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# **Latino Politicians, Activists, and Parents: The Challenge of Implementing City-Suburban Magnet Schools**

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Conference paper presented on the panel  
“Latinos and the Politics of Magnet Schools”  
Division G, Section 4: Social Contexts of Ed Policy, Politics, and Praxis  
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**Abstract:**

This socio-political analysis focuses on various coalition members' roles in the design and implementation of the Learning Corridor, a \$126 million complex of four interdistrict magnet schools, located in the predominantly Puerto Rican south side of Hartford, Connecticut. Drawing upon historical and qualitative research methods, it examines how different Latino politicians, activists, and parents viewed the original purpose of the magnet school project -- and how they continue to address conflicts that have arisen during the past five years of implementation. In addition to archival analysis of ten years of documents and statistics, the study draws upon twenty-nine semi-structured interviews with key advocates. Major findings reveal how city-suburban magnet schools have been a two-edged blade for Hartford's Latino residents, resulting in important tangible and symbolic gains for some, but diluting benefits that were originally slated for Hartford's neighborhood youth.

**Introduction: Magnet Schools in the Hartford Region**

Since the 1954 ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* school districts and communities have implemented a series of desegregation plans to increase racial balance and provide equal educational opportunities. Some involuntary desegregation plans, such as forced busing, resulted in strong opposition from whites who sought to avoid integration by fleeing to private schools or suburban public schools. In an attempt to create more acceptable integration plans, many cities have established creative and voluntary choice programs like magnet schools. Since the 1970s, magnet schools have gained in popularity as a more acceptable form of complying with court ordered desegregation. Magnet schools are designed to create a greater racial balance than neighborhood schools by attracting white suburbanites and inner-city minorities to the same building

for innovative and specialized educational opportunities not found in traditional schools.

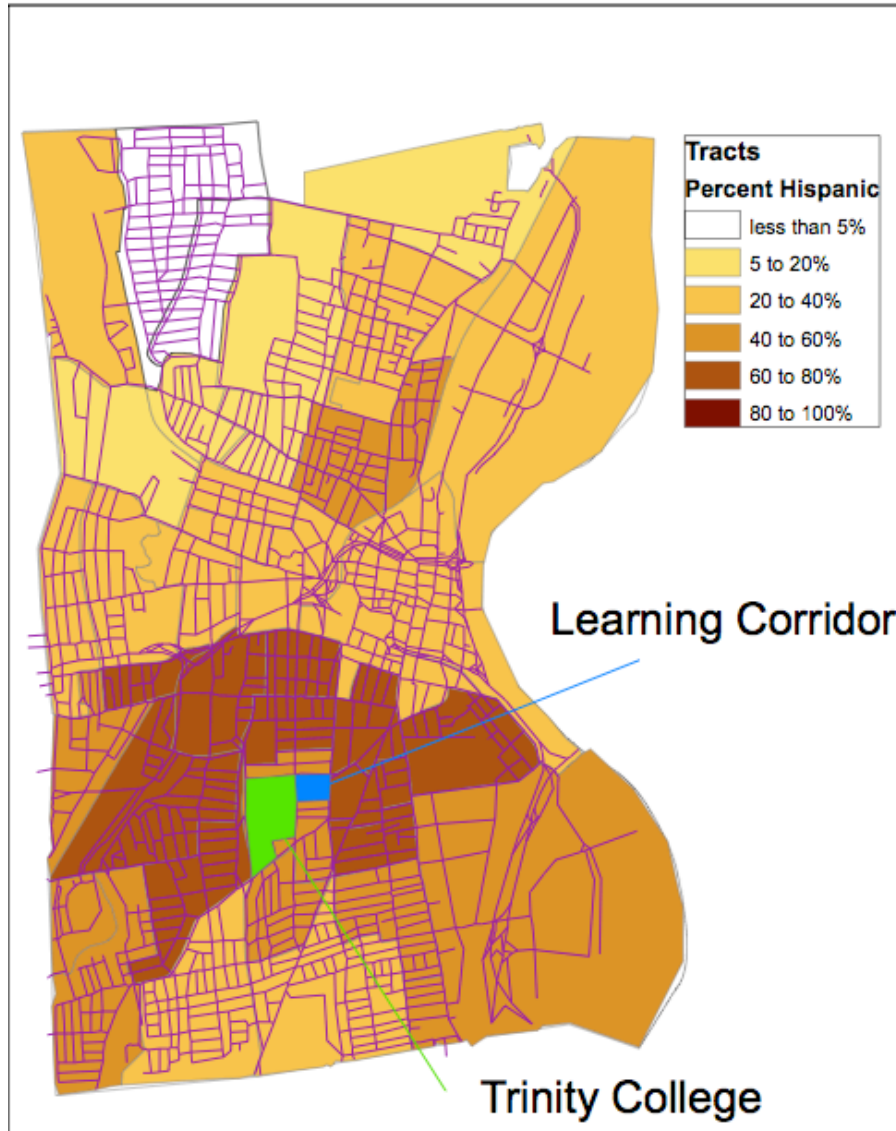
In Hartford, Connecticut, magnet schools attempt to reconcile some of the most extreme city-suburban disparities in the nation. The City of Hartford ranks as the second poorest in the U.S. (by percentage of families living in poverty among cities with populations greater than 100,000), and its public schools serve about 24,000 students, of whom 96 percent students are students color, and more than half of these are Latino. By contrast, the surrounding suburbs comprise the fifth highest per capita income in the U.S., with public schools serving over 75 percent white students. In 1989, black community activist Elizabeth Horton Sheff along with other minority and white parents launched the *Sheff v O'Neill* lawsuit on behalf of their children against then-Governor William O'Neill, charging that Connecticut's system of separate city and suburban districts led to racially segregated schools, violating their rights to equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination. After a prolonged trial, in 1996 the State Supreme Court split 4-3 in favor of the *Sheff* plaintiffs, ruling that racial and socioeconomic isolation of Hartford schoolchildren violated state law.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Court did not specify a remedy in its decision, fueling much political disagreement over how to proceed. Eventually in 2003, Sheff plaintiffs and defendants agreed on a legal settlement based on voluntary desegregation measures that were already in motion. A goal was established for 30 percent of Hartford's minority students to participate in integrated educational programs within four years, primarily through interdistrict magnet schools whose construction costs would be funded by the State. To date, a total of 19 interdistrict magnet schools -- of varying themes, sizes, and demographic composition

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<sup>1</sup> *Sheff et al. v. O'Neill et al.*, 238 Conn. 1, 678 A.2d 1267 (Conn. 1996), released 9 July 1996.

-- are operating in the metropolitan Hartford region.

### Hispanic Population in Hartford, by census tract, 2000



The most prominent cluster of interdistrict magnet schools is Hartford's Learning Corridor. Opened in fall 2000 with extensive local and national publicity, this \$126 million campus of four state-of-the-art school facilities and affiliated community outreach programs is located in a predominantly Puerto Rican south side neighborhood, adjacent to Trinity College, a predominantly white, elite small liberal arts institution.

The four schools that comprise the Learning Corridor each have a unique history and vary in levels of participation by city and suburban residents. Two of the schools are half-day high school resource centers for grades 9-12: the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts (GHAA) and the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science (GHAMAS). These students attend their “home school” for a half-day, and one of the academies for the other half of the day, thereby appeasing participating districts that did not wish to entirely give up some of their most talented students (and highest-scoring) students to the magnet system. The other two schools are the Montessori Magnet Schools (MMS, for pre-K to grade 6) and the Hartford Magnet Middle School (HMMS, grades 6-8). Both GHAA and Montessori existed prior to the Learning Corridor and were housed in inadequate facilities, while GHAMAS and HMMS were newly designed magnet programs created specifically for this new facility.

