

Introduction

There are a variety of public school choice programs in Connecticut, including magnet schools, charter schools, technical high schools, agriculture science and technology education centers, endowed private schools, designated high schools, and the Open Choice program. This policy briefing focuses solely on the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), formerly known as the Connecticut Technical High School System, and discusses its objectives, history, administration, and sources of funding.

Program History and Background

The CTECS is Connecticut's oldest system of public schools of choice.¹ Vocational-technical education was initially operated at the local level with state oversight but gradually transitioned to state operation, and by 1915 became entirely state-maintained.² In 1917, Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act, which made federal funding for vocational education conditional on oversight by a single state board.³

The CTECS is the largest public high school system in the state — educating 10,647 students during the 2018-19 school year.⁴ The CTECS operates 17 diploma-granting high schools, divided into four regions.⁵ The CTECS offers 31 career technology education programs, sorted into 11 career clusters: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Arts, Audio/Visual Technology, and Communications; Health Science; Hospitality and Tourism; Human Services; Information Technology; Manufacturing; Marketing, Sales, and Service; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics. A list of the trade programs can be found in the appendix of this policy briefing. The CTECS also offers traditional comprehensive high school programs in the areas of: English, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, health education, and art.⁶ Upon graduation, students receive a high school diploma and a certificate in a specific trade.⁷

Other CTECS Programs

The CTECS also operates the Bristol Technical Education Center (Bristol TEC), which provides 11th grade, 12th grade, and adult education. Bristol TEC does not offer comprehensive secondary school programs, and high school students complete academic coursework at their sending school.⁸ Some sending school districts allow students to complete academic coursework before or after normal school hours, over the summer, or through online courses.⁹ Students must pass their trade program and complete 720 hours of related instruction to receive a Bristol TEC High School Technology Certificate and earn five high school credits.¹⁰

Bristol TEC also offers full-time, post-secondary school programs, as do the CTECS's two aviation maintenance technician schools:¹¹ 1) CT Aero Tech School in Hartford and 2) Stratford School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians. In addition, six technical high schools offer part-time evening apprentice and extension courses.¹²

Program Eligibility and Student Participation

While many school choice programs are “blind admission,” wherein all students are eligible to attend the program if they choose to participate and an open seat is available, students must apply and meet criteria for admissions. While CTECS’ schools are divided into four regions, any student who has completed eighth or ninth grade and resides in Connecticut is eligible to apply for any CTECS school.¹³ Students may apply to start at the beginning of their ninth-grade year, or transfer mid-year during their ninth- or 10th-grade years.¹⁴

Students can apply to up to four schools by submitting a form, completed by both the student and their parent/guardian, to the student’s school counselor, principal, or teacher.¹⁵ The student’s school completes the sending school section and sends the full application to the student’s first choice school. The application includes the previous and current year transcript, previous and current year discipline record, previous and current year attendance report, a completed Student Interest Form, and the most recent Smarter Balanced Report.¹⁶ The application items are assigned points and students are placed on a ranked list by school based on their application’s total score.¹⁷

A CTECS school then sends a “First Step” letter to selected students in early February with a “Parent Response Form,” which is to be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the technical high school.¹⁸ If applicable, the technical high school receives the student’s IEP/504 records and convenes a PPT/504 meeting as necessary to determine the appropriate program at the school.¹⁹ In some instances, a PPT meeting may determine that technical education programs are not appropriate for the student and refer the student back to their sending school.²⁰ At the end of the school year, the accepted student’s current school sends the technical high school the following information for the accepted student: 1) health and immunization records; 2) English Learner program records, if applicable; 3) final eighth-grade transcript indicating successful completion of the eighth-grade, or ninth-grade transcript if applying for 10th grade; and 4) final discipline record that indicates no serious disciplinary infractions.²¹

Beginning with the 2019-20 school year, students interested in attending technical high schools in the Hartford region (E.C. Goodwin Technical High School, A.I. Prince Technical High School, or Howell Cheney Technical High School) must apply through the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), which handles applications for all public school choice programs in the Hartford area.²² The RSCO process for these schools differs from the other CTECS schools by not requiring report cards or test scores, and by using a school assignment process that utilizes a selection algorithm that takes into account hometown and trade preferences.²³

