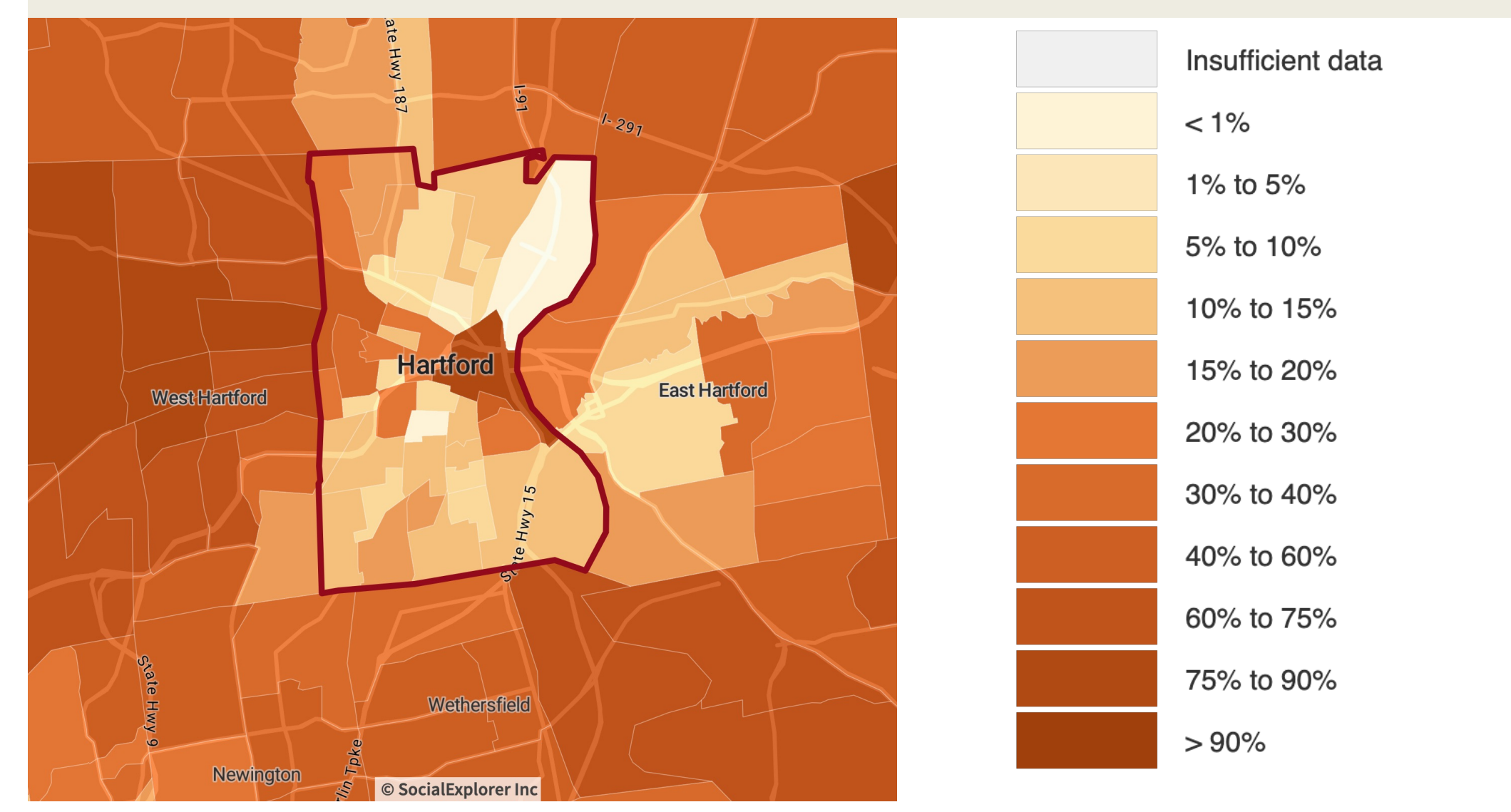


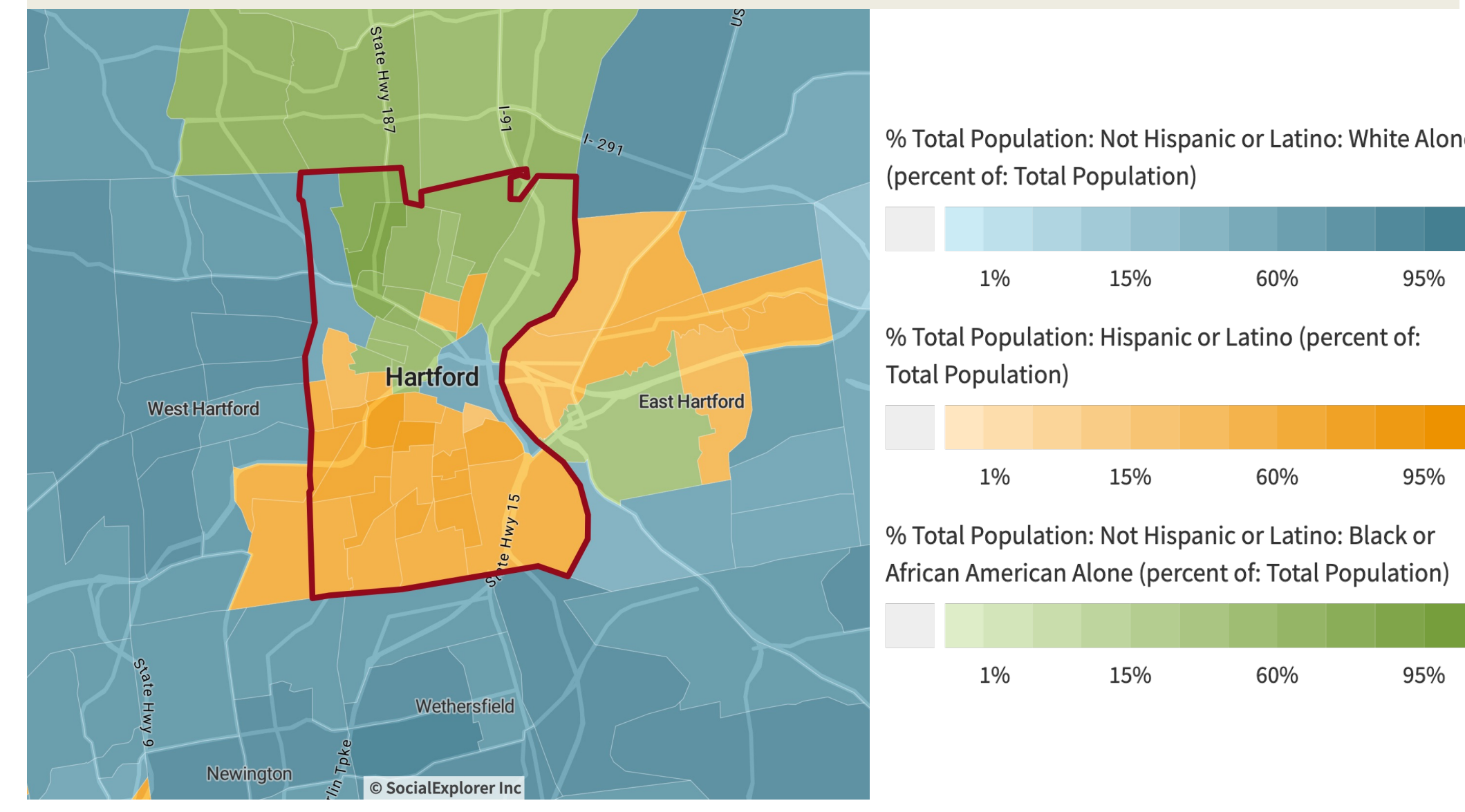
Introduction

- In the United States, **large disparities in education** and educational attainment across racial and ethnic groups continue to exist.
- According to the US Census (2016-2020), in **Connecticut, only 18% of Hispanic or Latino residents and 23% of Black residents had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher**, versus 66% of Asian residents, 45% of White non-Hispanic residents.

Map #1: Educational Attainment of Bachelor's Degree or Higher for Population 25 and Over (Hartford, CT) ACS 2021



Map #2: Total Population - Race (Hartford, CT) ACS 2021



- To combat this educational disparity, **families may look for opportunities that will help their child succeed** such as academic programming/enrichment. Hartford Youth Scholars (HYS) is one such program. Of note, its application process consists of many parts.
- It is **important for all families to have an equal opportunity to apply for academic enrichment programs like HYS**. Families of color tend to have fewer educational opportunities due to obstacles that correlate from their social and economic classes.
- Spanish-speaking and Bilingual families tend to have a harder time with these types of applications due to **triple segregation**, which is **segregation due to not only race/ethnicity and economic class, but also language** as a third barrier. Accordingly, Spanish-speaking or Bilingual families might not have a fair shot at applying to programming like Hartford Youth Scholars due to the lack of accessibility or resources.

