

SCHOOL + STATE FINANCE PROJECT



GUIDE TO CONNECTICUT'S MAGNET SCHOOLS

An extensive look into the administration, funding, and history of Connecticut's interdistrict and intradistrict magnet schools

February 2021

www.schoolstatefinance.org

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^A Originally published in November 2018, this report has been updated with new enrollment and student demographic data, as well as other updated information.

Timeline of Connecticut Magnet School History

1989: Led by Elizabeth Horton Sheff, a group of city and suburban parents file suit on behalf of their 18 children against Governor William O'Neill. The plaintiffs argue that public schools in Hartford are segregated, underfunded, and deny students in the Hartford area their constitutional right to an adequate and equal education due to the disparities in the distribution of funding and resources between communities of color in Hartford and the adjacent, majority white, suburbs.¹

1996: Connecticut Supreme Court rules in *Sheff v. O'Neill* and finds Hartford's public schools are racially segregated and in violation of the state constitution's anti-segregation provision. The Court finds the racial segregation — regardless of whether or not it is the result of intentional State action — deprives the plaintiff's children of their right to substantially equal educational opportunity. The Court orders the State to take remedial measures but defers to the legislature to develop a constitutional remedy.²

1997: General Assembly responds to *Sheff v. O'Neill* decision by passing 3-part legislation that includes: 1) a 5-year state takeover of the Hartford school system; 2) a major new commitment to early childhood education throughout the state; and 3) the basic structure of a two-way, voluntary integration program, including a new regional magnet school system and an expanded inter-district transfer program to be known as "Project Concern" and, eventually, "Open Choice."³

2002: Dissatisfied with the rate of school integration since the Connecticut Supreme Court's 1996 ruling, the *Sheff v. O'Neill* plaintiffs return to court.⁴

2003: After two evidentiary hearings, the *Sheff* plaintiffs and Gov. Rowland come to a mediated agreement as to the implementation of a number of voluntary, inter-district programs designed to reduce the racial and ethnic isolation of Hartford students. This temporary, 4-year settlement — approved by both the General Assembly and the trial court — is known as the Phase I stipulated agreement and requires, among other things, the State to spend \$45 million over four years to establish eight additional magnet schools in the Hartford area. The out-of-court settlement also requires the State to increase the percentage of Hartford students attending integrated schools to 30 percent by 2007.⁵

2007: *Sheff* plaintiffs return to court again claiming the State has failed to increase the percentage of Hartford students attending integrated schools to 30 percent by the designated time under the 2003 settlement.⁶

2008: *Sheff* plaintiffs and the State agree to new five-year Phase II settlement that calls for building more magnet schools in the Hartford suburbs and expanding the number of openings available for Hartford children through Project Choice (formerly Project Concern). The Phase II settlement also includes state-run technical and agricultural high schools.⁷

April 2013: Parties in *Sheff v. O'Neill* adopt one-year, court-ordered stipulation allowing State of Connecticut an additional year to reach the 2012-13 goal of 41 percent of Hartford's minority students being in "reduced isolation settings."⁸

December 2013: Parties in *Sheff v. O'Neill* announce a one-year Phase III settlement, which increases the number of magnet school seats, expands Open Choice, and allocates funds to strengthen a Hartford neighborhood “Lighthouse School.”⁹

2015: Parties in *Sheff v. O'Neill* adopt one-year extension to the case's Phase III settlement.¹⁰

2017: Hartford Superior Court Judge Marshall Berger rules the State of Connecticut cannot raise, for the 2017-18 school year, the percent of minority enrollment a *Sheff* magnet school may have for the school to be considered racially integrated.¹¹ Under the rules worked out for implementing the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, a school is deemed desegregated if students who are racial minorities (specifically Black and Hispanic students) make up no more than 75 percent of the school's total enrollment. The State had planned to raise the limit to 80 percent, but the *Sheff* plaintiffs filed for an injunction, which was granted by Berger.¹²

2020: On January 10, 2020, the parties in the case agreed to a new stipulated agreement that runs through June 30, 2022 and provides a pathway for potentially ending the litigation and judicial oversight of the case. Under the stipulated agreement, the State is expected to: increase the number of magnet school seats available, including increasing the amount reserved for Hartford resident students; change the Regional School Choice student assignment protocols so student lottery selection is based solely on socioeconomic status; and provide more than \$2 million in additional funding to diversify student bodies.¹³

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a magnet school and how does it differ from a traditional public school?