Although the *Sheff* case originally arose in the context of black-white desegregation politics in Connecticut during the late 1980s, the Learning Corridor has increasingly become driven by the interests of Latino politicians, community activists, and parents on Hartford’s south side. According to Census 2000, the Latino/Hispanic population in the city of Hartford rose to 41 percent, surpassing the number of Black and White one-race residents. In 2001, Eddie Perez was elected mayor, becoming the most prominent Puerto Rican chief

executive of a major city in the mainland United States. The city school superintendent at that time was Anthony Amato, another Puerto Rican, who was succeeded in 2002 by

City of Hartford, 2000		
Category	Population	Percent
Total	121,578	
White (one race)	33,705	28%
Black (one race)	46,264	38%
Hispanic (any race)	49,260	41%
<i>Does not equal 100%</i>		
Source: American FactFinder		

the current superintendent, Robert Henry, of Costa Rican descent. Within this isolated and impoverished environment, selected Latinos have become some of the most influential actors in shaping the politics of interdistrict magnet schools, grappling with serious issues of implementation from designs originally conceived many years earlier.

Despite the national spotlight the *Sheff* decision in 1996, academics and policymakers have paid relatively little attention to the interdistrict magnet schools that have resulted in the region during the past decade. Published research has been limited primarily to an evaluation of basic student enrollment, achievement trends, and parental satisfaction through survey instruments.<sup>2</sup> Highlighting the roles of Latino politicians, activists, and parents tells us a great deal about another side of the magnet story: the political compromises made in the service of magnet schools' multiple (and conflicting) goals. By concentrating on the underlying political causes and participation of the Latino community in the implementation of the magnet schools, this study questions the extent to which these highly-praised institutions represent the impoverished urban community that they were established to serve.

### **Literature on Magnet School Politics and Latinos**

Some of the best scholarship on magnet schools emphasizes the political complexity of these uniquely American institutions. Sociologist Mary Haywood Metz has argued that magnet schools openly reveal fascinating contradictions about American views on public education. On one hand, magnet schools are designed to promote school desegregation, embodying a societal promise for equal educational opportunity for all. But on the other hand, magnet schools are designed to “attract”

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<sup>2</sup> Barbara Q. Beaudin, *Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Magnet Programs in Connecticut: An Evaluation Report* (Connecticut Department of Education, Division of Evaluation and Research, March 2003). < <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/cmip/magnet.htm>>

families away from conventional neighborhood schools by offering exclusive educational resources, thereby encouraging the individual pursuit of a superior school advantage for a select few.<sup>3</sup> “Magnet schools draw political fire,” she explains, “because they bring this tacit contradiction to consciousness.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, magnet schools have become politically contentious institutions because they attempt to serve multiple (and conflicting) societal and individual goals in racially charged environments.<sup>5</sup>

Political challenges posed by magnet schools also appear in more traditional realms of the courts, public policy, and the media. Political scientist Jeffrey Henig also describes how the popularity of magnet schools grew rapidly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as federal courts and local school officials supported these voluntary desegregation plans as a political tactic to defuse white resistance to mandatory integration. After the Boston busing crisis of 1974, court-ordered magnet school plans arose in several metropolitan areas, such as Buffalo, Houston, Milwaukee, and St. Louis.<sup>6</sup> But researchers Susan Eaton and Elizabeth Crutcher exposed how in Prince George’s County, Maryland, magnet schools were used primarily as public relations tools by district advocates to bolster faith in the dispirited public school system, with no clear evidence that racial integration or student achievement were improving.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, President Ronald Reagan’s widely-publicized 1988 declaration of Prince

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Haywood Metz, *Different By Design: Context and Character of Three Magnet Schools, Reissued With a New Introduction* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986/2003), pp. 18-20.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Haywood Metz, “Magnet Schools and the Reform of Public Schooling,” In *Choice in Education: Potential and Problems*, eds. W. Boyd & H. Walberg, (McCutchan, 1990), p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), chapter 6.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey R. Henig, *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor* (Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 108-9.

<sup>7</sup> Susan E. Eaton and Elizabeth Crutcher, “Magnets, Media, and Mirages: Prince George’s County’s “Miracle” Cure,” In *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown V. Board of Education*, eds. Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton, pp. 265-89 (The New Press, 1996).



George's County's magnet schools as "one of the greatest successes of the education reform movement" underscores how the rhetoric of "choice" can overwhelm the reality of quality education.<sup>8</sup> While magnet school advocates continue to praise the importance of community involvement in the planning process, there is little research on the politics of magnet schools involving multiple racial constituency groups, and the tradeoffs and challenges that occur in these settings.<sup>9</sup>

Virtually all of the academic literature on the politics of magnet schools has been written in a Black-White racial context. One question remains largely unexplored: how do these insights translate into settings where other racial and ethnic groups, such as Latinos, constitute a significant third component of the population? To what extent does Latino participation make a difference in the politics of magnet school design and implementation? Across the nation, Latinos are the nation's fastest-growing racial group, and according to demographic projections, they will comprise one-quarter of the U.S. population by 2050. Yet we do not yet have a rich understanding of how Latino leaders, community activists, and parents are pursuing their interests amid the contested politics of magnet schools.

## Methods

This conference paper is drawn from a larger study of the Learning Corridor design and implementation from the 1990s to the present.<sup>10</sup> Methods included archival

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<sup>8</sup> Henig, *Rethinking School Choice*, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Robert D Barr, and William Parrett, *How to Create Alternative, Magnet, and Charter Schools That Work* (National Educational Service, 1997). See also Asian political interests in magnet schools in Caroline Hendrie, "New Magnet School Policies Sidestep an Old Issue: Race." *Education Week* 17 (10 June 1998): 10-12.

<sup>10</sup> Nivia Nieves, "Shaping the Learning Corridor: Interdistrict Magnet Schools, 1990s to the Present." Unpublished senior research project, Educational Studies Program, Trinity College. <<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ/css>>

research and qualitative interviewing during the summers of 2004 and 2005. Archival documents included stories from the region's only daily newspaper, the *Hartford Courant*; state legislation and reports on magnet schools in light of the *Sheff* litigation; and correspondence, meeting notes, and publications from organizations involved in the Learning Corridor. These organizations include Trinity College (specifically, the Office of Community and Institutional Relations, and the Board of Trustees), the non-profit coalition known as the Southside Institutional Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), a neighborhood advocacy organization known as Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART), and the regional entity that at one time managed all four magnet schools, the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). The documents provided a framework for analyzing the concerns of different groups of Learning Corridor advocates.

In the second phase of the research, the first author conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with Learning Corridor advocates who played significant roles in rallying support, designing, and implementing this interdistrict magnet school project. Learning Corridor advocates were sorted into five groups, each representing a particular political constituency:

- City of Hartford
- Suburban towns
- Trinity College
- State government
- Learning Corridor administrators

Members of each group were selected for interviews based upon their appearance

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in archival documents as well as referral by other key individuals. Interview participants who represented multiple groups were favored on the basis that they were more likely to provide insight from more than one perspective. While the original research design also called for interviews with “opponents” of the Learning Corridor, it was extremely difficult to identify individuals who publicly labeled themselves in this way. Only two suburban school board members publicly spoke out against the interdistrict magnet schools during the design phase, yet both of them refused to be interviewed; in any case, they became marginal characters in the main narrative of events. Nearly everyone claimed to be a supporter of the Learning Corridor, so we chose to examine more subtle political differences in the reasons and actions underlying their support.