Students who enter a CTECS school at the beginning of ninth grade participate in a career and technical exploratory program that “introduces each student to the goals and objectives for career and technical programs; provides an objective measure of student performance and a measure of potential for success for each student in all career and technical programs.”²⁴ The exploratory program is divided into three

phases: 1) Phase I provides information on all offered career and technical programs, with students transitioning between programs every two days; 2) Phase II provides hands-on experience in three programs, with students transitioning between programs every four days; and 3) Phase III provides permanent placement in a career and technical program for the next three years.^{25,26}

Students who transfer to a CTECS school in the middle of ninth grade or enter in their 10th-grade year are exempted from the exploratory program requirement.²⁷ Curricula for each grade at CTECS schools alternates every two weeks between technology classes for trade certification and academic classes for state graduation requirements, each over a total of 91 days, for a total of 182 days.^{28,29}

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System Governance

Administration

The Connecticut State Board of Education (SBOE) established and maintains the CTECS. However, the CTECS is advised by a separate state board of education called the Connecticut Technical Education System Board (referred to throughout this policy briefing as the CTECS board).³⁰ Currently, this board is made up of 11 members: four executives of businesses based in Connecticut, nominated by the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission and appointed by the governor; five members appointed by the SBOE; the commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD); and the commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Labor (DOL). The chairperson, who serves on the SBOE as a nonvoting ex-officio member, is appointed by the governor.³¹

A candidate for superintendent of the CTECS is jointly recommended by the CTECS board and the commissioner of the CSDE to the SBOE.³² The superintendent of the CTECS is "responsible for the operation and administration of the technical education and career schools and all other matters related to vocational, technical, technological and postsecondary education."³³

While each CTECS school is supervised by a principal and, depending on the size, two to three assistant principals,³⁴ unlike traditional high schools, the principal is not involved in the hiring of staff or the creation of positions.³⁵ The commissioner of the CSDE, in accordance with policies established by the CTECS board, is responsible for staffing decisions, establishing rules for the management of CTECS funding, and with expending funds appropriated from the General Fund for the CTECS schools.³⁶ However, because CTECS is a division of a state agency and its employees are state employees, Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management is ultimately responsible for approving new positions or the filling of new positions.³⁷ In addition, when a vacancy does occur, collectively bargained rights may allow an employee a lateral transfer from another CTECS school.³⁸

Additionally, each technical high school has a Career Technology Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) made up of local business and industry leaders, CTECS administrators and teachers.³⁹ CTEACs advise on "program curricula; program facilities;

state-of-the-art technology; occupational outlook; employability skills; and workplace credentials."⁴⁰

Transition to an Independent Agency

In 2017, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 17-237, which transitions the CTECS into an independent executive branch agency and out of the oversight of the CSDE.⁴¹ Beginning July 1, 2022, the CTECS board will consist of 11 members, all appointed by the governor, with at least two members being alumni of the system or having experience in manufacturing or a trade offered by the CTECS, and two members who are executives of businesses based in Connecticut and who have been nominated by the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission.⁴² The commissioners of the CSDE, the DECD, and DOL, or their designees, will serve as ex-officio members.⁴³

Following this transition, an executive director, appointed by the governor, will be responsible for the operation, administration, and financial accountability and oversight of the CTECS in matters relating to the central office, system-wide management, and other non-educational matters.⁴⁴ In addition, the superintendent of the CTECS will be appointed by the executive director at the recommendation of the CTECS board, and will continue to be responsible for the operation and administration of the individual schools.⁴⁵

