

CENTRAL FALLS DISTRICT-CHARTER COLLABORATION COMPACT

Date Signed: August 2011

Number of All Public School Students: 3,529 (2012-2013) NAPCS

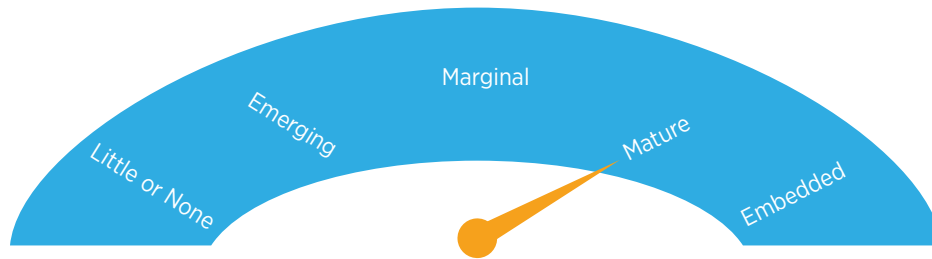
Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 37%

Charter Authorizer(s): Rhode Island State Department of Education

School District Governing Body: State-appointed school board

Compact Grant Amount: \$100,000 in 2011 and \$263,000 in 2014 for #Comeback City High Expectations Project

CURRENT STATUS OF COLLABORATION:



OVERVIEW

Even before signing the Compact, former Central Falls School District (CFSD) Superintendent Dr. Frances Gallo had a national reputation for her dogged pursuit of bold solutions in her struggling school district. In 2011, a year after a stalemate with the teacher's union over terms of a turnaround strategy for the district's only high school prompted Gallo to fire all the schools teachers, she made another highly controversial move to sign and champion a Compact with local charter schools. With the blessing of the school board, whose leadership supported her unwavering focus on children, Gallo brought charter school leaders and CFSD principals together to consider various collaborations. Early efforts included joint professional development, sharing a strong reading curriculum and bilingual instruction expertise, cross-sector teacher fellowships, and combined teacher recruitment. Facilities were also a priority and when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) provided a loan via a nonprofit developer, Gallo helped identify a site to build a new elementary charter school, which opened its doors in 2014.

Now, a year after Gallo's retirement and nearly five years after signing the Compact, local charter leaders continue their engagement with CFSD. The transition to current superintendent Victor Capellan was smooth; he made it clear during board interviews that he would continue to work with charter schools. He has not only embraced the inroads Gallo forged, but has deepened connections and engaged with surrounding charter schools in new ways.

One of the most remarkable collaborations in Central Falls grew out of a conversation about special education between Gallo and Jeremy Chiappetta, executive director of Blackstone Valley

Prep (BVP), a successful local charter organization. During a six-month pilot, CFSD provided BVP with special education staff time and expertise at cost. As BVP teachers saw improvements in their instruction and their confidence grew, CFSD staff shifted their time to advising BVP leadership on how to generally improve its special education program. The contract was renewed for a year and has expanded in scope. The BVP staffer who compiles special education records is housed at the district, where she collaborates with professional peers. BVP also participates in the district's regular meetings to craft post-graduation transition plans for special education students. The district recently invited students from BVP and another local charter high school to attend their popular "Transition Fair" for special education students nearing graduation.

The collaboration work in Central Falls continues to evolve. While some early initiatives have been scrapped, others are being developed. In 2014, the BMGF provided a grant to foster a culture of high expectations in district and charter schools and share instructional practices across schools and sectors. CFSD schools recently adopted BVP's math curriculum, and a new federal grant funds the sharing of math instruction strategies across sectors. A second federal grant enables Central Falls High School staff to spend time in Blackstone Academy, a local charter high school (not affiliated with BVP), to develop a similar college-going culture.

Long after exhausting the 2011 collaboration grant, this tiny school district not only continues to collaborate with the charter sector, but consistently pushes the boundaries on what is possible in ways that much larger and more charter-friendly cities have been unable to do.

COMMON AREAS OF COLLABORATION	COMPACT PROGRESS
<p>High-Performing Schools</p>	<p>Collaboration in Central Falls has included various efforts to improve instruction in struggling schools, including Central Falls High School, which was one of the first schools in the country to opt for the full turnaround model under new Federal School Improvement Grant guidelines. Collaboration grants have supported teacher professional development around math, reading, and bilingual and special education, and the use of restorative justice to reduce use of exclusionary discipline.</p>
<p>Special Education & English Language Learners (ELL)</p>	<p>Early in the collaboration work, the district worked closely with the Learning Community Charter and the International Charter on improving services for English language learners. In 2014 the district began to formally share special education expertise with Blackstone Valley Prep charter at cost. The first agreement for six months was signed in 2014, with a second Memorandum of Understanding signed in July 2015 that renewed and expanded the arrangement for an additional year.</p>
<p>Facilities & Resources</p>	<p>BMGF provided a loan via Civic Builders, a nonprofit charter facilities developer, to finance the opening of a new charter school facility. Gallo and BVP worked together to find a closed Catholic school that was then renovated. In 2014, a new BVP elementary school opened in the building.</p>
<p>School Performance Framework</p>	<p>The Compact document included reference to sharing data to compare schools across sectors, but this has not yet been a high-priority focus of collaboration.</p>
<p>Enrollment Systems</p>	<p>The Compact document does not address this area, although the parties are aware of and watching common enrollment efforts elsewhere to understand if this could benefit Central Falls students.</p>
<p>Human Capital & Professional Development</p>	<p>The Learning Community Charter and International Charter provided professional development to CFSD on bilingual education. CFSD and charter schools used digital platforms to share classroom videos with other teachers across sectors and teachers were able to provide feedback. After software glitches and weak feedback the parties scrapped the program.</p>
<p>Common Core</p>	<p>A grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation enabled the development of Professional Learning Communities across district and charter schools as a strategy for implementing the Common Core State Standard.</p>