Interview guides were designed to obtain information on the participant’s relationship with the Learning Corridor, including perceptions, involvement, and roles during, before, and after construction. Participants also were asked to comment on their perceptions of other individuals and groups involved with the project. The interview process received Institutional Review Board approval, and in accordance with the *Principles and Standards* of the Oral History Association, transcripts and consent forms will be donated to the Trinity College archives. (See interview guides and consent forms in the appendix.)

### **A Political Analysis of Latinos and the Learning Corridor**

In the context of this conference paper on Latinos and the politics of magnet schools, our reading of the archival documents and interview transcripts yielded four major findings, which we have written in the format of an historical narrative:

## 1) Building the Magnet School Coalition: A Story of Converging Interests

Like many school reform movements, the Learning Corridor began with a group of advocates interested in creating change within their world. In the mid-1990s, the political interests of three constituencies converged to create the design for a complex of interdistrict magnet schools in Hartford. At its core, the coalition consisted of three parties:

- 1) neighborhood activists from Hartford's predominantly Latino south side
- 2) Connecticut state officials
- 3) Trinity College administrators

While the interests of these three groups overlapped, they were not identical. As a result, the plans for the Learning Corridor served multiple goals, perhaps even more so than the typical magnet school suggested by sociologist Mary Metz.

From the perspective of neighborhood residents in Hartford's predominantly Latino south side, the mid-1990s were a low point, particularly for public education. In the Hartford Public School system, the cumulative dropout rate was reported to be nearly 50 percent.<sup>11</sup> On standardized tests, Hartford scored lowest in the entire state, even among comparable urban areas. Hartford schools hired six different superintendents during the 1990s, and its school board became politically dysfunctional before being taken over by State officials.<sup>12</sup> Southside residents were also plagued by other issues in the mid-1990s, such as rising levels of poverty and violent crime. But many viewed better schooling as the most attainable solution to their problems. Edie Lacey, a community activist from the southside neighborhood where the Learning

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<sup>11</sup> Hilary Cramer, "Understanding the Dropout Rate in Hartford: 1996-Present." Unpublished Educational Studies senior research project, December 2004.  
<<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ>>

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Kuzyk, *A Hartford Primer and Field Guide, 2nd Edition* (Trinity College, 2003), p. 94.

Corridor eventually was built, explained that “The only solution to all the ills of society is education. That is the only answer. . . whether it is poverty. . . or neglect or abuse. Once you show anyone that they have hope, hope is the most powerful thing of all.”<sup>13</sup>

A second major partner in the Learning Corridor coalition was the Connecticut state government. Pressure built up on the state when the *Sheff* lawsuit went to trial in 1992, and headlines repeated the plaintiff’s charge that Hartford schooling resembled an “apartheid” system, and that city-suburban school district boundaries should be dismantled.<sup>14</sup> In response to the case, Connecticut’s state education department built support for voluntary desegregation, featuring “incentive plans” for interdistrict magnet schools. During the early 1990s, magnet schools were by no means a new idea to the nation, or Connecticut, where over two dozen existed. But there were only three magnet schools available to Hartford students, and each of them struggled with curricular, leadership, or facility issues that prevented them from attracting sizable numbers of suburban families. For instance, the strongest magnet school in Hartford in the early 1990s was the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts (GHAA), which served only 106 city and suburban high students on a part-time basis in a building on Wethersfield Avenue that previously had been a bar and funeral home.<sup>15</sup> In 1996, when Connecticut’s judicial branch ruled in favor of the *Sheff* plaintiffs’ desegregation suit (without specifying a remedy), the Republican Governor immediately announced that city and suburban school district boundaries would remain untouched. Kevin Sullivan,

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<sup>13</sup> Edie Lacey, interview with Nivia Nieves, 4 August 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Frahm, “Suit Could Redraw School Lines: Desegregation Action Fights City-Suburb Split,” *Hartford Courant* 27 April 1989, p. A1; Robert Frahm and Rick Green, “School System Likened to Apartheid,” *Hartford Courant* 17 December 1992, p. A1.

<sup>15</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education, *Quality and Integrated Education: Options for Connecticut* (April 1989), p. 26; Connecticut Public Act 93-263: An Act Improving Educational Quality and Diversity; Thomas C. Reynolds, “Magnet Schools and the Connecticut Experience,” (MA thesis in Public Policy, Trinity College, 1994), p. 42-3, appendix.

a rising Democratic state senator from suburban West Hartford, also cast doubt on any plan to redraw city and suburban school boundaries, referring to the idea as “a sort of racial gerrymandering” that would not survive a legal challenge. “I don’t think the legislature in a million years would choose that alternative,” he commented.<sup>16</sup> A vast majority of Rowland’s Republican and Sullivan’s Democratic colleagues in the state assembly agreed.<sup>17</sup> Three years earlier, they passed a bill that would support construction costs for new interdistrict magnet schools that qualified. But in politically fractured environment of metropolitan Hartford, where city and suburbs often viewed each other with suspicion, who could bring together different parties to agree on a magnet school for all?

The third major partner in the Learning Corridor coalition was the leadership of Trinity College. This small, elite, predominantly white liberal arts institution, located in the center of Hartford’s south side, had witnessed its neighborhood shift from Italian and Irish families in the 1960s and 1970s to Puerto Rican families in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>18</sup> In an effort to address the changing urban neighborhood, Trinity President Tom Gerety proposed that a bilingual elementary magnet school be constructed on the edge of the college campus, to draw students from Hartford and suburban districts.<sup>19</sup> Trinity was motivated by self-interest: some hoped that a magnet school would generate “significant public relations benefits for the College” while also helping to “seal off” the edge of the campus from the deteriorating neighborhood. But this initial concept faded by 1994, due to legal difficulties in land acquisition and the absence of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Frahm, “Ruling Revives Interest in Voluntary Programs.” *Hartford Courant* 11 July 1996, p. A1.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Frahm, “Court Orders Desegregation: Legislature, Governor Left to Manage Remedy,” *Hartford Courant* 10 July 1996, p. A1.

<sup>18</sup> Kuzyk, *A Hartford Primer and Field Guide*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>19</sup> Tom Condon, “A Quick Fix for Schools is No Fix At All.” *Hartford Courant*, 2 March 1993, p. B1; “Options for Integration [editorial]”, *Hartford Courant*, 6 May 1993, p. C14.

sustained leadership, namely the departure of President Gerety and turnover among local school superintendents who assisted him.<sup>20</sup>

In 1995, Trinity welcomed the new President Evan Dobbelle, an experienced politician, who faced a growing crisis that led him to revive and expand the magnet school idea. As Hartford's economic and social decline worsened in the mid-1990s, with increasing poverty and gang violence, Trinity struggled to attract students. A common anecdote at the time told of a prospective white applicant and her affluent family driving up to the campus, looking around the impoverished neighborhood, and then driving away instead of visiting the Admissions Office. The most visible threat to Trinity was an abandoned city bus garage that stood immediately across the street from college's green lawn campus. Dobbelle persuaded the Trustees to take action. Months before the 1996 *Sheff* decision, Trinity trustees agreed to commit \$6 million of their limited endowment "for the purchase of strategic properties" on that 16-acre site ". . .to help stabilize our neighborhood and create a neighborhood learning initiative."<sup>21</sup> Trinity revised the language magnet concept into a science and technology magnet, in an attempt to build a bigger and bolder facility that would attract more funding.<sup>22</sup> President Dobbelle spoke candidly with the *New York Times* about Trinity's self-interest in this project. "I was recruited basically because the Board understood that for Trinity to remain a viable institution, it had to be more competitive," he explained, adding that significant numbers of students who declined Trinity's offer of admission "give the

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<sup>20</sup> John Taylor Risley, "The Impact of Magnet Schools and the Characteristics For Their Success: A Review of the Literature," unpublished paper written for Trinity College, 21 September 1994, pp. 14-15; Eddie Perez, Trinity Director of Community Relations to Glee Holton, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Program Officer, 15 October 1995 draft; both documents from CREC files.