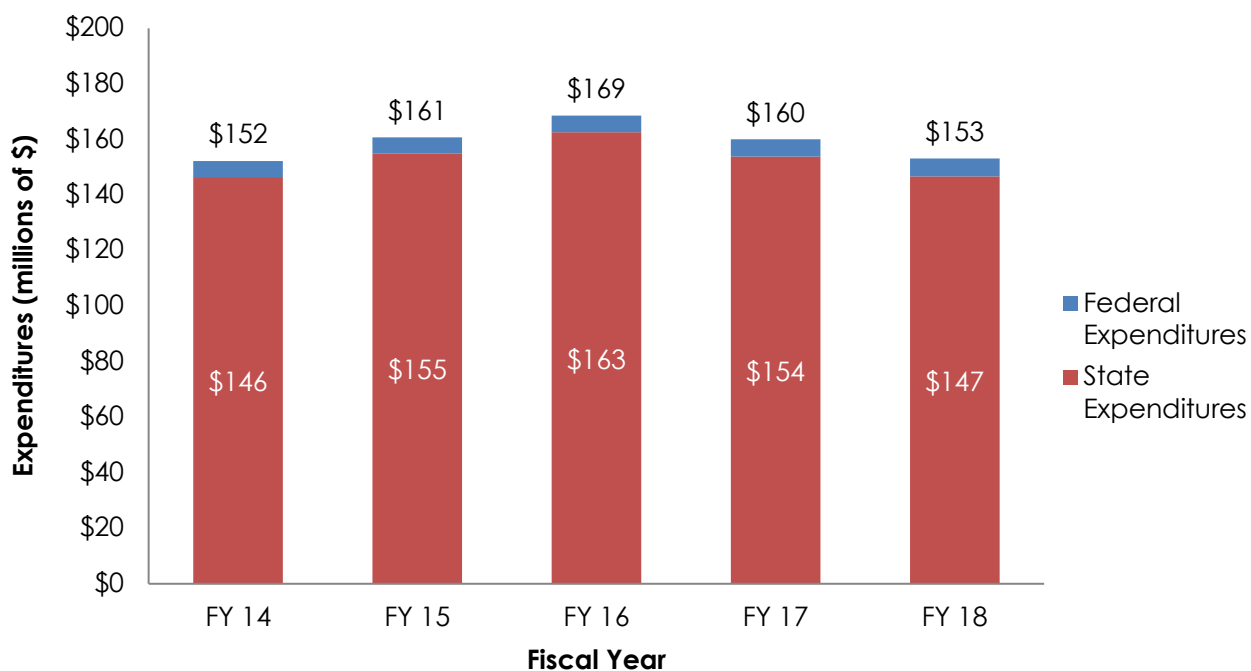
This transition was initially intended to take effect July 1, 2019⁴⁶ but has been delayed twice: 1) Conn. Act 17-2 §§ 72-82 (June Special Session) delayed the transition to July 1, 2020; and 2) Conn. Act 19-117 §§ 273-284 further delays the transition to July 1, 2022. Delaying the transition to an independent executive branch agency is anticipated to save the State approximately \$1 million by delaying the hiring of 21 new administrative positions.⁴⁷

Funding

Operating Funding

The per-pupil expenditure for the CTECS for the 2017-18 school year was \$17,321, inclusive of employee fringe benefits costs.⁴⁸ The CTECS is exclusively state-operated and funded out of the resources of the State of Connecticut's General Fund.⁴⁹ As a result, CTECS schools do not receive funding through the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula and CTECS students are not counted in the resident student count of the town in which they reside. The State provides, and assumes the costs for, special education services required by CTECS students.⁵⁰ The CTECS expended \$146.69 million in expenditures in fiscal year 2018,⁵¹ and the State appropriated \$152.86 million to the system in FY 2019.⁵² The graph below shows the budgeted state expenditures over the past five years. Please note these figures do not include the fringe benefit costs for past and current employees of the CTECS because those costs are budgeted centrally for all state employees under the state comptroller.

Figure 1⁵³
Total State Expenditures in Support of CTECS



The State of Connecticut receives a federal grant specifically for technical education in the form of “Career and Technical Education – Basic Grants to States” authorized under Title I of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. This grant was \$10,247,655 for FY 2018, of which \$200,377 went to the CTECS.^{54,55} The State also receives annual federal grants for CTECS under: Title I, Title II Part A, and Title III Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Title IV Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (when applicable); the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) (when applicable); and 21st Century Community Learning Centers as part of ESSA (when applicable).⁵⁶ A breakout of these grants is included in the appendix of this policy briefing.