What is Hartford Youth Scholars?

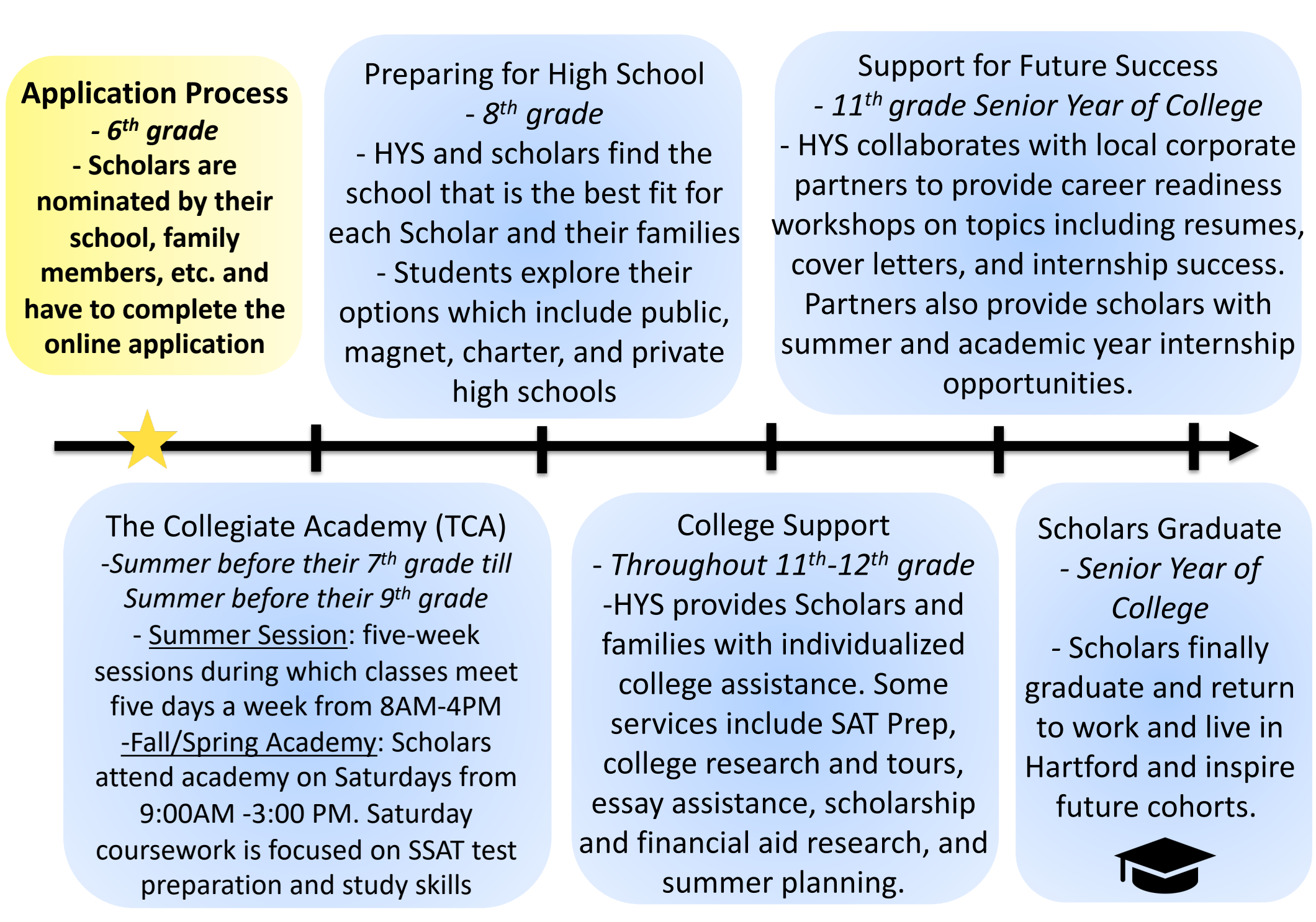
Hartford Youth Scholars (HYS) is a nonprofit organization that works with Hartford students starting in middle school and helps them get “to and through” college.

HYS’s mission is to **give Hartford students the opportunity to change their lives through education**. They do this by helping highly motivated Hartford students gain access to and graduate from best-fit high schools and colleges.

The organization provides Scholars and their families with academic and mentoring support for **10 or more years**, beginning the summer before scholars enter 7th grade and continuing through scholars’ college graduation.

