Parthenon-EY began a research project, commissioned by Barbara Dalio and the Dalio Foundation, with a desire to understand a single question with broad ramifications:

"What would it take to help disengaged and disconnected youth in Connecticut graduate from high school ready for the future?"

Untapped potential offers reason to believe the challenge is solvable and invites ideas and action from everyone in Connecticut.

The report is available for download at: ctopportunityproject.org

Read the full report

September 2016
www.parthenon.ey.com
Executive summary | Untapped potential: Engaging all Connecticut youth

1 The need

More than one in five high school students in Connecticut are disengaged or disconnected.

- **113** districts have at least **50** such students.
- Multiple dimensions of demographic inequity exist as:
  - **78%** of disengaged and disconnected youth are low income or minority
  - **36%** are boys of color
  - **34%** are students with disabilities or English language learners (ELL)
- Yet this represents a diverse population that affects every community:
  - **9,000** disengaged youth are from towns with above-average income levels.
  - **6,000** are white or Asian from middle and high-income households.

The stakes for youth have never been higher.

- Disconnected youth are yet to experience a recovery from the recession.
- Since 2010, 22,000 jobs have been created in the state for those with a bachelor’s degree or above, while 4,000 jobs were lost for those with less than a high school diploma.

2 The potential

Helping disengaged and disconnected youth connect to success would spark a virtuous cycle for both young people and the state as a whole.

If communities can engage even half of the 39,000 disengaged and disconnected youth, our analysis suggests dramatic results for the state:

- **2,000 additional high school graduates each year**, giving Connecticut the highest graduation rate in the US
- **8,000 more jobs for 18- to 35-year-olds**, reducing their unemployment rate by 16%
- **4,000 fewer people incarcerated**, saving the state $200m each year
- **$3 billion additional gross state product**
### The opportunity

**Untapped potential** offers reason to believe that dramatic progress is possible, and invites ideas and action from everyone in Connecticut.

#### Promising points of intervention

By intervening at critical moments in a student’s high school career, educators and schools can almost double his or her odds of graduating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The power of the ninth grade</th>
<th>It’s never too late</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41% of all disengaged Connecticut youth enter high school having been disengaged in eighth grade.</td>
<td>58% of all disengaged Connecticut youth were disengaged in their first year of high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About half re-engage in ninth grade.</td>
<td>About a third re-engage in tenth grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88% four-year graduation rate</td>
<td>66% four-year graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The other half remain disengaged in ninth grade.</td>
<td>About two thirds remain disengaged in tenth grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48% four-year graduation rate</td>
<td>38% four-year graduation rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Changing the youth experience

Educators and non-profit organizations across the state have an opportunity to re-imagine the youth experience around three key, research-based themes.

**Personalization**
- Use data to understand student needs as early as possible
- Organize teams of teachers with time to develop individualized student approaches

**Relationships**
- Encourage caring adults to form bonds with all ninth grade students through the high school transition
- Use case management approach with over-age students to form strong relationships with mentors

**Connections**
- Start early in goal setting with students to plan for college and career
- Incorporate work-based learning and career opportunities into high school, especially for over-age students

#### System-level improvements

The scale and systemic nature of the need that we see in Connecticut mean that educators alone cannot solve this issue. Stronger support and greater focus are needed to create the conditions for progress.

**Strong practice in schools**
- Create collaborative, strong networks and supports for educators
- Design high school models tailored to student needs
- Develop high-quality schools and programs to serve over-age youth

**Supportive systems and policies**
- Improve district and state data infrastructure
- Strengthen enrollment, attendance and transfer policies
- Increase per-pupil investment and accountability for schools serving the most at-risk youth

**Coordinated research agenda**
- Disengagement and disconnection along K-12 continuum
- Post-secondary outcomes
- Evaluation of funding for disengaged and disconnected youth

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See the full report at [www.ctopportunityproject.org](http://www.ctopportunityproject.org).
About the Parthenon-EY Education practice

The Parthenon-EY Education practice of Ernst & Young LLP has a long track record of providing strategic planning and implementation support for public sector and not-for-profit education organizations in the US and around the world. Our clients include state departments and ministries of education, school districts, colleges and universities, school networks, foundations and non-profits from early childhood through K-12, post-secondary and adult education. In the past 10 years, we have completed more than 1,000 education projects in more than 80 countries, including working with nearly 40 US urban school districts and state departments of education. At the heart of our approach is a commitment to helping our clients use data to develop strategies that improve student outcomes. Our focus on disengaged and disconnected youth began more than a decade ago with support for the multiple pathways to graduation strategy created by the New York City Department of Education, and has included similar work in Boston, Chicago, Washington, DC and other cities. To learn about Parthenon-EY, please visit parthenon.ey.com.

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