<sup>21</sup> Trinity College Board of Trustee Minutes, October 19, 1995. See also Peter J. Knapp, with Anne H. Knapp, *Trinity College in the Twentieth Century: A History* (Trinity College, 2000), 508-9.

<sup>22</sup> Perez to Holton, 15 October 1995.

college's neighborhood as their reason." In Dobelle's eyes, "We're taking a neighborhood which is a debit and making it an asset."<sup>23</sup>

Between these three interest groups -- Hartford's south side residents, the State government, and Trinity College -- new political opportunities for magnet schools emerged in the late 1990s. Some *Sheff* plaintiffs and allies continued to lobby for a metropolitan school district that would erase city-suburban boundaries, rather than settling for voluntary magnet school desegregation.<sup>24</sup> But in Hartford's southside, neighborhood leaders were willing to consider magnet schools, the State's preferred desegregation remedy, if they were designed with their community's interests in mind. Trinity President Dobelle spent considerable political capital on bringing this coalition together. He repeatedly met with neighborhood leaders to reassure them that this was not a gentrification project that forced out lower-income people; instead, they would be part of the solution. Dobelle's efforts won public displays of trust from key groups such as Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART), the southside's oldest and strongest neighborhood organization, as well as the Spanish-American Merchants Association, based on the southside's Park Street small business district.<sup>25</sup> Eddie Perez, a rising Puerto Rican community activist who previously served as Trinity's Director of Community Relations under former President Gerety, took charge of the Learning Corridor project, and in 1999 became President of the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) that oversaw the construction phase. Perez's success

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<sup>23</sup> Gitta Morris, "How Trinity Aims to Stay Competitive," *New York Times* 18 February 1996, p. CN 1. Portion about "give the college's neighborhood as their reason" is an indirect quote by the reporter.

<sup>24</sup> Connecticut Center for School Change, "The Unexamined Remedy," 5 June 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Hilda Gandara [Spanish-American Merchants Association president] and Marilyn Rossetti [HART president], "Neighbors Trust Evan Dobelle," *Hartford Courant* 28 September 1997. On HART, see *People's History: The Story of Hartford Areas Rally Together* (HART, 1995) and also <<http://www.hartnet.org/hart/>>. On SAMA, see <<http://www.samact.org>>.



with the Learning Corridor eventually paved the way for future political career, including his rise as Hartford's first Hispanic mayor in 2001.<sup>26</sup> Dobelle also hired Kevin Sullivan, a former mayor of suburban West Hartford and rising Democratic leader in the state senate, to support the project as Trinity's Vice President of Community and Institutional Relations in 1996.

Together, Dobelle, Perez, and Sullivan glued together a Learning Corridor coalition that relied upon Hartford's southside neighborhood, state construction funding, and the college's organizational leadership. In time, the coalition would add a fourth member: suburban school districts that were under pressure from state officials to demonstrate support for *Sheff*, and agreed to send some students (with operating budget funds) to the magnet schools. In the fall of 2000, the four Learning Corridor magnet schools opened their doors, accompanied by a tremendous public relations campaign. National and local news media proclaimed it one of the most extensive public-private partnerships in education to date. The \$112 million facility would eventually enroll about 1,500 students each year. Yet even before the doors officially opened, a dispute began brewing over whose students would attend, which threatened to rip apart its founding coalition.

## **2) A Learning Corridor Conflict: Neighborhood versus Magnet Schools**

Educational reforms sometimes change course from the design stage to the implementation stage. In the case of the Learning Corridor, changes occurred primarily due to the shifting interests within the three-way magnet school coalition. During the initial design phase, community activists from Hartford's south side dreamed of

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<sup>26</sup> City of Hartford, biography of Mayor Eddie Perez  
<<http://www.hartford.gov/Government/mayor/biography.htm>>

building a public middle school that would serve their neighborhood interests. But increasing pressure from the State to create interdistrict magnet schools that addressed the continuing *Sheff* litigation altered those initial ideas. While interdistrict magnet schools seemed very attractive in many people's eyes, there was one significant downside: city-suburban schools would serve fewer local Latino youth than a new neighborhood school. As members of the Learning Corridor coalition clashed over how to resolve this intractable problem, Hartford's key decision-makers on this issue were Latino political and educational leaders, forced to weigh the interests of their own ethnic group versus competing interests.

This transformation is best explained by tracing the evolution of the schools that comprised the Learning Corridor, from its early planning phase to the present. Back in 1993, Trinity President Gerety's original idea called for one school: bilingual elementary regional magnet. By 1996, his successor, President Dobbelle, announced a multi-million dollar neighborhood revitalization plan for the abandoned bus garage site, featuring three educational facilities: a "neighborhood middle school" for Hartford youth, plus two interdistrict magnet schools (an elementary Montessori and a high school science and math resource center) for city and suburban youth.<sup>27</sup> (Eventually, the plan included a fourth school: an interdistrict high school arts magnet .) This combination of neighborhood and magnet schools was designed to appeal to all members of the emerging three-way coalition. Hartford voters had approved a new southside neighborhood middle school in a bond referendum in 1992, and State officials were eager for interdistrict magnet schools to be constructed to show that voluntary desegregation could work. For both types of schools, the state legislature would

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<sup>27</sup> "Trinity Heights: Neighborhood Revitalization" [booklet] Trinity College, circa 1996; Mike Swift, "Trinity Chief Says Project Would Not Displace Residents," *Hartford Courant* 19 January 1996, p. A3. The label "Trinity Heights" preceded the "Learning Corridor."

reimburse most of the capital costs.

But the Hartford neighborhood middle school soon became the subject of growing concern. In June 1996, the Hartford board voted to authorize its superintendent to proceed with the middle school project, but some members were puzzled by vague plans over which they had little control. "There is a lot of rhetoric out there whether we are building a new middle school with Trinity's help or a new high school with God knows whose help," exclaimed board member Donald Romanik. "There seem to be a lot of agendas out there. . ."<sup>28</sup> One month later, in the wake the July 1996 *Sheff* ruling and state leaders' emphasis on voluntary desegregation, plans for the Hartford neighborhood middle school became less certain. Over the next few months, Learning Corridor planners suggested that it might become "an *intra-district* magnet school" linking different Hartford neighborhoods, or "an *inter-district* magnet school" for the metropolitan region.<sup>29</sup> By 1998, planners went back to the original plan, reassuring audiences that it would remain a "neighborhood middle school," which in combination with the two proposed interdistrict magnets would "serve about 1,000 students, about two-thirds from Hartford."<sup>30</sup> But one year before the opening, when construction was fully underway, this new building still did not have a clear identity. Public relations materials in 1999 sometimes referred to it as the "Learning Corridor Middle School" or the simply the "City of Hartford Middle School." While the three interdistrict magnet schools were ready to launch with principals and curricular themes, the neighborhood

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<sup>28</sup> Mike Swift and Rick Green, "Plan for New Middle School Advances." *Hartford Courant* 19 June 1996, p. B1.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Kuczkowski, "Changing the Face of Frog Hollow," *The Hartford Advocate* 20 March 1997, p. 18 [refers to intradistrict]; Rick Green, "Poised for a New Direction, Consortium Links Revitalization to Saving Schools." *Hartford Courant* 3 September 1996, p. A1 [refers to interdistrict].

