

CONNECTICUT
SCHOOL FINANCE
PROJECT

FY 18/19
BUDGET
CHANGES TO
SCHOOL FINANCE

UPDATED: November 20, 2017

About the CT School Finance Project

- Founded in 2015, the nonprofit Connecticut School Finance Project aims to ensure Connecticut has a fair and equitable school finance system and be a trusted, nonpartisan, and independent source of accurate data and information.
- Although not a member-based organization, the Connecticut School Finance Project actively works with a diverse group of stakeholders, including education and community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and individuals interested in how school finance impacts their students and schools.
- We aim to develop fair, well thought-out solutions to Connecticut's school finance challenges that incorporate the viewpoints and perspectives of stakeholders.

CT School Finance Project's Goals

- Build knowledge about how the current school funding system works,
- Bring together stakeholders who are impacted by how schools are funded, and
- Identify solutions to Connecticut's school funding challenges that are fair to students and taxpayers, and strengthen schools and communities.

OVERVIEW OF
FY 18/19 EDUCATION
BUDGET CHANGES

Total ECS Funding

- **FY 2018**
 - *After holdbacks: \$1.93 billion (-\$89.3 million from FY 2017 levels)*
- **FY 2019**
 - \$2.02 billion in FY 2019 (+\$88.9 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)
- Budget also allows a town to reduce its Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) in FYs 2018 and 2019 if it experiences a decrease in ECS funding. The MBR reduction cannot be higher than the ECS decrease.

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *Allocated Lapses FY 2018*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/holdback_list.pdf.

Other Significant Education Grants

- **Commissioner's Network**
 - FY 2018 after holdbacks: \$10 million (-\$2.1M from FY 2017 levels)
 - FY 2019: \$10 million (+\$0 from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)
- **Excess Cost grant**
 - FY 2018 after holdbacks: \$139 million (+\$3.5 million from FY 2017 levels)
 - FY 2019: \$142.1 million (+\$3.1 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)
- **Open Choice program**
 - FY 2018 after holdbacks: \$37.1 million (-\$3.1 million from FY 2017 levels)
 - FY 2019: \$40.1 million in FY 2019 (+\$3 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)
- **Priority School Districts**
 - FY 2018 after holdbacks: \$37.2 million (-\$5.2 million from FY 2017 levels)
 - FY 2019: \$38.1 million (+\$1 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *Allocated Lapses FY 2018*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/holdback_list.pdf.

Choice Program Funding

Grant	FY 2017 Funding	FY 2018 Funding with holdbacks	Difference from FY 2017	FY 2019 Budgeted Funding	Difference from FY 2018
State Charter Schools	\$110,838,808	\$109,821,500	-\$1,014,308	\$116,964,132	+\$7,142,632
Local Charter Schools	\$388,015	\$432,000	-\$43,985	\$540,000	+\$108,000
Magnet Schools	\$313,058,158	\$309,509,936	-\$3,548,222	\$326,508,158	\$16,998,222
CT Technical High School System	\$163,367,535	\$151,022,633	-\$12,344,902	\$157,780,114	+\$6,757,481

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *Allocated Lapses FY 2018*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/holdback_list.pdf.

ECS FUNDING IN FISCAL YEAR 2018

ECS block grants remain in place for FY 2018

- Budget does not implement new ECS formula until FY 2019
- For remainder of FY 2018, budget continues practice of distributing ECS funds via block grants
- FY 2018 ECS grants are based on what districts received in FY 2017
- Non-Alliance Districts receive percentage decreases from FY 2017 grants ranging from 75% to 13%
- Non-Alliance Districts receive percentage decreases from FY 2017 grants ranging from 2.3% to .12%
- ECS is reduced by a total of \$88.9 million in FY 2018 after holdbacks are taken into account.

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *Allocated Lapses FY 2018*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/holdback_list.pdf.