Magnet schools are one of several public school choice programs offered in Connecticut that students can attend in lieu of their local public school district. Other public school choice programs include technical high schools, vocational agricultural centers, charter schools, endowed private schools,^B designated high schools,^C and the Open Choice program.¹⁴ The purpose of magnet schools in Connecticut is to promote racial, ethnic, and economic diversity as well as offer students a specialized and high-quality curriculum.¹⁵

What entities are allowed to establish magnet schools in Connecticut?

Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs), local or regional boards of education, the board of regents for the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities system, the board of trustees for the University of Connecticut, the board of governors for an independent institution of higher education, and any third party not-for-profit organization approved by the commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) are allowed to establish a magnet program in Connecticut.¹⁶ Currently, all of Connecticut's magnet schools are operated by RESCs or local or regional boards of education.¹⁷

How many magnet schools does Connecticut have and where are they located?

In the 2019-20 school year, Connecticut had 86 interdistrict magnet schools in operation enrolling 38,955 students and 33 intradistrict magnet schools in operation enrolling 16,250 students.¹⁸ Four part-time magnet programs were also in operation, however, separate enrollment is not reported for these programs.¹⁹ Connecticut's magnet schools are located across the state, but the majority are operated by Connecticut's various RESCs, Hartford Public Schools, and New Haven Public Schools.²⁰

How are interdistrict magnet schools different than intradistrict magnet schools?

Interdistrict magnet schools can serve students across district lines in addition to students residing in the district in which the school is located.²¹ Currently, RESCs and local or regional boards of education operate interdistrict magnet schools. In addition to local and federal funds, interdistrict magnet schools are eligible to receive grants appropriated by the Connecticut General Assembly and distributed by the CSDE for the costs of operating the school. Intradistrict magnet schools are operated only by local public school districts and act as a school of choice for students who reside in the district in which the school is located.²² Because they do not enroll students residing outside of the

^B Connecticut has three endowed academies currently in operation (Gilbert School, Norwich Free Academy, and Woodstock Academy). With state approval, an endowed academy may serve as a town's public high school with the sending town's board of education paying the tuition costs for its students to attend the academy.

Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-34.

Sullivan, M. (2016). *Models of Public High School Education in Connecticut* (2016-R-0155). Hartford, CT: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/rpt/pdf/2016-R-0155.pdf>.

^C "Designated high schools" are high schools that a Connecticut local public school district allows its high school age students to attend if the district does not maintain a high school. The sending district's board of education pays the tuition costs for their resident students attending the designated high schools.

Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-33.

district in which they are located, intradistrict magnet schools are not eligible to receive state magnet school grant funding and are funded almost entirely through local funds by the district in which the school is located.²³

Why did Connecticut establish interdistrict magnet schools?

The Connecticut interdistrict magnet school system was created as a result of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* court case in which the Connecticut Supreme Court, in 1996, ruled that Hartford's public schools were racially segregated and in violation of the Connecticut Constitution's anti-segregation provision. The Court found the racial segregation — regardless of whether or not it was the result of intentional State action — deprived Hartford's children of their right to substantially equal educational opportunity.²⁴

Although the Court ordered the State to take remedial measures following the *Sheff* ruling, it deferred the responsibility of developing a constitutional remedy to the General Assembly.²⁵ The legislature's solution was to develop voluntary school choice programs to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation for students in urban areas, the centerpiece of which was the interdistrict magnet school program.²⁶

What is *Sheff v. O'Neill*?