<sup>30</sup> Lizabeth Hall, "Private Grant Boosts Trinity's Efforts." *Hartford Courant* 5 June 1998, p. A3.

middle school still had neither.<sup>31</sup>

Southside residents soon discovered that “their” neighborhood middle school would be converted into a magnet school, taking away seats that were originally intended for their community’s children. In early 2000, Hartford’s new school superintendent, Anthony Amato, revealed that the new facility -- soon to be named the Hartford Magnet Middle School (HMMS) -- would open as an *intra*-district magnet for students in all parts of the city, and that suburban students would be welcome to transfer in as well.<sup>32</sup> When the Learning Corridor opened in fall 2000, the middle school’s first class of 160 six-graders came from three areas: about half from the immediate Southside neighborhood, about half from other Hartford neighborhoods (such as the North End), plus about ten who transferred in from suburban areas.<sup>33</sup> Two months later, Amato went a step further, by announcing his plan to convert HMMS from an *intra*- to an *inter*-district magnet and recruit even more students from suburban districts.<sup>34</sup>

Neighborhood activists from Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART), who had been part of the Learning Corridor coalition, reacted angrily to being shut out of these magnet conversion decisions. HART members focused their fury on Amato, a Puerto Rican, whom they believed had “betrayed our neighborhood.”<sup>35</sup> When the news first broke in early 2000, HART organized a meeting where members publicly criticized a

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<sup>31</sup> “Strengthening a Neighborhood from Within” [Learning Corridor booklet], Trinity College, August 1999; “Ready for Ignition: Learning Corridor Schools on Pace for September 2000 Launch,” *SINA Reports*, September 1999, pp. 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Cynde Rodriguez, “Corridor Openness Questioned,” *Hartford Courant* 21 January 2000, p. B1.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Chedekel et al., “Learning Corridor Channels Hope, School Complex Opens to Great Expectations.” *Hartford Courant* 6 September 2000, p. A1. \*\*double-check if suburban students enrolled through interdistrict transfer CRCP\*\*

<sup>34</sup> Rachel Gottlieb, “Luring Suburban Students into City, Hartford Superintendent Plans to Make Schools Inter-District Magnets.” *Hartford Courant* 22 November 2000, p. A1.

<sup>35</sup> Edie Lacey, interview with Nivia Nieves, 4 August 2004.

cardboard cut-out of Amato, since the superintendent himself was away from the city.<sup>36</sup> “How many children from this neighborhood will be able to go to the new Learning Corridor?” HART board member Gary Collier asked aloud. Neighborhood concerns spilled over from the middle school to the other Learning Corridor schools. The Montessori Magnet School, for example, accepted students only through a one-time lottery, at age three, to insure the integrity of their curriculum. The school did not accept older children as transfers, unless they had previously enrolled at another Montessori school, essentially limiting transfers to families that could afford to pay tuition at private Montessori schools.

Converting a neighborhood school into a magnet school threatened the interests of southside residents who had depended upon the new institution as “their” community school. Prior to opening, the Learning Corridor coalition emphasized in its public relations campaign that Trinity was not gentrifying the neighborhood, and that the complex would be built with the interests of working-class residents. A typical human interest media story from 1999 featured people like Nick Rosado and his wife Nancy Marrero, who bought a home in the Learning Corridor neighborhood, rather than leaving Hartford, with the clear intent of enrolling their children in the new neighborhood middle school. “It’s going to be a while before the schools are up and running,” explained Nancy Marrero, “but hopefully our kids will be able to go to the middle school someday.” Other Latino families also testified that they were moving into (rather than out of) the Southside neighborhood due to their hope of enrolling their children at a Learning Corridor school.<sup>37</sup> But the magnet conversion ran counter to

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<sup>36</sup>Cynde Rodriguez, “Corridor Openness Questioned,” *Hartford Courant* 21 January 2000, p. B1.

<sup>37</sup> “A Very Good Place to Bring Up My Kids,” *A Neighborhood Reborn* [Hartford’s Frog Hollow], published by *Courant Direct* [C-32602-1], circa 1999, p. 4. See also similar story about

these plans to directly link the revitalization of schools and homes. “A boom landed on the community when it turned out that there wasn’t going to be a neighborhood school,” recalled Alta Lash, the Director of Trinity’s Center for Neighborhoods. “We could not guarantee people who lived in the neighborhood that their kids would be going to this school, and it lost a little bit of its luster, frankly.”<sup>38</sup> According to HART community activist Edie Lacey, the decision was based on dollars, not children. “[When] former superintendent Amato pulled some political strings and got [HMMS] changed from a neighborhood school to a magnet school, [it] infuriated the neighborhood, because we really felt that our kids who were at-risk were the middle school kids,” Lacey recounted. “And he did it because he could get more money as a magnet school.”<sup>39</sup>

When the State created voluntary desegregation incentives as its primary response to the *Sheff* litigation, the lure of funding for interdistrict magnet schools reshaped the focus of the Learning Corridor middle school. Converting HMMS from a neighborhood to an inter-district magnet would qualify the school for increased state subsidies. Under the “landlord magnet” model that had been developed in New Haven, Hartford would receive a state subsidy for hosting HMMS, and it would increase if no more than 30 percent of its students came from any one school district (such as Hartford). Meanwhile, the landlord model also encouraged suburban district participation by allowing them to retain regular state funding (from the Education Cost Sharing Act) for students who enrolled in the magnet school, and would not require any suburban tuition to be paid to

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resident Joanne Rios, in Rosalinda DeJesus and Johnny Mason Jr., “Learning Corridor Gives Neighbors Hope.” *Hartford Courant* 4 July 1999, p. A1.

<sup>38</sup> Alta Lash, interview with Nivia Nieves, 15 July 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Edie Lacey, interview with Nivia Nieves, 4 August 2004.

Hartford.<sup>40</sup> Interdistrict magnets were a win-win for the districts. The local neighborhood, which initially had expected to fill all of the seats, was the only loser.