Alliance Districts “held harmless”

- Budget uses both the original and updated Alliance District lists, resulting in 33 districts being held harmless

Ansonia

Bloomfield

Bridgeport

Bristol

Danbury

Derby

East Hartford

East Haven

East Windsor

Groton

Hamden

Hartford

Killingly

Manchester

Meriden

Middletown

Naugatuck

New Britain

New Haven

New London

Norwalk

Norwich

Putnam

Stamford

Thompson

Torrington

Vernon

Waterbury

West Haven

Winchester

Windham

Windsor

Windsor Locks

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

FY 2019:
A NEW ECS FORMULA

Overview of New ECS Formula

- New formula would begin in FY 2019 and be phased in over 10 years
 - Increase of \$88.9 million (over FY 2018 ECS funding with holdbacks) in FY 2019
 - Estimated increase of \$42.3 million per year from FY 2020 – FY 2028
 - Estimated total increase, after phase-in, of \$380 million in FY 2028 and beyond
- Student-based, weighted funding formula
- Formula only applies to local public schools, all other types of Connecticut public schools (magnet schools, local and state charter schools, CTHSS, vo-ag schools, Open Choice) will continue to be funded by 10 other formulas

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *Allocated Lapses FY 2018*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/holdback_list.pdf.

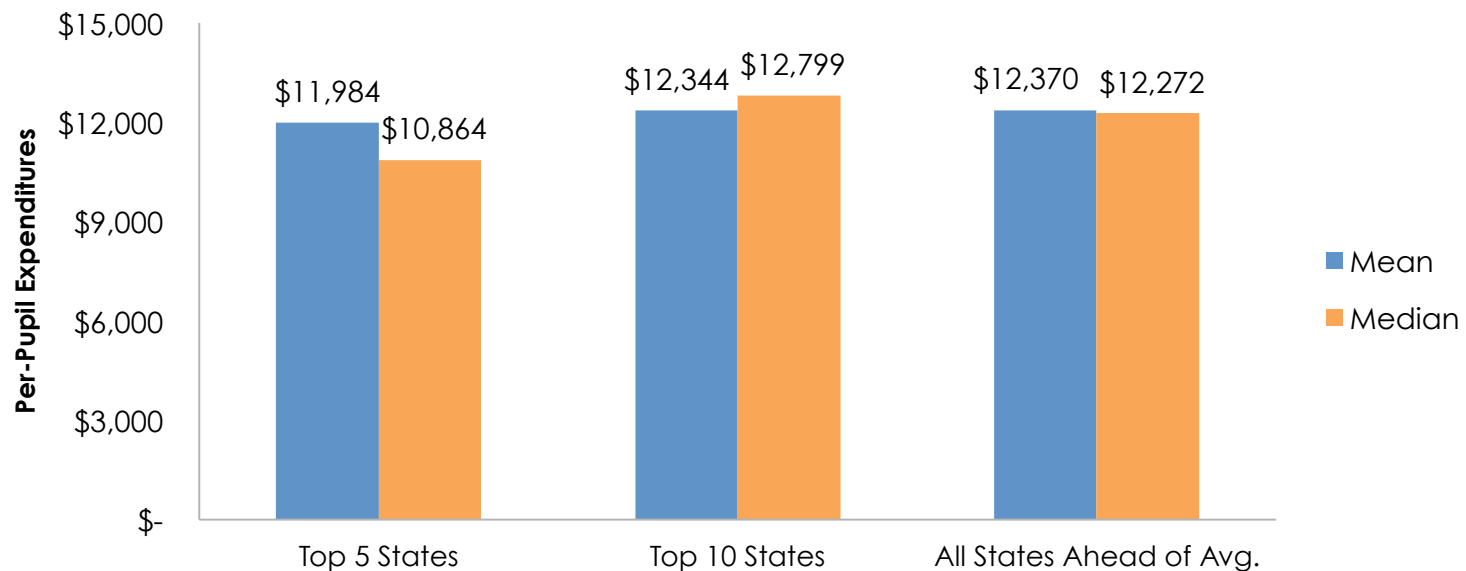
Foundation

- Foundation amount is intended to represent the estimated cost of educating a CT general education student who does not have any additional learning needs.
- Foundation in new formula = \$11,525 per pupil
 - Same as most recent ECS formula
- Foundation continues to “incorporate” State’s share of general special education funding.
- Foundation based on past foundation amounts and not derived using verifiable education spending data
 - However, \$11,525 is within a range of reasonable foundation amounts when accounting for the inclusion of special education aid.

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Performance Adjusted Foundation

- Below foundation estimates are based on state-level expenditures.
 - Derived by calculating an average of total state per-pupil expenditures on core instructional cost categories for states performing well on the 2013 NAEP.
 - Expenditure data is adjusted to CT cost-of-living and inflation from 2013-2017.
- Calculation of the relative performance of each state includes adjustments for factors such as poverty, English proficiency, race and ethnicity, and special education to ensure apples-to-apples comparisons between state performance levels.



