for early care and education issues:

- Participation in public expressions of support for early childhood issues – for example, by attending community forums, participating in provider tours, speaking at advocacy events, posting statements of support on the legislator's website, and so on

- Sponsorship and support of specific legislation directly related to early childhood issues, especially early care and education
- Participation in oversight of executive implementation of legislation through legislative committees
- Membership on taskforces and other bodies concerned with early childhood issues

Legislative climate would then be measured by computing the number of actions and statements made by legislators indicating interest in and support for early childhood issues divided by the number of legislators in various groups – including all legislators in the Assembly and subgroups of legislators such as legislative leadership and legislators representing the Discovery communities. The computed value of the index could then be used to compare this measure of legislative climate between time periods or across groups of legislators.

While the data used in computing the index would be based on what individual legislators said and did, the legislature as a whole, not the legislators as individuals, is the focus. Therefore, this index is different from "legislator watch lists," which generally focus on votes on specific legislation and are used to compare the record of support for particular issues by individual legislators. Further, actions vis-à-vis specific pieces of legislation are only one dimension of legislative climate, recognizing that there are many external and idiosyncratic factors that can determine the outcome of a specific bill. For that reason, this or any other measure of general legislative interest and support in an issue area may not translate into passage of specific legislation in that area. Since the Discovery initiative theory of change, as used in the evaluation, is focused on creating sustained attention to early childhood issues and capacity to influence early childhood policy at both the community and state levels, measuring legislative climate, not just specific legislative actions, is appropriate.<sup>43</sup>

Because data on some of the possible indicators of interest and support were not uniformly available for 2007 and 2009, the analysis of change between these two years focuses on actions taken on bills introduced in the General Assembly. Information on public expression of support and membership on oversight committees and task forces was collected for all legislators in the 2008 and 2009 cohort and can be used as the benchmark for comparison with similar information in subsequent years.

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<sup>43</sup> Of course, if what appeared to be a supportive legislative climate never resulted in legislative action on the issue, measuring climate per se would be of little value. However, determining this would require measures over several legislative sessions, taking into account other factors such as budget constraints such as were experienced in 2009.

## Data Collection Methods:

The first step in the construction of the legislative climate index was to identify specific “relevant” bills for which various actions should be tracked. A search was conducted of the database of bills on the Connecticut General Assembly website using the following terms:<sup>44</sup>

- Birth to 3
- Care4Kids
- Early childhood
- Early childhood accreditation project
- Early Childhood Education Cabinet
- Early childhood community plan
- Head Start
- Infant health
- Maternal and child health
- Parent information
- Parent leadership
- Parent training
- Parenting education
- School readiness
- Young child health
- Young child mental health

Special attention was paid to bills that were considered by relevant committees, including the Select Committee on Children and the Education and the Health and Human Services Committees. Bills that were introduced and voted out of committee were included.<sup>45</sup> Bills may or may not have been passed and may or may not have survived the final appropriations and budget process. A list of the bills reviewed in 2007 and 2009 is included in the endnotes to the tables at the end of this appendix. A total of 20 bills were reviewed in 2007 and 10 in 2009. Legislative actions included: co-sponsorship, voting in committee, and voting on the floor (for bills that reached that stage). In 2007 a total of 28 committee votes by 163 of the 188 legislators in the General Assembly and one floor vote were reviewed; in 2009 23 committee votes by 146 of the 187 legislators and 8 floor votes were reviewed.

Every member of the legislator in both years was coded as to political party, chamber, first year in the Assembly, district (which was then coded as to whether a CFI or Discovery community

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<sup>44</sup> This list of terms was reviewed with experts at the Office of Legislative Research and Legislative Library to ensure that these terms that would identify any bills that included these terms anywhere in the text of the bill.

<sup>45</sup> A review of JFS (Joint Favorable Substitute) documents was conducted to exclude any bills that had been so drastically amended that they no longer were relevant to early childhood.

was in the district), leadership position,<sup>46</sup> and whether served on the Appropriations Committee or on any of the following committees—Children, Education, and Health and Human Services.