Transportation Funding

Local and regional boards of education are responsible for the “reasonable and necessary” transportation of students residing in their district to the CTECS school the student attends, regardless of where the CTECS school is located.⁵⁷ Under Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-266m, local and regional boards of education are eligible for a formula-based grant to help offset the costs of transportation.⁵⁸ However, the Connecticut General Assembly has not appropriated funding for the transportation grant line item since 2016 and, as a result, districts do not receive any state funding for transportation.⁵⁹ However, in order to comply with the Connecticut Supreme Court’s 1996 ruling in *Sheff v. O’Neill*, and the case’s subsequent stipulated agreements, the State provides funding to transport students to all school choice programs in the greater Hartford region — including CTECS schools in that region — that assist the State in meeting its obligations under *Sheff*.⁶⁰

Capital Funding

Similar to operational expenses, capital improvement and capital equipment for the CTECS is funded entirely by the State.⁶¹ The CTECS board is required to submit a 3-year rolling capital plan to the General Assembly's Education Committee; Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee; and Appropriations Committee.⁶² The most recent rolling capital plan for the CTECS, covering FY 2019 through FY 2021, identified a need for \$25.2 million to cover educational equipment, technology, infrastructure, vehicles, and energy efficiency projects.⁶³

The General Assembly authorizes general obligation bonds to the CSDE, which issues grants to the CTECS for existing building and grounds improvements, equipment tools, vehicles, and technology upgrades.⁶⁴ From FY 2014 through FY 2019, the General Assembly authorized \$32.5 million in bonding for the CTECS.^A Of that authorized bonding amount, \$1.77 million is unallocated as of April 3, 2019.⁶⁵

Connecticut's Department of Administrative Services includes CTECS school construction projects on its list of school building projects, and approves applications for grants to assist the CTECS with repairing fire damage; correcting health, safety, and other code violations; replacing roofs; remedying air quality emergencies; and/or purchasing and installing portable classroom buildings.⁶⁶

Employee Classification and Benefits

CTECS schools are state property and are operated with state funding. As a result, all CTECS employees are state employees and are provided full state health and pension benefits. CTECS teachers are allowed to choose between the State Employee Retirement System (SERS), where members contribute to a defined-benefit pension and pay Social Security, or the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), where members contribute to a defined-benefit pension but do not pay into Social Security.⁶⁷ A report by the General Assembly's Office of Legislative Research explains a scenario where a teacher would choose the TRS system:

In one common scenario, the technical high school system hires a teacher who has already worked for a local board of education and therefore is in the TRS. Since the teacher wants to continue building a TRS pension, he or she opts to stay in the TRS even though the teacher could join SERS and therefore also pay into Social Security.⁶⁸

Administrative staff who hold a SBOE certificate or permit, such as guidance counselors, are considered teachers under the law and have the option to join SERS or TRS.⁶⁹ Non-certified staff are required to be members of SERS.⁷⁰

^A Since FY 2014, the General Assembly has authorized \$55.5 million in general obligation bonds for the CTECS. However, this amount was reduced by \$12 million under Conn. Act. 16-4 § 215 and \$11 million under Conn. Act 17-2 § 504 (June Special Session), resulting in a total of \$32.5 million in available general obligation bond authorizations.

Appendix

The table below details the number of students enrolled in each CTECS school, listed by region and school.

Table 1⁷¹
CTECS Enrollment by Region and School, 2018-19

Region	School	Town/City	Enrollment	Waitlist ^{72, B}
1	Bullard-Havens Technical High School	Bridgeport	760	229
	H. Abbott Technical High School	Danbury	672	124
	Platt Technical High School	Milford	808	292
	J. M. Wright Technical High School	Stamford	421	78
2	E. O'Brien Technical High School	Ansonia	607	271
	E. Whitney Technical High School	Hamden	593	104
	O. Wolcott Technical High School	Torrington	637	24
	W. F. Kaynor Technical High School	Waterbury	787	436
3	A. I. Prince Technical High School	Hartford	677	73
	H. Cheney Technical High School	Manchester	631	95
	H. C. Wilcox Technical High School	Meriden	763	70
	Vinal Technical High School	Middletown	407	38
	E. C. Goodwin Technical High School	New Britain	647	124
4	H. H. Ellis Technical High School	Danielson	657	21
	E. T. Grasso Technical High School	Groton	491	38
	Norwich Technical High School	Norwich	641	135
	Windham Technical High School	Willimantic	448	1

^B Waitlist counts are based on applications. Students may apply to more than one school.

The map below shows the location of the 17 CTECS schools, color coded by region.