Sources: Chingos, M.M. (2015). *Breaking the Curve: Promises and Pitfalls of Using NAEP Data to Assess the State Role in Student Achievement*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000484-Breaking-the-Curve-Promises-and-Pitfalls-of-Using-NAEP-Data-to-Assess-the-State-Role-in-Student-Achievement.pdf>.
U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). National Public Education Financial Survey Data. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/stfis.asp>

Formula Weights

- New formula contains three “need-student” weights, which increase per-pupil state education aid for students with additional learning needs.
- **Low-income student weight (NO CHANGE)**
 - Formula includes a low-income student weight of 0.3
 - Increases foundation amount by 30 percent for students who live in low-income households as measured by eligibility for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL).
- **Concentrated poverty weight (NEW)**
 - Formula increases per-student funding for low-income students who live in districts with high concentrations of low-income students.
 - Concentrated poverty weight is 0.05
 - Increases foundation amount an additional five percent (for a total of 35 percent) for low-income students residing in districts with concentrations of low-income students of over 75 percent of district enrollment.
- **English Learner weight (NEW)**
 - Formula includes weight of 0.15 for English Learners
 - Increases foundation amount by 15 percent for students needing additional English-language skills.

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Formula Weights Comparison

	Prior ECS Formula	New ECS Formula
Low-Income	30%	30%
Concentrated Low-Income	X	5% for districts with more than 75% of students identified as low-income
English Learner	X	15%

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Formula Weights

Low-income Students	Weight: 0.3 Concentration Threshold: .75 Concentration Weight: .05 Identification Method: Eligibility for FRPL
English Learner (EL) Weight	Weight: 0.15 Concentration Weight: 0

Student Need	Funding Per Student
General Education (Non-need) Student	\$11,525
Low-income Student	\$14,983
Concentrated Low-income Student	\$15,559
Low-income and English Learner	\$16,711
English Learner	\$13,254
Concentrated Low-income English Learner	\$17,288

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Base Aid Ratio

- Formula includes equity metric to distribute state education aid, where the towns with the least ability to fund their public schools receive the most state aid.
- Town's ability to fund its public schools is calculated by:
 - **70% Property Wealth Factor**
 - Determined using a town's Equalized Net Grand List per Capita (ENGLPC), compared to the state median town ENGLPC, as calculated annually by OPM
 - Most recent ECS formula used 90% Property Wealth Factor
 - **30% Income Wealth Factor**
 - Determined using a town's Median Household Income (MHI), compared to the state median MHI, as calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey
 - Most recent ECS formula used 10% Income Wealth Factor
- Formula lowers Statewide Guaranteed Wealth Level from 1.5 to 1.35, creating more equitable distribution of state education aid
- Maintains minimum aid ratio of 10% for Alliance Districts and reduces minimum aid ratio for all other districts from 2% to 1% (guarantees all districts some ECS aid).

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Additional Funding for Towns in Need

- Formula adds additional funding for communities that have a Public Investment Communities (PIC) index score of over 300.
 - PIC index is calculated annually by OPM and measures the relative wealth and need of CT's towns
- If a town has one of the top 19 highest PIC Index scores, under the new formula, the town will receive a bonus of three to six percentage points to its Base Aid Ratio, which determines each community's ability to financially support its public schools

Town's PIC Index Rank	Additional % Points Added to Base Aid Ratio
1-5	6 percentage points
6-10	5 percentage points
11-15	4 percentage points
16-19	3 percentage points

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Phase-in Plan

- New formula would begin in FY 2019 and be phased in over 10 years
- Alliance Districts that would otherwise receive a decrease in aid, according to the new formula, are permanently held harmless at FY 2017 grant amounts.

Phase-in Schedule			
	FY 2019	FY 2020-2027	FY 2028
Towns Receiving Increase in ECS Funding over FY 2017 Grant	Increase phased in by 4.1%	Increase phased in by 10.66% per year	Towns receive 100% of their ECS grant, as calculated by formula
Towns Receiving Decrease in ECS Funding Compared to FY 2017 Grant	Decrease phased out by 25%	Decrease phased out by 8.33% per year	Towns receive 100% of their ECS grant, as calculated by formula

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Example of How Phase-in Plan Works

- It is important to remember that the new formula would be calculated on an annual basis using updated district and town data.
- As a result, a town's calculated ECS grant will change as its district and town inputs change.
- Additionally, as a town's calculated ECS grant changes, so will the difference between the town's calculated ECS grant and its FY 2017 ECS grant, which will impact the phase-in schedule of the town's grant.