The *Sheff v. O'Neill* court case was filed on behalf of Hartford students in 1989. The plaintiffs in the case argued that public schools in Hartford were segregated and did not provide students with an adequate and equal education under Connecticut's Constitution due to the presence of disparities in funding and resources between communities of color in Hartford and the adjacent, majority white, suburbs.²⁷ This case resulted in a 1996 Connecticut Supreme Court ruling that required the State of Connecticut to address racial, ethnic, and economic isolation of Hartford Public Schools.²⁸

What is the difference between a *Sheff* magnet school and a non-*Sheff* magnet school?

A *Sheff* magnet school refers to an interdistrict magnet school located in the *Sheff* region,[¶] which includes Hartford and surrounding suburban towns. Interdistrict magnet schools were established in the *Sheff* region in an effort to help the State comply with the Connecticut Supreme Court's 1996 ruling in *Sheff v. O'Neill* and are subject to the court case's stipulated agreements. Through state statute, the Connecticut General Assembly provides interdistrict magnet schools in the *Sheff* region with higher per-pupil operating grant amounts than interdistrict magnet schools located elsewhere in the state (known as non-*Sheff* magnet schools). Non-*Sheff* magnet schools are interdistrict magnet schools not located in the *Sheff* region and are not directly tied to the State of Connecticut's obligations under the 1996 *Sheff v. O'Neill* ruling and the case's subsequent stipulated agreements.²⁹

[¶] The *Sheff* region consists of the towns of Avon, Bloomfield, Canton, East Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Manchester, Newington, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, South Windsor, Suffield, Vernon, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor, and Windsor Locks.

Stipulation and Order, *Sheff v. O'Neill*, Superior Court, judicial district of New Britain, Docket No. X03-89-042119S (January 22, 2003). Retrieved from http://www.sheffmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2003_Stipulation-and-Order_Ex71.pdf.

What is the difference between a host district magnet school and a RESC-operated magnet school?

Host district magnet schools are operated by local or regional boards of education while RESC-operated magnet schools are operated by RESCs. Both RESC-operated and host district magnet schools are interdistrict magnet schools.³⁰ Each operator type has a different funding mechanism and has different enrollment criteria that must be met in order to be eligible to receive state magnet school operating grants.³¹

What is a Regional Education Service Center (RESC)? Do all RESCs operate magnet schools?

A RESC is a public education authority that represents boards of education for a particular region in Connecticut and delivers programs and services to students in its given region.³² Connecticut has six RESCs.[†] Currently, EdAdvance is the only RESC that does not operate any interdistrict magnet schools.³³

How are Connecticut's magnet schools funded?

Interdistrict magnet schools are funded through a mix of state, local, and federal dollars, with the largest source of funding being state-funded magnet school operating grants. There are five different funding formulas for Connecticut's interdistrict magnet schools. Funding for Connecticut's magnet schools differs based on a number of factors, including the type of magnet school (interdistrict or intradistrict), the magnet school operator (local/regional school district or RESC), and where the magnet school is located (in the *Sheff* region or not).³⁴ For additional detail on the per-pupil operating grants for interdistrict magnet schools, please see the Interdistrict Magnet School Funding section below.

Intradistrict magnet schools are operated only by local or regional boards of education and are funded through the same funding sources as the other schools located in the district (a mix of local, state, and federal funding, which varies by district). Intradistrict magnet school operators do not receive operating, transportation, or supplemental grants from the State of Connecticut for the operation of these schools.³⁵

Can magnet schools charge tuition to parents or guardians?

By law, Connecticut's magnet schools cannot charge parents or guardians tuition for K-12 education costs.³⁶ However, some interdistrict magnet schools can charge tuition for the cost of educating a student to a local or regional board of education (typically the local school district for the town in which the student resides).³⁷ Additionally, RESC-operated interdistrict magnet schools offering preschool programs can charge parents or guardians tuition, up to \$4,053. However, parents or guardians with a family income below 75 percent of the state median income are not charged tuition for preschool programs.³⁸

[†]The six RESCs are Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.), Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), EASTCONN, EdAdvance, and LEARN. Towns by RESC can be found at http://www.crec.org/docs/7056/Map_with_logos_2017.pdf.