In addition, legislators were coded for their participation on committees and task forces in 2008 and 2009, including:

- Early Childhood Education Cabinet/State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care
- Children in Recession Task Force
- Commission on Education Achievement
- 2010 Achievement Gap Task Force

Legislators who participated in the 2008 tours of early childhood education facilities and the Read Across America events and those who were named 2009 or 2010 champions by the Early Childhood Alliance were also identified. (As noted earlier, comparable information was not obtained for the 2007 period so this information was not included in the analysis of change in legislative climate between 2007 and 2009.)

### **Analysis Approach and Results:**

The favorable votes cast by each legislator in committee or on the floor on the relevant bills were tallied; nays, absences, and abstentions were all treated as “not favorable.” The number and percent of possible votes that were favorable were then computed in each year (2007 and 2009) for various groups of legislators – specifically, for all members of specific committees, for

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<sup>46</sup> Leadership positions in Senate included:

- President pro tempore
- Majority leader
- Chief deputy president pro tempore
- Chief deputy majority leader
- Majority whip
- Minority leader
- Minority whip

Leadership positions in House include:

- Speaker
- Majority leader
- Republican leader
- Republican caucus chair
- Republican whip

Any other positions with “deputy” in the title were coded as deputy leaders.

new legislators (those in office 2 years or less), for legislators representing CFI or Discovery communities, and for those in legislative leadership positions. The differences between years were then compared. The results of this analysis are shown in the table at the end of this appendix.

The trend in legislative climate indicating interest and support for early childhood issues evident in the analysis of this index between 2007 and 2009 is very consistent with the observations of key stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation, both legislators themselves and advocates and other experts.

**Possible Implications:**

Given the strong agreement between key observers of and participants in the legislative process in Connecticut with the legislative climate index, it appears that the index might be a valuable addition to other ways of gauging interest and potential support in the Assembly. As noted in the introductory description of this index, there are other ways in which legislative support can be expressed – through public statements, participation in advocacy events, and membership on relevant committees and task forces. It is recommended that data on these types of legislative support be collected systematically and prospectively and then analyzed to determine their added value to the index.

**RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATIVE CLIMATE INDEX, 2007 AND 2009**

2007	2009	TREND
<b>COMMITTEE VOTES</b>		
Number of bills reviewed: 10 House bills; 10 Senate bills <sup>7</sup>	Number of bills reviewed: 6 House bills; 4 Senate bills <sup>8</sup>	More relevant bills were introduced in 2007 than in 2009.
Number of committee votes coded: 15 on House bills; 13 on Senate bills	Number of committee votes coded: 13 on House bills; 10 on Senate bills	Similar number of committee votes were held in both years, even though there were fewer bills in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators voting in committee on reviewed bills: 163 (out of 188)	Number of legislators voting in committee on reviewed bills: 146 (out of 187)	There were fewer committees involved in bills in 2009 than in 2007, reducing the number of legislators involved in committee votes between the

2007	2009	TREND
		two years.
Number of committee voting opportunities for legislators on committees for reviewed bills: Mean number=5.3; Median number=5.0; Range=1-18	Number of committee voting opportunities for legislators on committees for reviewed bills: Mean number=6.3; Median number=5.0; Range=1-18	However, the number of voting opportunities for legislators on committees reviewing relevant bills increased somewhat between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators on committees reviewing bills who voted in favor at least once: 156 (out of 163)	Number of legislators on committees reviewing bills who voted in favor at least once: 143 (out of 146)	The percent of committee members who voted in favor of relevant bill at least once was virtually identical (96% and 98% in 2007 and 2009 respectively).
Number of legislators on committees reviewing bills who never voted in favor: 7 (out of 163)	Number of legislators on committees reviewing bills who never voted in favor: 3 (out of 146)	Similarly, the percent of committee members who never voted in favor of a relevant bill was also very similar (4% and 2%, respectively)
Number of legislators on committees who voted in favor of reviewed bills 80% or more of voting opportunities (depending on how many committees legislator served on): 108 (out of 163; 66%)	Number of legislators on committees who voted in favor of reviewed bills 80% or more of voting opportunities (depending on how many committees legislator served on): 128 (out of 146; 88%)	A substantially higher percentage of legislators on committees considering relevant bills voted in favor most of the time in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators on committees who voted in favor of reviewed bills 100% of voting opportunities (depending on how many committees legislator served on): 90 (out of 163; 55%)	Number of legislators on committees who voted in favor of reviewed bills 100% or more of voting opportunities (depending on how many committees legislator served on): 98 (out of 146; 67%)	A substantially higher percentage of legislators on committees considering relevant bills in 2009 always voted in favor than in 2007.
Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 13 (out of 18; 72%)	Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 20 (out of 21;	A substantially higher percentage of new legislators on committees considering relevant bills voted in favor most of the time in 2009 than