Using Bristol as our sample Connecticut town, below is a hypothetical example of how a change in district enrollment (in this case a 5% increase) — with all other inputs remaining the same — would impact a town's ECS grant for a given year (FY 2020) compared to if all of the district/town inputs remained constant.

Example Town	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual with Holdbacks	FY 2019 Actual	Estimated FY 2020 if District/Town Inputs Remain the Same	Estimated FY 2020 if District Enrollment Increases 5%
Bristol	\$44,853,676	\$44,603,676	\$45,317,623	\$46,523,886	\$46,938,417

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2017). *FY 2018 Municipal Aid Holdbacks*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/fy2018_holdbacks/tbt_estimates_post_holdback.pdf.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Maintains More than 10 Different Formulas

- New ECS formula only applies to local public schools
- All other types of Connecticut public schools (magnet schools, local and state charter schools, CTHSS, vo-ag schools, Open Choice) will continue to be funded by 10 other formulas/statutory amounts
- All other formulas not based on student and community needs
- Continuation of more than 10 different formulas also continues the challenges many districts have experienced related to choice programs charging tuition

Low-Income Metric Remains a Challenge

- Use of FRPL eligibility as a proxy for identifying low-income students has become functionally unusable for the purposes of a school finance system.
- Need for a more accurate, verifiable proxy for low-income students is growing quickly as a result of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the federal Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010.
 - To qualify for CEP, at least 40 percent of a school or district's enrollment must be identified as eligible for FRPL via direct certification.
- As higher-need districts adopt CEP district-wide, there is no incentive to collect household income information from students, resulting in inaccurate FRPL identification rates.
- As a result, an alternative proxy for measuring low-income students will need to be identified in order to effectively and accurately provide critical resources to higher-need students.

Sources: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-296, § 104, 124 Stat. 3193, 3194-3201 (2010).

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2016, April 29). Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Retrieved from <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=335336>.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2015). *GUIDANCE: The Community Eligibility Provision and Selected Requirements Under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/15-0011.doc>.

Funding for Special Education

- Formula does not disentangle special education funding from ECS grant, and instead leaves state aid for special education “incorporated” into the foundation amount.
 - Approximately 22% of the foundation amount is attributable to special education.
- Continuing to incorporate special education funding into the foundation, while also reducing total ECS spending in FY 2018 and FY 2019, puts Connecticut at continued risk of violating its federal maintenance of support (MOS) requirement, which is the primary fiscal measure by which states are judged to be eligible for federal funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- To be eligible for federal IDEA funding, a state cannot provide less state financial support for special education than it did in the preceding fiscal year.
 - If a state has been found to have failed to maintain support, the U.S. Secretary of Education may reduce federal funds to that state.
- By leaving special education funding incorporated into the ECS formula’s foundation, and then reducing ECS funding, Connecticut runs a serious risk of violating its MOS requirement and having its federal IDEA funding reduced.

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis and the Office of Legislative Research. (2014). *CT Special Education Funding*. Retrieved from http://www2.housedems.ct.gov/MORE/SPED/pubs/OFA-OLR_Presentation_2013-01-23.pdf.

Connecticut School Finance Project. (2016). *Memorandum Regarding Maintenance of Effort and Support Requirements Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/reports/memorandum-regarding-maintenance-of-effort-and-support-requirements-under-the-individuals-with-disabilities-education-improvement-act-idea-of-2004>.

Overall Formula Cost

- Despite a new, bipartisan biennial budget, Connecticut still faces significant fiscal challenges ahead.
- Declining revenues, continued growth of fixed costs, and looming unfunded pension obligations are expected to stress the State's finances for the near future, potentially causing large deficits.
- As a result, the State could resort to not fully funding the formula (and its estimated total increase of \$380 million) or abandon it altogether like it has in the past.
- At the beginning of FY 2014, Connecticut stopped using the most recent ECS formula because the State did not have enough money to fund the formula's phase-in plan.
- With fiscal and economic obstacles, and a longer 10-year phase-in schedule, sticking to the new formula will be a continual challenge for the General Assembly.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION

Read Our Full Analyses

Our full independent analysis of the changes to state education funding contained in the budget is available at

ctschoolfinance.org/formula-analyses

Also available are two other materials:

- A table comparing the components, total costs, and phase-in plans of recent school funding proposals
- A document providing state education funding estimates for FY 2018 (and FY 2019 for Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session)) for each town and choice program under recent school funding proposals