How are transportation costs for students attending magnet schools funded?

The CSDE provides transportation grants on a per-pupil basis for students attending interdistrict magnet schools in a district other than the district in which they reside. The amount of these grants differs depending on whether or not a magnet school is in the *Sheff* region.³⁹

How are special education costs for students attending magnet schools funded?

If a student attending an interdistrict magnet school requires special education services, the town in which the student resides is responsible for the reasonable cost of educating the student beyond the per-pupil grant amount received by the interdistrict magnet school, including any transportation costs related to special education.⁴⁰

How are magnet schools different from charter schools?

Connecticut's magnet schools are operated by local or regional boards of education or RESCs, while charter schools in Connecticut are operated by nonprofit governing authorities that are independent of any local or regional board of education.⁴¹ Connecticut's charter schools are also funded differently than magnet schools as all of Connecticut's public school choice programs have different statutory funding mechanisms.⁴² For more information on these funding differences, please visit ctschoolfinance.org/obstacles-to-equity/formulas.

Interdistrict Magnet Schools

Program Administration

The CSDE administers magnet school operating, transportation, and supplemental grants, and provides oversight for Connecticut's interdistrict magnet school programs.⁴³ State magnet school operating grants are distributed on a per-pupil basis and are used to fund the daily activities of the interdistrict magnet school program.⁴⁴

In order to be eligible to receive state magnet school operating grants, all interdistrict magnet schools must maintain certain enrollment percentages as outlined in the Program Eligibility section below.⁴⁵ State magnet school operating grant amounts and enrollment requirements vary by the classification of the magnet school and are detailed in Figure 2 in the "State Funding" section below.⁴⁶ If an operator of an interdistrict magnet school is no longer meeting its eligibility requirements, the CSDE can withhold state magnet school operating grants from the school's operating entity until the operator submits a compliance plan that is approved by the commissioner of the CSDE.⁴⁷ Additionally, if enrollment in an interdistrict magnet school drops below the level for which an operating grant was appropriated, the CSDE may withhold the excess funds from the magnet school operator.⁴⁸

Program Eligibility

In order to be considered eligible to receive magnet school operating grants from the State of Connecticut, interdistrict magnet schools are required to meet certain enrollment criteria based on the percentage of enrolled students from a single district and the percent of enrolled students that are considered "reduced isolation."^F Figure 1 below details the enrollment and reduced isolation standards per the type of magnet school.

^F Conn. Acts 17-172 requires the commissioner of the CSDE to define the term "reduced-isolation student" and establish a requirement for the minimum percentage of reduced-isolation students who can be enrolled in an interdistrict magnet school. Additionally, the public act gives an interdistrict magnet school the ability to have an enrollment of no greater than one percent under the minimum enrollment percentage, pending the submission of a compliance to, and approval by, the commissioner of the CSDE.

In an October 2020 memorandum to operators of interdistrict magnet schools and host districts, the CSDE defined a reduced-isolation student as a student who:

- "[i]dentifies as Native American, Asian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, and/or White; and
- Does not identify as Black/African American, or Latinx/Hispanic."

Cardona, M. (2020, August 19). *Memorandum to Interdistrict Magnet School Operators and Host Districts RE: Interdistrict Magnet Schools Reduced-Isolation Standards*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut State Department of Education. Retrieved from https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Strategic-Planning/Interdistrict_Magnet_Schools_Reduced-Isolation_Standards.pdf.

Figure 149

Type of Magnet School	Date Magnet Began Operating	Residency Standard	Reduced Isolation (RI) Standard	School Year by Which RI Standards Must Be Met	Allowances for Enrollment Variance
Non-Sheff Magnet School	Prior to July 1, 2005	No more than 75 percent of school enrollment can attend from a single district.	The percentage of RI students enrolled must equal at least 25 percent of the school enrollment.	2021-22 school year. If the magnet school has at least 20 percent RI students and the school is operating with a compliance plan designed to bring the school in to compliance, the school will meet the RI standard.	A school can be considered compliant with the enrollment standards if it is within one percent of the applicable Residency Standard, or RI Standards, and the school is operating under a compliance plan designed to bring the school into compliance with the standard in question.
Non-Sheff Magnet School	On or after July 1, 2005			Effective immediately. If the magnet school has at least 20 percent RI students and the school is operating with a compliance plan designed to bring the school into compliance, the school will meet the RI standard.	
Sheff Magnet School	Not applicable			Effective immediately per the stipulated agreement and court order from January 10, 2020.	Not applicable.