A second motivation behind the magnet conversion was racial and ethnic diversity. Learning Corridor planners argued that an interdistrict magnet school, which brought in suburban children, would better serve the long-term interests of Hartford's southside youth by educating them in an integrated setting. Jacqueline Mandyck, Trinity's Director of Community and Institutional Relations, looked back on the incident and explained that the interdistrict decision "would be more beneficial to [the] school," not only for funding, but also "for the diversity factor."<sup>41</sup> A *Hartford Courant* editorial criticized the HART neighborhood group for being "negative" on the issue. If schools like HMMS "are turned into magnets and draw some suburban kids, so much the better for Hartford," wrote the editors. "Surely numerous students who live in the Learning Corridor neighborhood would be eligible to apply -- and would be admitted."<sup>42</sup> But Learning Corridor planners did realize the long-term impact of the HMMS decision. "Ironically, the result is lower neighborhood enrollment in the schools than originally planned," observed Kevin Sullivan, a Democratic state legislative leader and Trinity vice-president, in an article looking back on the development of the Learning Corridor. "This [was] especially noticed by the local community."<sup>43</sup>

### **3) Resolving a Magnet Conflict by Invoking Special Privileges**

In the wake of the dispute over the Hartford Magnet Middle School, Learning

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<sup>40</sup> Rachel Gottlieb, "Luring Suburban Students into City, Hartford Superintendent Plans to Make Schools Inter-District Magnets." *Hartford Courant* 22 November 2000, p. A1.

<sup>41</sup> Jacqueline Mandyck, interview with Nivia Nieves, 4 August 2004.

<sup>42</sup> "HART's Ridicule was Wrong" [editorial] *Hartford Courant* 24 January 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin B. Sullivan, and James A. Trostle, "Trinity College and the Learning Corridor: A Small, Urban Liberal Arts College Launches a Public Magnet School Campus." *Metropolitan Universities* 15 (Summer 2004): \*\*find pages\*\*.

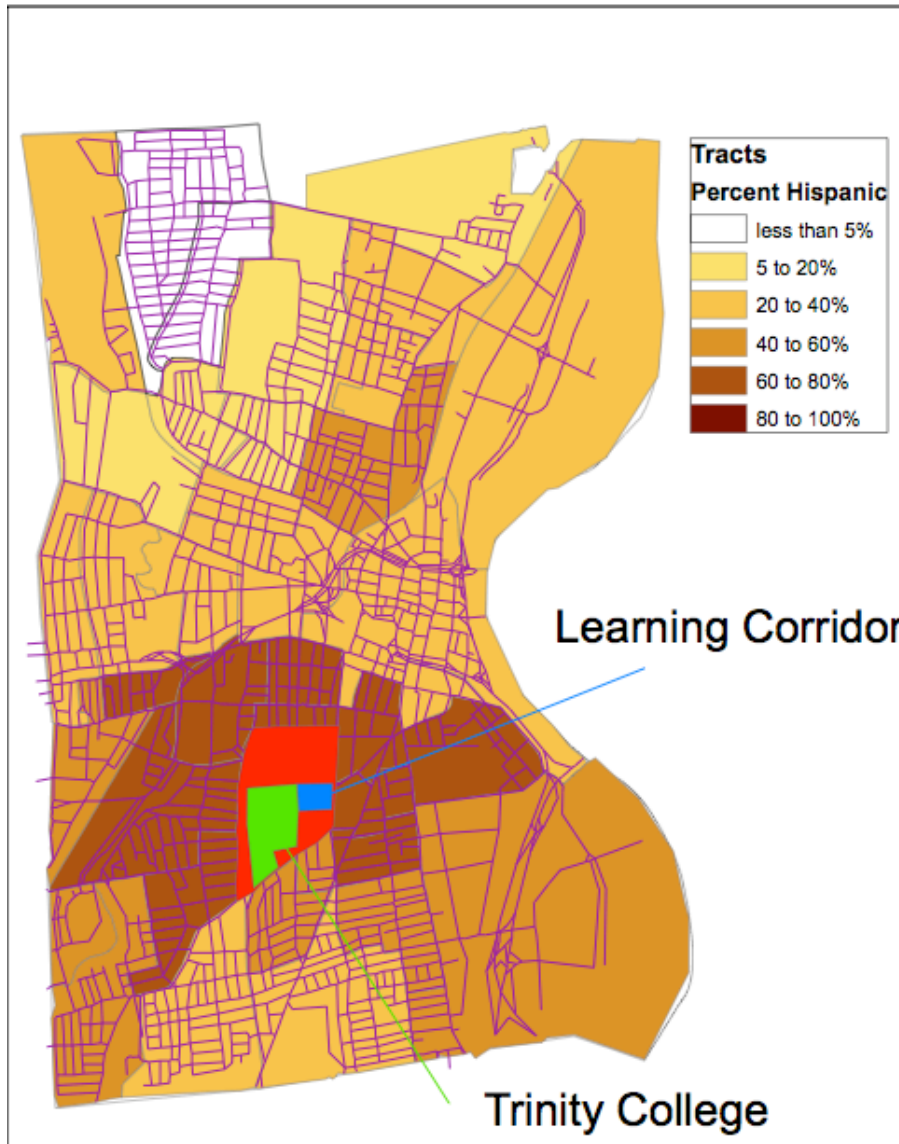
Corridor administrators sought to broker a peaceful resolution. Southside neighborhood activists were deeply frustrated that “their” neighborhood middle school had been converted into an interdistrict magnet school, reducing the number of local youth who could attend. In response, Learning Corridor officials offered a compromise: special privileges to increase neighborhood access to HMMS, outside of the conventional lottery. Magnet administrators created a system of weighted enrollments to privilege students who resided in a special neighborhood zone. As a short-term political settlement, the arrangement was ideal. But as a long-term principled decision about Learning Corridor’s broader purpose, the special privileges left many questions unanswered.

In an effort to ease growing tensions with the Southside neighborhood, magnet school planners engaged in a series of meetings with residents, hoping to restore their confidence in the Learning Corridor. Bruce Douglas, a key official at the Capitol Region Education Council, which managed the Learning Corridor, recalled these meetings as extremely important for understanding the neighborhood’s concerns and reaching a resolution. “HART realized that they had lost a school where 100 percent of the children were going to be from the neighborhood,” Douglas remembered. “As I began to listen to them, I realized that we were going to have to make a commitment to ensure that kids from the neighborhood were represented on the [Learning Corridor] campus.” The outcome of meetings held by Douglas, Eddie Perez, and other magnet advocates was the creation of a special zone in the predominantly Latino neighborhood that gave residents access to magnet school seats, outside of the conventional lottery. According to Douglas, “we weighted the lottery” so that one-third of the students at HMMS and



also the Montessori Magnet School would become from the neighborhood.<sup>44</sup> A 15-block radius from the schools defined the neighborhood boundary.<sup>45</sup>

### Learning Corridor neighborhood attendance zone (red)



Southside neighborhood activists were divided over the special privileges arrangement. Some agreed that the weighted enrollment plan compensated for the loss

<sup>44</sup> Bruce Douglas, interview with Nivia Nieves, November 23, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Map based on streets listed in "Learning Corridor Magnet Middle School Zone" document, undated, obtained from Montessori Magnet School staff, 2005. \*\*Check how this compares with Eddie Perez's description of HMMS 50/50 and MMS 25/25/50 quotas in 20001014HC \*\*\*

of the neighborhood school, while others continued to object to the financial and political motivations behind the decision to convert HMMS into an interdistrict school. Still others expressed concern over the arbitrary “neighborhood” boundary that divided residents more than bringing them together. “I think they made a huge mistake with the Latino community” by excluding Park Street from the neighborhood zone, recalled Alta Lash, director of Trinity’s Center for Neighborhoods. The Park Street small business district is the “heart and soul” of the Hartford’s southside Latino community, but it remained one block outside of the Learning Corridor “neighborhood” zone.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4) Defining “Success” for the Learning Corridor**

To what extent has the Learning Corridor been successful? The answer to that question depends upon how its goals are defined -- and for whose benefit. Over the years that have passed from its design phase to its implementation, the Learning Corridor brought together a coalition of advocates who supported the project for very different reasons. At times, divisive conflicts over their goals have nearly pulled them apart.