Figure 2
CTECS Enrollment by Region and School, 2018-19

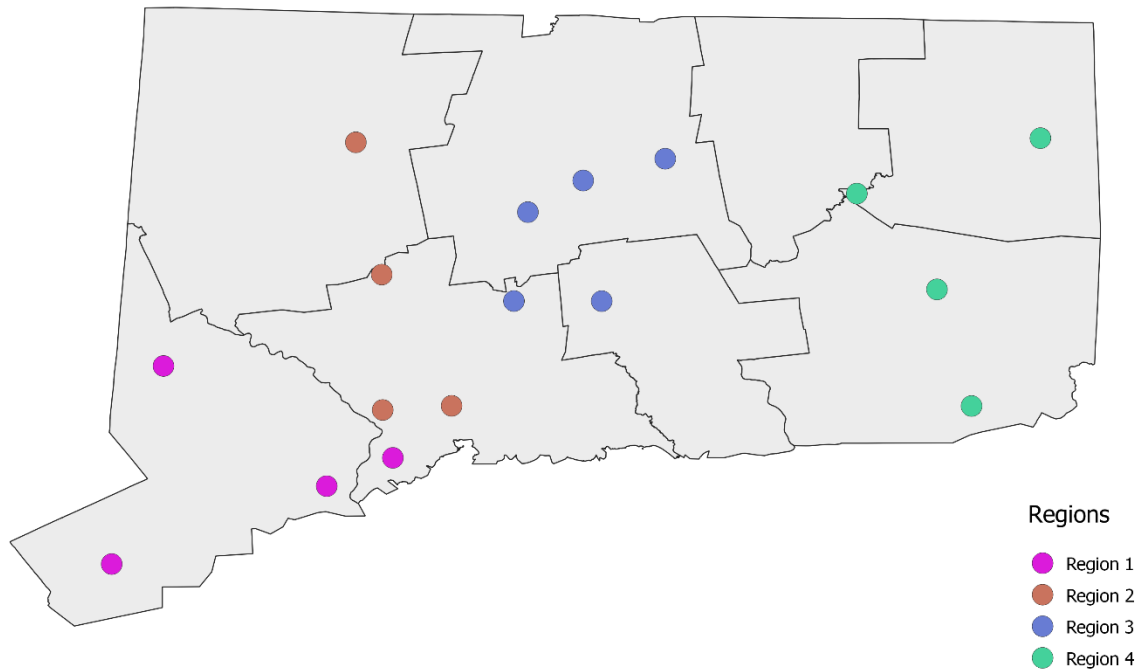


Table 2³CTECS Resident Town Count for the 2018-19 School Year (as of October 1, 2018)^c

Town	Resident Town Count	Town	Resident Town Count
Andover	8	Derby	109
Ansonia	198	Durham	22
Ashford	24	Eastford	9
Avon	*	East Granby	*
Barkhamsted	13	East Haddam	24
Beacon Falls	17	East Hampton	27
Berlin	19	East Hartford	192
Bethany	*	East Haven	56
Bethel	23	East Lyme	19
Bethlehem	6	Easton	*
Bloomfield	11	East Windsor	17
Bolton	8	Ellington	26
Bozrah	16	Enfield	48
Branford	16	Essex	*
Bridgeport	1032	Fairfield	6
Bristol	146	Farmington	11
Brookfield	18	Franklin	10
Brooklyn	63	Glastonbury	7
Burlington	10	Goshen	6
Canaan	*	Granby	6
Canterbury	55	Greenwich	8
Canton	*	Griswold	93
Chaplin	21	Groton	106
Cheshire	36	Guilford	6
Chester	*	Haddam	13
Clinton	14	Hamden	132
Colchester	39	Hampton	10
Colebrook	*	Hartford	651
Columbia	24	Hartland	8
Cornwall	*	Harwinton	31
Coventry	41	Hebron	14
Cromwell	18	Kent	7
Danbury	441	Killingly	120
Darien	*	Killingworth	*
Deep River	8	Lebanon	58

^c Data is suppressed pursuant to CSDE data suppression guidelines. Any cell with a value less than or equal to five is suppressed.