2007	2009	TREND
	95%)	in 2007.
Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 11 (out of 18; 61%)	Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 16 (out of 21; 76%)	A substantially higher percentage of new legislators on committees considering relevant bills in 2009 always voted in favor than in 2007.
Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 21 (out of 26; 81%)	Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 22 (out of 25; 88%)	The percent of legislators from CFI communities on committees considering relevant bills voting in favor most of the time was very similar in 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 18 (out of 26; 69%)	Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 15 (out of 25; 60%)	The percent of legislators from CFI communities on committees considering relevant bills always voting in favor was lower in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators from districts with a CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 87 (out of 126; 69%)	Number of legislators from districts with a CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 98 (out of 112; 87%)	The percent of legislators from CFI and the other original Discovery communities on committees considering relevant bills who voted in favor most of the time increased substantially.
Number of legislators from districts with a CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 74 (out of 126; 59%)	Number of legislators from districts with a CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 72 (out of 112; 64%)	The percent of legislators from CFI and original Discovery communities on committees who always voted in favor increased somewhat between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators in legislative leadership positions voting in	Number of legislators in legislative leadership positions	The percent of legislative leaders on committees



2007	2009	TREND
favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 34 (out of 55; 62%)	voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 26 (out of 36; 72%)	considering relevant bills who voted in favor most of the time increased substantially between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators in legislative leadership positions voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 30 (out of 55; 55%)	Number of legislators in legislative leadership positions voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 15 (out of 36; 42%)	The percent of legislators in leadership positions who served on committees considering relevant bills always voting in favor most of the time decreased between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 28 (out of 53; 53%)	Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 47 (out of 56; 84%)	The percent of legislators on the Appropriations Committee and also on committees considering relevant bills voting in favor most of the time increased substantially between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 21 (out of 53; 40%)	Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 32 (out of 56; 57%)	The percent of legislators on the Appropriations Committee and also on committees considering relevant bills always voting in favor increased substantially between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 39 (out of 53; 73%)	Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 80%+ of opportunities: 45 (out of 53; 85%)	The percent of legislators on committees related to early childhood and on committees considering relevant bills voting in favor most of the time increased substantially between 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 28 (out of 53;	Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor of reviewed bills in committee 100% of opportunities: 27 (out	The percent of legislators on committees related to early childhood and on committees considering relevant bills always voting in favor stayed

2007	2009	TREND
53%)	of 53; 51%)	almost the same between 2007 and 2009.
FLOOR VOTES		
Number of floor votes coded: 1	Number of floor votes coded: 8 total (1 in House only; 3 in Senate only; 4 in both chambers)	Only one of the bills reviewed in 2007 went to the floor for vote; many more did in 2009.
Number of legislators voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 135 (out of 188; 72%)	Number of legislators by percent of votes in favor of bills brought to floor: Mean percent=94%; Median percent=100%; Range=40-100%	A higher percent of legislators voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 19 (out of 23; 83%)	Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 18 (out of 21; 86%)	Approximately the same percent of new legislators voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2007 and 2009.
	Number of freshman legislators (in legislature one year or less) voting in favor 100% of floor votes: 16 (out of 21; 76%)	Approximately the same percent of new legislators voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2007 and 2009.
Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 21 (out of 29; 72%)	Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 24 (out of 28; 86%)	Approximately the same percent of legislators from districts with CFI communities voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2007 and 2009.
	Number of legislators from districts with CFI community voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 21 (out of 28; 75%)	Approximately same percent of legislators from districts with CFI communities voted in favor of relevant bills brought to the floor in 2007 and 2009.

