

Bridgeport School Finance FAQs

Q: How many students attend Bridgeport Public Schools and what are their learning needs? How does this compare to similar districts?

A: Bridgeport Public Schools educates **20,572 students**. Of those students, **nearly 3 out of 5 are classified as low-income***, **18% are English Learners**, and **close to 1 in 5 need special education services**.¹

District	Total Enrollment	Percent Low-income (qualify for free and reduced price lunch)*	Percent English Learners	Percent Special Education
Bridgeport	20,572	57%	18%	18%
Windham	3,297	83%	27%	20%
New Britain	10,179	80%	16%	21%
Waterbury	18,847	72%	15%	19%
Hartford	19,767	74%	21%	19%
New Haven	21,264	55%	17%	15%

*The enrollment and demographic data listed in the table above is from the 2018-19 school year. However, due to concerns expressed by the Connecticut State Department of Education about the integrity and accuracy of the free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) data for the 2018-19 school year, FRPL data for the 2017-18 school year has been used for this slide as the most recent available, accurate data.

Q: How much does Bridgeport Public Schools spend per student? How does this compare to similar districts?

A: Bridgeport Public Schools spends **\$14,241 per student**.²

District	Per-student Spending
Bridgeport	\$14,241
New Britain	\$13,061
Waterbury	\$15,547
New Haven	\$18,381
Windham	\$18,868
Hartford	\$19,616

Q: How much do Bridgeport taxpayers contribute to the city's education budget?

A: Bridgeport taxpayers pay **21 cents of every dollar** of the education budget, or **\$3,218 per student**.³

Q: How does Bridgeport's ability to raise local tax revenue compare to other communities?

A: Cities and towns in Connecticut **raise revenue through property taxes**. There are two factors to consider when thinking about a city's ability to raise revenue through local property taxes. The first is the total amount of taxable property in the city, this is known as the "grand list." The second is the income of the city's taxpayers, which is an indicator of the amount of money the city's taxpayers have available to pay their taxes.

To compare the amount of taxable property between cities, we use a metric called “Equalized Net Grand List per Capita,” which measures the value of taxable property in the city per person who lives in the city. To compare the income of taxpayers between cities, we use a measure called “Median Household Income,” which is the mid-point between the highest and lowest household income in the city.⁴

Here is how Bridgeport’s Equalized Net Grand List per Capita and Median Household Income compare to similar communities:

City	Equalized Net Grand List per Capita (Property Wealth) ⁵	Median Household Income (Household Wealth) ⁶	Share of local education budget paid by city taxpayers ⁷
Bridgeport	\$59,188	\$44,841	21%
New Britain	\$50,329	\$43,611	32%
Waterbury	\$53,441	\$40,879	35%
New Haven	\$78,225	\$39,191	28%
Windham	\$53,786	\$41,293	27%
Hartford	\$57,135	\$33,841	22%**

**Revenue by source data for the 2015-16 school year, the most recent year available for all other school districts, is unavailable for Hartford Public Schools. As a result, 2014-15 school year data has been used for Hartford only.

Q: How does the state decide how much money each school receives?

A: Connecticut’s legislature has established more than 10 different funding formulas to determine how much money public schools should receive.^{8,9} The formula that distributes funding to local public school districts is called the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula.¹⁰

Q: What is the ECS formula?

A: The ECS formula is the formula the state legislature has established to distribute approximately \$2 billion in state education funding to local public school districts. In October 2017, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a new ECS formula in the biennial budget bill. The new formula began being implemented in fiscal year 2019 and will be phased in over 10 years.¹¹

Q: What factors does the new ECS formula take into consideration to determine how much state education funding a local school district will receive?

A: The new ECS formula uses the following factors to determine how to distribute state education funding:

- The number of students who live in a city/town (resident student count)
- An amount that represents the cost of educating a student (the foundation)
- The number of low-income students in a city/town (low-income student weight)
- Whether 75 percent or more of a district’s student enrollment is identified as low-income (concentrated poverty weight)
- The number of students who are English Learners in a city/town (English Learner weight)
- A measure of the city/town’s wealth to determine how much a city/town must raise from its property taxes to pay education costs, and how much state funding is needed to help offset these costs (base aid ratio)¹²

Q: How much education aid does Bridgeport receive through the ECS formula?

A: For fiscal year 2019, the first year of the new ECS formula, Bridgeport is estimated to receive **\$182.5 million in ECS funding**.¹³ While under the new formula a district's full funding is phased in over 10 years, if the ECS formula was fully funded this year, Bridgeport would receive an estimated **\$208.6 million** in ECS funding — **roughly \$26.1 million more** than the district is currently scheduled to receive in fiscal year 2019.^{14, 15}

Q: What are some of the obstacles Connecticut faces to achieving equitable school funding for all its public school students?

A: While the General Assembly has taken steps toward equitably funding Connecticut's public school students, the state still faces several obstacles to implementing and maintaining a fully equitable school finance system. These obstacles include:

- **The school finance system remains disjointed:** Connecticut continues to use more than 10 different funding formulas. Only one of these formulas takes student and community needs fully into consideration. Instead, these formulas are based on where a school is located and what type of school it is (local district, magnet, charter, etc.).
- **Local property taxes vary widely:** Local property taxes are the largest source of funding for public schools. Community wealth varies widely in our state and some communities have very low property tax rates, while other communities have high property tax rates. This means some communities are able to fund their schools at higher levels than others.
- **Higher-need students doesn't necessarily translate to greater resources:** Despite research showing that higher-need students, such as those who are low-income or English Learners, often need more resources to achieve at levels similar to their non-need peers, there continues to be no correlation in Connecticut between the percentage of low-income and English Learner students a district serves and its per-pupil spending.

Q: How can we make school funding fair for Bridgeport?

A: Connecticut needs a modern, fair school finance system that meets the needs of today's students, schools, and communities. Connecticut's school finance system should:

- Use one funding formula to fund all students fairly
- Allocate funding based on student learning needs
- Distribute education dollars in a way that is consistent, predictable, efficient, and transparent
- Meet the needs of communities and the state's budget

Sources:

- ¹ Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). EdSight: Public School Enrollment. Available from <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>.
- ² Connecticut State Department of Education. (2019). *2017-18 Net Current Expenditures (NCE) per Pupil (NCEP) and 2018-19 Special Education Excess Cost Grant*. Retrieved from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/assets/uploads/files/2017-18-Net-Current-Expenditures-Per-Pupil.pdf>.
- ³ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2018). *Connecticut Local Public School District Per-pupil Expenditures by Revenue Source, 2013-16*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-local-school-district-expenditures-by-revenue-source>.
- ⁴ State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2011). *Statutes Governing Property Assessment and Taxation*. Retrieved from <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?q=383128>.
- ⁵ State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management. (2019). *Municipal Fiscal Indicators, Fiscal Years Ended 2013-2017*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/MuniFiscalIndicators/FI-2013-17-Edition-As-of-1-31-19.pdf?la=en>.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2018). *Connecticut Local Public School District Per-pupil Expenditures by Revenue Source, 2013-16*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-local-school-district-expenditures-by-revenue-source>.
- ⁸ Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. (2013). *Task Force to Study State Education Funding Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/2013-R-0064.htm>.
- ⁹ Moran, J.D., & Bolger, A. (2018). *Comparison of Charter, Magnet, Agricultural Science Centers, and Technical High Schools (2018-R-0030)*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/rpt/pdf/2018-R-0030.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262f.
- ¹¹ Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Conn. Acts 18-81.
- ¹⁴ Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
- ¹⁵ Conn. Acts 18-81.