A school and its operating entity are subject to penalties if a school fails to adhere to the enrollment requirements outlined above. If a *Sheff* or non-*Sheff* interdistrict magnet school does not meet the new reduced-isolation standard set by the commissioner of the CSDE, and enrolls greater than 75 percent of students from a single participating district, that school is no longer eligible for state magnet school operating grants (with the exceptions detailed in the table above).⁵⁰ The magnet school may, however, continue to remain eligible for state magnet school operating grants for one or more years if the commissioner of the CSDE determines it is appropriate to award the grant(s) for additional years, and the commissioner approves a plan to ensure the enrollment of the school is in compliance with the reduced-isolation standard.⁵¹ If a magnet school does not meet the new reduced-isolation standard in two or more years consecutively, the commissioner may impose a financial penalty on the operating entity of the school, or take other measures in concert with the operating entity to assist in compliance with the reduced-isolation settings.⁵²

Student Eligibility

All students who are eligible to attend Connecticut public schools are eligible to attend interdistrict magnet schools. Students seeking to attend interdistrict magnet schools do

not need to reside in a particular district but must apply through the operating entity in order to be eligible to attend a magnet school.^{G,53,54}

After accommodating students from the participating districts, as determined by the approved enrollment agreement,^H the operator of an interdistrict magnet school may enroll any Connecticut student interested in the program.⁵⁵ Students not already participating in an interdistrict magnet program are given preference for these available seats.⁵⁶ Interdistrict magnet school operators may limit the number of students who can attend a magnet school or program if there are more applicants for the school or program than there are number of seats available in the school or program.

In the event there are more applicants than seats available, a lottery must be conducted to determine which applicants will be offered seats.⁵⁷ Additionally, magnet school operators may establish geographic transportation zones and certain preferences for applicants, such as neighborhood or sibling preference. However, students cannot be "denied placement or enrollment in an interdistrict magnet school or program because of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, genetics, age, religion or any other protected class as defined by federal and state nondiscrimination laws."⁵⁸

It is the responsibility of the operator of the interdistrict magnet program to notify the district that a student would otherwise attend of the student's participation in the magnet program.⁵⁹ The local or regional board of education that would otherwise be responsible for educating the student must pay the tuition amount that is charged to the participating sending districts (this is only the case if tuition is charged as not all magnet schools charge tuition to the sending district).⁶⁰

^G Students attending private schools are allowed to enroll in part-time magnet school programs as long as the population of these students does not exceed five percent of enrollment in a given magnet school. These students are not counted for the purposes of awarding operating and transportation grants to the operating entity.

Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264f.

^H An enrollment agreement sets a number or percentage of students from the participating district(s) that must be accommodated by an interdistrict magnet school before students from other resident districts can be enrolled.

Coleman, S. (2008). *Interdistrict Magnet School Students from Nonparticipating Districts* (2008-R-0684) Hartford, CT: Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/rpt/2008-R-0684.htm>.

Interdistrict Magnet School Funding

State Magnet School Operating Grants

The CSDE distributes state magnet school operating grants to interdistrict magnet schools on a per-pupil basis, which is determined by the percentage of students attending the magnet school from a single school district, whether or not the interdistrict magnet school is operated by a RESC, and whether or not the school is in the *Sheff* region.⁶¹ The state magnet school operating grants are structured to reduce student racial, ethnic, and economic isolation by offering higher grant amounts for schools that maintain a higher percentage of students who do not reside in the district where the interdistrict magnet school is located.⁶² In Connecticut's biennial state budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, magnet school per-pupil grants were increased by two percent,⁶³ which was the first increase to magnet school funding since 2010.⁶⁴

Figure 2 below details the per-pupil operating grants that are appropriated and distributed by the State based on the type of magnet school and the enrollment criteria the school must meet. In addition, Figure 2 details the tuition amounts and limits on interdistrict magnet school operators. Additional information regarding interdistrict magnet school tuition can be found in the Local Funding & Tuition section below.