From the perspective of the State’s response to the *Sheff* desegregation case, the Learning Corridor is clear evidence of steps toward city-suburban desegregation. Collectively, the Learning Corridor interdistrict magnet schools are more racially diverse than most Hartford and suburban schools they draw students from. Indeed, the Learning Corridor *Annual Report* optimistically reminds readers that, “With students from over 40 different school districts in the Greater Hartford area...the degree of demographic diversity at the Learning Corridor is unmatched by any other Connecticut

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<sup>46</sup> Alta Lash, interview with Nivia Nieves, July 14, 2005.

public school system."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, of the nearly 1,500 students enrolled at the four Learning Corridor schools combined in 2004-05, the racial percentages were approximately one-third White, Black, and Hispanic.<sup>48</sup>

<b>Student enrollment 2004-05</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
all 4 Learning Corridor schools combined	39%	31%	26%	4%

As a result, the Learning Corridor allowed the State of Connecticut to shield itself from continuing litigation on school desegregation. In 1999, the *Sheff* plaintiffs returned to court in an attempt to speed the State’s compliance with the vague terms of the 1996 court ruling. But the State’s magnet school defense strategy prevailed. “In that second court case, the Learning Corridor was one of the jewels of the defense,” recalled GHAMAS principal Howard Thiery. “The State defense was, ‘Look at what we are doing’.”<sup>49</sup> The extensive publicity surrounding the beautiful Learning Corridor complex visibly demonstrated that Connecticut officials were taking action to desegregation cities and suburbs, without dwelling over the relatively small number of students involved.

From the perspective of Trinity College, the Learning Corridor has been successful in reducing the neighborhood “deficit” on the admissions office. Between 1995 and 2001 [\*check years again\*], the number of applications submitted rose 82 percent, and the Admissions Office became more selective by reducing its acceptance rate from 60 to 29 percent.<sup>50</sup> This private-public partnership did benefit the neighborhood, but Trinity’s primary self-interest has always been clear: the Learning Corridor was fundamentally

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<sup>47</sup> The Learning Corridor *Annual Report* 2001-2002.

<sup>48</sup> Learning Corridor enrollment data sources: Capitol Region Education Council and Hartford Magnet Middle School.

<sup>49</sup> Howard Thiery, interview with Nivia Nieves, October 6, 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Andrea Crawford, “In Your Back Yard.” *University Business* (June 2001): 45-47. \*\*Check against Trinity admissions statistics, 1967-present, in the Trinity archives.\*\*

an urban renewal strategy to counteract the neighborhood's negative influence on the College's image. For Trinity, constructing a new building on the abandoned bus garage lot that faced its campus was always more important than raising the quality of public education in Hartford for its own sake.

What did residents of the predominantly Latino neighborhood in Hartford's south side gain from the Learning Corridor? Indeed, there have been many tangible benefits. The magnet school construction project cleaned up an environmental waste site, provided some jobs for minority workers, and funneled additional millions of dollars of public and private investment into housing renovation for the neighborhood. In addition to the four magnet schools that comprise the heart of the Learning Corridor, the campus also includes three community outreach centers: the Trinity Boys and Girls Club of America (an afterschool program), the Trinfo Cafe (a computer training and internet access center), and the Aetna Center for Families. All three provide direct services for southside neighborhood residents. But they are not schools per se.

As an educational reform, the benefits of the Learning Corridor are less clear for Hartford's predominantly Latino southside neighborhood. While the conflict over converting HMMS from a neighborhood to an interdistrict magnet school was the flash point, it revealed deeper concerns among neighborhood activists that the new facilities were not being implemented with their interests in mind.

While the Learning Corridor rightfully prides itself in being the most diverse campus in Connecticut, the racial composition of each school varies considerably. At one end are the predominantly White high school academies, and at the other end are the predominantly Black and Latino elementary and middle schools.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Learning Corridor student enrollment sources: Capitol Region Education Council and Hartford Magnet Middle School.

<b>Student enrollment by Race, 2004-05</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
Greater Hartford Academy of Arts (GHAA)	73%	13%	11%	2%
Greater Hartford Academy of Math & Sci (GHAMAS)	54%	19%	12%	14%
Montessori Magnet School (MMS)	22%	47%	30%	1%
Hartford Magnet Middle School (HMMS)	23%	38%	36%	3%

Furthermore, the four Learning Corridor schools differ in the percentage of Hartford students that they serve. At one end, the high school arts academy (GHAA) and math & science academy (GHAMAS) enrolled only 14 and 31 percent of their students from Hartford, respectively. At the other end, the middle school (HMMS) and Montessori (MMS) each enrolled about half of their students from the city. Together, the number of Hartford students in all four Learning Corridor schools stood at 619 (43 percent) in 2004-05, a significant decline from the “about two-thirds from Hartford” statement proposed by planners in 1998.<sup>52</sup> We estimate that perhaps as few as half of these Hartford students reside in the designated Learning Corridor neighborhood zone.<sup>53</sup>

<b>LCorridor enrollment, by Residency, 2004-05</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Hartford</b>	<b>Pct Hartford</b>
Greater Hartford Academy of Arts (GHAA)	359	51	14%
Greater Hartford Academy of Math & Sci (GHAMAS)	190	58	31%
Montessori Magnet School (MMS)	309	154	50%
Hartford Magnet Middle School (HMMS)	589	356	60%
<b>total</b>	<b>1447</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>43%</b>

Placing these numbers in a broader context helps to show the relatively small scale of the Learning Corridor’s numerical impact on Hartford’s public school system. The 619 Hartford students enrolled in all four Learning Corridor schools in 2004-05 represents about 2.5 percent of the city’s total population of 24,000 students. In light of the \$112 million cost and massive publicity generated by this southside magnet school project, one might have expected greater direct benefits for the Hartford youth that

<sup>52</sup> Lizabeth Hall, “Private Grant Boosts Trinity’s Efforts.” *Hartford Courant* 5 June 1998, p. A3.

<sup>53</sup> Due to the lack of street-level enrollment data available to us (particularly for HMMS), this figure is only an estimate. About 45 percent of these 619 Hartford students are Hispanic.

*Sheff* was originally intended to serve.

### **Conclusion: Trapped by *Sheff***

Over time, the *Sheff* decision became a two-edged blade for Hartford's southside residents, with consequences that simultaneously helped and hurt the community. On one hand, the *Sheff* desegregation ruling focused the State's attention (and financial resources) on uplifting the quality of education in this predominantly Latino neighborhood. Ideas for magnet schools blossomed prior the 1996 court decision, but they flourished into a \$112 million Learning Corridor due to the State's reaction to the *Sheff* ruling, and the political climate in favor of voluntary desegregation solutions. Southside residents owed their Learning Corridor "jewel" to *Sheff*. On the other hand, *Sheff* took away their brand-new neighborhood middle school. State magnet school funding gave priority to city-suburban integration, thereby pressuring Hartford school officials to convert the Hartford Magnet Middle School into an interdistrict magnet, reducing the number of youth who were originally slated to enroll from the predominantly Latino neighborhood. *Sheff* cut both ways: first by "saving" the southside community, and then by "stealing" away its brand-new neighborhood school. "This is where the Learning Corridor has not worked well," acknowledges one of its key planners, Kevin Sullivan. "That piece of it sort of got trapped by *Sheff*. . . We indeed do less education for the community around us than we wanted to do initially."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kevin Sullivan, interview with Nivia Nieves, June 17, 2004.