HYS envisions Scholars attaining their college degrees and then returning to work and live in Hartford to inspire and help to cultivate similar achievements in younger Hartford students.

HYS Commitment Timeline



Research Questions

- #1:** According to parents who applied their children to the Hartford Youth Scholars (HYS) program in the last 3 years, how did families experience the application process and how did families navigate barriers they may have encountered?
- #2:** What are parents looking for when enrolling their children in HYS?
- #3:** What were some aspects of the application process that made applying easy and accessible? What can HYS improve?

Methodology

<p>Interviewed 13 parents; 7 English, 4 Spanish, 2 Bilingual as primary language</p>	<p>Conducted in person or via Zoom</p> <p>Conducted in English or Spanish per participant’s preference.</p>	<p>Questions focused on motivations for applying to HYS and experience navigating the application.</p>
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Findings

#1: Overall Application Process was Smooth

Most parents had a positive experience with HYS’s application process. Only a few expressed feelings of difficulty or concern throughout their experience. Some difficulties and concerns parents mentioned had to do with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (in-person → online interviews), the application timeline (Fall-Spring), the intensity of application (steps required), and third-party application requirements (teacher recommendations, immunization history from doctor, etc.).

In terms of accessibility, HYS’s application was overall accessible to English-speaking parents and accessible to Spanish-speaking and Bilingual parents. Parents mostly were pleased with how accessible staff were. **All 13** were satisfied with staff communication and accessibility throughout the process.

“I found it very convenient to do everything online. Like upload. We didn't have to leave home and carry any paper or send it to the post office. Everything was electronic. That was very easy”.

#2: HYS Provides Beneficial Support to Students

Academic Help for Students

“For me, for my family, it is like a support and reinforcement for my daughter’s education... That’s a phrase that she always says, “I’m learning”. Mostly in mathematics... she feels more secure because right now she is in 8th grade but the math class she is in is all 9th graders... She is comfortable, why? Because she has a reinforcement here. Yes, that is an advantage”.

A Diverse Setting for Students of Color

“...we realized that HYS puts care in minority...There was a lot of blacks and Hispanics, and even the teachers and everything. So that was one thing that we were really happy about...Knowing that we’re going have black tutors for our kids, someone that really understands our background”.

Gateway to College

“They’re helping the minority people in Hartford to get into college. They help if we have any financial difficulties, they help us to get our children into college and get that necessary fund (financial aid) to get into the college. They want all minorities who come from various countries to get a college degree”.

#3: Accessible and Bilingual Staff

“I thought it (staff accessibility) was great... the person who was involved in the process, she was very accessible, answered any questions that I had. There was a part where we weren’t able to get a transcript and she was doing her due diligence to make sure that we were able to attain those things. The communication was very good”.

“Well, thank you (HYS) for including Spanish. Because in Hartford, we are starting to see a big Spanish-speaking population and it seems to me like an extra help. We are able to express ourselves more during the interviews and when filling out the application in Spanish. We appreciate it as well”.

“In my case I had no problem, I understood perfectly, and I speak English, but I think that they do need more staff that speaks Spanish. ...My dad doesn’t speak English, so it (application process) was a little difficult for him. Also, the hours/slots for the interviews in Spanish were limited because there was only one person that spoke Spanish”.

Discussion

- Overall, according to most parents, the Hartford Youth Scholars application process was straightforward and accessible. Only a few parents expressed feeling challenged by the application due to outside and application factors .
- Hartford, a city with a majority Hispanic/Latino and Black population, has a low educational attainment when it comes to a Bachelor’s Degree or higher. We see on Maps #1 and #2 how cities surrounding Hartford, which have a higher White population, have higher levels of educational attainment. There is an obvious gap between the White population living in these surrounding affluent towns vs. the majority Hispanic/Latino community living in Hartford. To give students in Hartford a better chance against these odds, parents and students choose to enroll into academic enrichment programs such as HYS in order to succeed academically despite this educational gap. Parent responses to Research Question #2 indicate that parents choose to enroll their children for this exact reason.
- Parents were satisfied with the accessibility of the HYS application and staff. We also heard from Spanish-speaking parents that the overall process was easy and straightforward due to the language inclusion and Bilingual staff. It is interesting to note that one English-speaking parent and one Bilingual parent did express concern about accessibility for Spanish-speaking parents. Nonetheless, Spanish-speaking parents interviewed did not mention any language associated barriers when applying.

Suggestions

- More Bilingual Staff
- Not only informing students about the program when nominating them but informing parents as well
- Resources for students who were not accepted to the program

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