Town	Resident Town Count
Ledyard	51
Lisbon	33
Litchfield	21
Lyme	*
Madison	*
Manchester	144
Mansfield	26
Marlborough	7
Meriden	538
Middlebury	8
Middlefield	11
Middletown	148
Milford	98
Monroe	10
Montville	97
Morris	6
Naugatuck	145
New Britain	438
New Fairfield	34
New Hartford	15
New Haven	445
Newington	19
New London	195
New Milford	84
Newtown	23
Norfolk	*
North Branford	16
North Canaan	17
North Haven	9
North Stonington	14
Norwalk	59
Norwich	212
Old Lyme	8
Old Saybrook	7
Orange	13
Oxford	32
Plainfield	169
Plainville	27
Plymouth	51
Pomfret	10

Town	Resident Town Count
Portland	24
Preston	29
Prospect	38
Putnam	61
Redding	*
Ridgefield	*
Rocky Hill	13
Salem	9
Salisbury	*
Scotland	17
Seymour	63
Sharon	6
Shelton	76
Sherman	8
Simsbury	*
Somers	9
Southbury	11
Southington	74
South Windsor	16
Sprague	22
Stafford	55
Stamford	340
Sterling	54
Stonington	33
Stratford	158
Suffield	*
Thomaston	47
Thompson	60
Tolland	23
Torrington	334
Trumbull	21
Union	*
Vernon	69
Voluntown	24
Wallingford	117
Warren	*
Washington	*
Waterbury	585
Waterford	47
Watertown	54
Westbrook	9

Town	Resident Town Count
West Hartford	*
West Haven	199
Wethersfield	12
Willington	23
Wilton	*
Winchester	51
Windham	261

Town	Resident Town Count
Windsor	15
Windsor Locks	17
Wolcott	35
Woodbridge	*
Woodbury	16
Woodstock	23
TOTAL	10,647

Table 3
CTECS Career and Technical Programs for the 2018-19 School Year⁷⁴

Career Cluster	Career Pathway
Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Bioscience and Environmental Technology
Architecture and Construction	Carpentry
	Electrical
	Facilities Management
	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
	Masonry
	Plumbing and Heating
	Plumbing, Heating and Cooling
	Sustainable Architecture
Arts, Audio Visual Technology and Communications	Digital Media
	Sound Production Technology
Health Science	Biotechnology
	Health Technology
Hospitality and Tourism	Baking
	Culinary Arts
	Tourism, Hospitality and Guest Services Management
Human Services	Early Child Care and Education
	Hairdressing and Cosmetology
Information Technology	Electronics Technology
	Graphics Technology
	Information Systems Technology
Manufacturing	Automated Manufacturing Technology
	Mechanical Design and Engineering Technology
	Mechatronics
	Precision Machining Technology
	Welding and Metal Fabrication
Marketing, Sales and Service	Marketing, Management and Entrepreneurship
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	Pre-Electrical Engineering and Applied Electronics Technology
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing
	Automotive Technology
	Diesel and Heavy-Duty Equipment Repair

Table 4⁷⁵
Federal Grants Received by the CTECS, FYs 2014-18

Year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Title I	\$2,928,075	\$2,939,677	\$2,802,824	\$2,557,090	\$2,595,349
Title II Part A	\$516,544	\$528,393	\$558,186	\$566,328	\$567,830
Part III Part A	\$48,846	\$52,879	\$57,211	\$53,795	\$44,924
Part IV Part A	\$198,838	-	-	-	-
IDEA	\$2,530,393	\$2,443,919	\$2,447,573	\$2,350,498	\$2,335,730
NLS	-	-	\$20,000	\$19,998	-
CCLC	-	-	-	-	\$81,879
TOTAL	\$6,423,073	\$6,155,197	\$6,064,430	\$5,722,290	\$5,795,917

Endnotes

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- ⁵⁴ Miller, S.L. (2018). *Estimated Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 State Allocations under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) and Request for Conforming Revisions to State Plans, Including Budgets (OMB Approval Number 1830-0029)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of

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⁵⁶ Federal funding data provided to the Connecticut School Finance Project by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

⁵⁷ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-97.

⁵⁸ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-266m.

⁵⁹ State of Connecticut, Office of the State Comptroller. (n.d.). Open Budget: Transport of School Children broken down by Line-Item. Retrieved from <http://openbudget.ct.gov/>.

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