## **Learning Corridor Oral History Project DESIGN Interview Guide July 21, 2004**

### **Before Interview:**

Call to arrange time and place for 45 minute interview

Bring tape/recorder/cassette, camera, guide, two consent forms, and metro Hartford map

### **Beginning the interview:**

The purpose of this interview is to document how different people became involved in the Learning Corridor from the 1990s to the present.

Explain consent form and ask participant to sign TWO copies

### **Origins of the LC**

- 1) To your knowledge, how did the concept of a Learning Corridor first arise? When and where did you first learn about it?
- 2) When and how did you first become involved with the Learning Corridor interdistrict magnet school project?
- 3) What concerns did you have about Hartford and the region in the mid-1990s?
- 4) Did this Learning Corridor idea address your concerns?
- 5) Did you consider any alternatives to the Learning Corridor model?

### **Group Roles**

- 6) What role, if any, did you play with the Learning Corridor during its early years?
- 7) What role, if any, have you played since it has been constructed?
- 8) Which groups or individuals were most influential in shaping the Learning Corridor?
- 9) Did any groups or individuals oppose, or have mixed feelings about, the Learning Corridor?
- 10) I'm going to list different groups of people -- to your knowledge, what actions did they take regarding the Learning Corridor -- and why?

State and regional officials

Southside Institutional Neighborhood Alliance (SINA)

Hartford city and school officials

Hartford neighborhood organizations

Suburban town and school officials

Trinity College

Hartford business groups

### **Objectives over Time**

- 11) We've talked about several aspects of the Learning Corridor. In essence, what were its original objectives?
- 12) Now that the Learning Corridor has been operating, what are its objectives now?
- 13) Has the Learning Corridor fulfilled these objectives?
- 14) Has the Learning Corridor affected you in any way?
- 15) In your opinion, what direction should the Learning Corridor take in the future?

### **Background questions (if needed)**

- 16) Please tell me about the work that you currently do. Have you changed jobs?
- 17) Where do you live? Have you moved since the 1990s?

### **After the Interview:**

Thank participant; Ask permission to take photo; Confirm mailing address

Transcribe tape and post in Docex/Educ folder; deliver tape and consent form to Jack

## Learning Corridor Oral History Project    **IMPLEM**    Interview Guide June 28, 2004

### **Before Interview:**

Call to arrange time and place for 45 minute interview

Bring tape/recorder/cassette, camera, guide, two consent forms, and metro Hartford map

### **Beginning the interview:**

The purpose of this interview is to document how different people became involved in the Learning Corridor from the 1990s to the present.

Explain consent form and ask participant to sign TWO copies

### **START HERE with new interviews; start below with second-round interviews**

#### **Background**

- 1) To your knowledge, how did the concept of a Learning Corridor first arise? When and where did you first learn about it?
- 2) When and how did you first become involved with the Learning Corridor interdistrict magnet school project?

#### **Group Roles**

- 3) What role, if any, did you play with the Learning Corridor during its implementation 2000 to present?
- 4) Which groups or individuals were most influential in implementing the Learning Corridor?
- 5) Did any groups or individuals oppose, or have mixed feelings about, the Learning Corridor during the implementation?
- 6) I'm going to list different groups of people -- to your knowledge, what actions did they take regarding the implementation of the Learning Corridor -- and why?
  - a. State and regional officials
  - b. Southside Institutional Neighborhood Alliance (SINA)
  - c. Hartford city and school officials
  - d. Hartford neighborhood organizations
  - e. Suburban town and school officials
  - f. Trinity College
  - g. Hartford business groups

### **Implementation Guide Continued**

#### **START HERE with second-round interviews**

Last summer my interview focused on the design phase of the LC from its origins to 2000, and now I'd like to focus on its implementation during the past five years.

- 1) **Funding** has been a continuing concern for the Learning Corridor magnet schools.
  - What are the underlying causes of the funding problem?
  - Has financial support from different sources changed over time?  
(State legislature? Suburbs? City? Businesses? Foundations?)
  - What are the consequences of these funding problems for the LC?
- 2) Another concern has been the degree of **suburban** student participation and suburban district



funding in the Learning Corridor magnet schools.

- Why have there been different levels of support among suburbs? (Examples?)

3) Since opening in 2000, how has the Learning Corridor **influenced the City** of Hartford? And the immediate neighborhood in particular?

-- Can you tell me more about the “neighborhood zone” lines around the LC, their purpose, and how they were determined?

-- Have the zone changed over time?

4) The **Hartford Magnet Middle School** has gone through many transitions since opening.

-- First, it shifted from a neighborhood school to an interdistrict magnet school -- how & why did this happen?

-- Second, it has altered between management by CREC and HPS -- how & why did this occur?

-- What have been the consequences of these changes for the neighborhood? and the LC?

5) Over the past five yeras, **two organizations** have taken responsibility for managing magnet schools in Hartford: HPS and CREC. Where does the LC stand between the two right now? And in the future?

6) How would you describe the **goals** of the Learning Corridor today in 2005?

-- To your knowledge, are these the same goals that people who designed the LC had in mind more than five years ago?

-- Of all of the goals that you’ve mentioned, which ones are being met? And not met?

**Background questions (if needed)**

7) Please tell me about the work that you currently do. Have you changed jobs?

8) Where do you live? Have you moved since the 1990s?

**After the Interview:**

Thank participant; Ask permission to take photo; Confirm mailing address

Transcribe tape and post in Docex/Educ folder; deliver tape and consent form to Jack

## **Shaping the Learning Corridor Interdistrict Magnet Schools, 1990-Present Interview Consent Form**

Participant's Name :

Participant's Mailing Address:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Learning Corridor Oral History Interview. In our attempt to fully capture the history of the LC and in consideration of the oral history program of the Trinity College Archives and its objective of documenting Trinity's history through recorded commentary, I hereby give, donate and convey to the Trinity College Archives for administration by the authorities thereof the materials described below.

The tape(s) and the transcript which will be prepared are the result of one or more recorded, voluntary interviews with me. The tape is the primary document, and the transcript is of my spoken word.

In accordance with its regulations and policies, the Trinity College Archives will make available for research purposes the tape or tapes and any accompanying transcript. It is further understood that no copies of the tape(s) or transcript may be made and nothing may be used from them in any published form without the written permission of the Trinity College Archivist.

My participation in this project is entirely voluntary and I understand that I may withdraw at any time before the interviews are deposited in the Trinity College Archives.

A free copy of the transcript will be mailed to the address listed above.

Brief description of interview:

Interview Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature                                  Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's Signature                                  Date

Accepted: \_\_\_\_\_  
                College Archivist                                  Date  
                Peter J. Knapp

Note about authorship:

This paper represents a collaborative effort between the co-authors. Nivia Nieves will receive her undergraduate degree from Trinity College in May 2006 with a major in Educational Studies. She conducted all of the interviews and compiled the archival documents, developed the main arguments, and wrote the first drafts of the conference paper as part of her undergraduate senior research project. Jack Dougherty is Associate Professor and Director of the Educational Studies Program at Trinity College. As the faculty advisor for the first author, he helped to conceptualize the study design and its analysis, and revised the second draft. The collaboration took part through the Cities, Suburbs, and Schools research project at Trinity College (see more at <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ/css>)

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