Figure 2⁶⁵

	Operator	Enrollment Criteria	In-district (or dominant district) Per-pupil Grant	Out-of-district (or non-dominant district) Per-pupil Grant	Tuition Amounts and Limits
Non-Sheff	Host District	Between 55 and 75 percent of enrollment from a single district	\$3,060	\$7,227	Operator must apply to the CSDE and the commissioner of the CSDE must take into consideration the average per-pupil expenditure of the operator and any state grants received on a per-pupil basis before the operator can charge tuition.
	RESC	Less than 55 percent of enrollment from a single district	\$8,058	\$8,058	Operator can charge the difference between the average per-pupil expenditure from the prior fiscal year and any grants received from the State on a per-pupil basis.
	RESC	At least 55 percent of enrollment from a single district	\$3,060	\$7,227	Operator can charge the difference between the average per-pupil expenditure from the prior fiscal year and any grants received from the State on a per-pupil basis.
	RESC-operated magnet school that began operations between July 1, 2001 and July 1, 2008 (Edison Magnet School in Meriden)	Between 55 and 80 percent of enrollment from a single district	\$8,344 per student up to the number of in-district students enrolled in 2013 \$3,060 per student for students in excess of the number of in-district students enrolled in 2013	\$8,344 per student up to the number of out-of-district students enrolled in 2013 \$7,227 per student for any student in excess of the number of out-of-district students enrolled in 2013	Operator can charge the difference between the average per-pupil expenditure from the prior fiscal year and any grants received from the State on a per-pupil basis.
Sheff	RESC (or non-local public school district, or Great Path Academy)	Between 50 and 60 percent of enrollment from Hartford	\$10,652	\$10,652	Operator can charge the difference between the average per-pupil expenditure from the prior fiscal year and any grants received from the State on a per-pupil basis.
	RESC (or non-local public school district, or Great Path Academy) for 2015-16 and later classes	Less than 50 percent of enrollment from Hartford	\$10,652	\$8,058 for ½ of non-Hartford students above the 50 percent enrollment \$10,652 for all other non-Hartford students	Operator can charge the difference between the average per-pupil expenditure from the prior fiscal year and any grants received from the State on a per-pupil basis.
	Host District	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	\$13,315	Operators are prohibited from charging tuition.

Because of the limited availability of state funding, the magnet school operating grant line item in the state budget is not fully funded (i.e. there is not enough funding appropriated to the state magnet school operating grant line item for the State to pay the statutory per-pupil amount to the operating entities for each student enrolled in a magnet school. As a result, the General Assembly passed legislation that gives the CSDE the authority to reduce the grant amounts it distributes to grant levels associated with October 1, 2013 enrollment counts.⁶⁶ Grants distributed on a per-pupil basis are reduced accordingly if enrollment exceeds the 2013 counts. Additional funding beyond the 2013 level is awarded on the following priority basis:⁶⁷

- A. Enrollment increases in interdistrict magnet schools that are adding planned new grade levels.
- B. Enrollment increases in an interdistrict magnet program due to a transition into a permanent facility on or after July 1, 2014.
- C. Enrollment increases in an interdistrict magnet school that ensures compliance with the requirement that more than 25 percent, but less than 75 percent of students, are students classified as racial minorities.
- D. New enrollments in interdistrict magnet schools constructed on or after July 1, 2014 in compliance with the 2013 *Sheff* stipulation.

The effect of this legislation is that it allows CSDE to, within certain guidelines, prorate the amount of funding magnet school operating entities receive so that the magnet school operating grant does not exceed the amount of funding appropriated by the General Assembly.

