

Norwalk School Finance FAQs

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

A: Norwalk Public Schools educates **11,573 students**. Of those students, **more than half are classified as low-income**, **15% are English Learners**, and **close to 1 in 7 need special education services**.¹

District	Total Enrollment	Percent Low-income (qualify for free and reduced price lunch)	Percent English Learners	Percent Special Education
Norwalk	11,573	52%	15%	14%
Groton	4,381	44%	3%	17%
Middletown	4,588	45%	4%	14%
Hamden	5,420	41%	7%	18%
Bristol	7,997	44%	5%	18%
Danbury	11,483	58%	26%	13%
Stamford	15,931	52%	13%	13%

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

A: Norwalk Public Schools spends **\$16,989 per student**.²

District	Per-student Spending
Norwalk	\$16,989
Danbury	\$12,742
Bristol	\$14,044
Groton	\$15,813
Middletown	\$16,695
Stamford	\$18,570
Hamden	\$18,786

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

A: Norwalk taxpayers pay **84 cents of every dollar** of the education budget, or \$14,426 per student.³

Q: How does Norwalk'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 Norwalk’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
Norwalk	\$203,038	\$80,896	84%
Danbury	\$118,509	\$67,430	70%
Bristol	\$90,026	\$61,551	53%
Groton	\$134,106	\$64,074	63%
Middletown	\$101,623	\$63,828	68%
Stamford	\$249,113	\$81,634	85%
Hamden	\$91,256	\$71,665	73%

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 that is scheduled to be implemented beginning in fiscal year 2019.¹¹

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 Norwalk receive through the ECS formula?

A: For fiscal year 2019, the first year of the new ECS formula, Norwalk is estimated to receive **\$11.5 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, Norwalk would receive an estimated **\$16 million** in ECS funding — **roughly \$4.6 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 Norwalk?

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. (2018). *Public School Enrollment, 2017-18*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.
- ² Connecticut State Department of Education. (2018). *2016-17 Net Current Expenditures Per Pupil*. Retrieved from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/assets/uploads/files/2016-17-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. (2017). *Municipal Fiscal Indicators, Fiscal Years Ended 2012-2016*. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/Fl_2012-16_Edition_As_of_2-6-18.pdf.
- 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.