2007	2009	TREND
Number of legislators from districts with CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 100 (out of 146; 69%)	Number of legislators from districts with CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 136 (out of 147; 93%)	Substantially higher percentages of legislators from the Discovery communities voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators from districts with CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 100 (out of 146; 69%)	Number of legislators from districts with CFI or original Discovery community voting in favor 100% of floor votes: 114 (out of 147; 78%)	Substantially higher percentages of legislators from the Discovery communities voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators in legislative leadership positions voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 27 (out of 57; 47%)	Number of legislators in leadership positions voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 50 (out of 57; 88%)	Substantially higher percentages of legislators in leadership positions voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
	Number of legislators in leadership positions voting in favor 100% of floor votes: 47 (out of 57; 82%)	Substantially more legislators in leadership voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor of reviewed bill on floor: 39 (out of 53; 74%)	Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 51 (out of 57; 89%)	Somewhat higher percentages of legislators on the Appropriations Committee voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
	Number of legislators on Appropriations Committee voting in favor 100% of floor votes: 44 (out of 57; 77%)	Somewhat higher percentages of legislators on the Appropriations Committee voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor of reviewed bill: 40 (out of 53; 75%)	Number of legislators on a committee related to early childhood issues voting in favor 80%+ of floor votes: 48 (out of 53; 91%)	Somewhat higher percentages of legislators on committees related to early childhood voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.
	Number of legislators on a committee related to early	Somewhat higher percentages of legislators on committees

2007	2009	TREND
	childhood issues voting in favor 100% of floor votes: 41 (out of 53; 77%)	related to early childhood voted in favor of relevant bills in 2009 than in 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Bills reviewed for 2007 included:

- HB 05348** RE: Concerning an appropriation for the Kinship Fund
- HB 06152** Re: Implementing a recommendation of the child poverty and prevention council
- HB 06722** Re: Concerning healthy kids initiatives
- HB 06723** RE: Concerning the prevention of childhood lead poisoning
- HB 07117** RE: Concerning an appropriation to expand the family school connection program
- HB 07136** RE: Concerning a grant program to match federal and private dollars to promote early childhood literacy in the pediatric care setting
- HB 07177** RE: Concerning family resource centers
- HB 07247** RE: Designating Connecticut community action agencies as the state's coordinating agencies to reduce child poverty
- HB 07302** RE: Concerning rates paid to providers under the child care subsidy program
- HB 07360** RE: Concerning early childhood education and reading programs
- SB 0329** RE: Concerning early childhood services and programs
- SB 0683** RE: Concerning early childhood lead poisoning
- SB 0756** Re: Concerning an appropriation for diapers for children living in poverty
- SB 1117** RE: Increasing certain bond authorizations for capital improvements
- SB 1198** RE: Concerning the Early Childhood Education Cabinet
- SB 1220** RE: Concerning the birth-to-three program
- SB 1335** RE: Concerning school readiness for homeless children
- SB 1340** RE: Concerning a comprehensive plan to eradicate childhood lead poisoning
- SB 1355** RE: Concerning appropriations to the Even Start program
- SB 1382** RE: Concerning professional assistance to persons providing child care assistance

<sup>8</sup> Bills reviewed for 2009 included:

- HB 5426** RE: Concerning child care subsidies for the unemployed under the Care 4 Kids program
- HB 5841** RE: Concerning a uniform reporting form for preschool and childcare programs
- HB 6309** RE: Concerning administration of the department of developmental services
- HB 6411** RE: Concerning a reduction in child poverty and investment in prevention
- HB 6486** RE: Concerning responsible fatherhood and strong families
- HB 6544** RE: Simplifying procedures for early childhood education facilities
- SB 1020** RE: Concerning pesticide application at child day care centers and schools
- SB 749** RE: Concerning the inclusion of the Children's Trust Fund in the Early Childhood Education Cabinet
- SB 826** RE: Concerning the licensure of child daycare facilities and youth camps
- SB 941** RE: Concerning early childhood education planning