Additionally, interdistrict magnet programs that are operating at least half-time, but not full-time, are eligible to receive a grant that is up to 65 percent of the grant the program would qualify for if it were operating on a full-time basis.⁶⁸

Supplemental State Grants for Sheff Interdistrict Magnet Schools

The CSDE may make additional grants available to entities in the *Sheff* region operating interdistrict magnet schools for the purposes of running academic support programs and summer school programs.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the CSDE may allocate up to \$75,000 to assist with start-up costs associated with developing a new interdistrict magnet school program that assists the State in meeting the stipulated agreements of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* court case.⁷⁰

Magnet School Construction

Interdistrict magnet school building projects developed for the purposes of increasing diversity are eligible to have up to 80 percent of the costs of construction reimbursed by the State.⁷¹ Prior to 2012, magnet schools built for the purpose of assisting the State in meeting the *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulated agreements were eligible to be reimbursed for up to 100 percent of the costs associated with the school's construction.⁷² The rate for these programs was reduced from 100 percent to 80 percent by Conn. Acts 12-120.⁷³

State Transportation Grants

The CSDE provides transportation grants on a per-pupil basis for students attending interdistrict magnet schools in a district other than the district in which they reside. The amount of these grants differs depending on whether or not a magnet school is in the *Sheff* region.⁷⁴ Figure 3 below shows the per-pupil transportation grant amounts that interdistrict magnet school operators are eligible to receive for students who attend an interdistrict magnet school in a district where they do not reside.⁷⁵

Figure 3⁷⁶

Per-Pupil Transportation Grants for Interdistrict Magnet Schools	
Operator Type	Per-pupil Grant Amounts
Host Districts and RESCs	\$1,300
Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) and host districts assisting the State in meeting the requirements of the <i>Sheff</i> Stipulated Agreements	\$2,000 plus any additional supplemental grants within available appropriations. All state transportation funding is currently directed to CREC.

Local Funding & Tuition

Local Funding for Interdistrict Magnet Schools Operated by Local or Regional Boards of Education

Interdistrict magnet schools operated by local or regional boards of education are considered part of those school districts. As a result, those magnet schools also receive funding through the operating budgets of those school districts, including revenue from local property taxes.⁷⁷ In this manner, these interdistrict magnet schools are treated similarly to neighborhood schools within a local public school district.

Magnet School Tuition Paid by Sending Districts

Interdistrict magnet schools may not charge tuition to students' parents or guardians for K-12 magnet school programs. However, in some cases, interdistrict magnet schools can charge tuition to students' sending districts (i.e. the local or regional school district in which the student resides).⁷⁸ The amount of tuition charged cannot push the total average per-pupil expenditures of the magnet school operating entity above the maximum allowable threshold, which is 120 percent of the statewide average per-pupil expenditure.⁷⁹

Students attending interdistrict magnet schools are still counted as residing in the district in which they live for the calculation of Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant amounts,⁸⁰ and the sending district¹ may use state and/or local funds to pay the tuition amounts.⁸¹ If a local or regional board of education fails to pay tuition, the CSDE has the authority to withhold ECS funds from said board of education, up to the tuition amount, and use those funds to make the payment to the operator of the magnet school.⁸²

¹ "Sending district" refers to any district that sends students it is legally responsible for educating to another district.

Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264f.

Not all magnet school operating entities charge tuition to the sending district. In some instances, the magnet school operating entity is prohibited from charging tuition by law, and in other instances, the magnet school operating entity has chosen not to charge tuition. In cases in which a magnet school operating entity is eligible to charge tuition, but chose not to charge tuition prior to fiscal year 2015, the magnet school operating entity may only begin charging tuition if it makes a request to the commissioner of the CSDE by September 1 of the year prior to when tuition will be charged and the commissioner of the CSDE approves the request.⁸³

Tuition amounts charged by interdistrict magnet schools are detailed in Figure 5, which can be found in the Appendix.

Intradistrict Magnet Schools

District Participation

Local or regional boards of education can create intradistrict magnet schools for resident students to attend if they so choose.⁸⁴ Intradistrict magnet schools allow students and families to exercise school choice within their home district and are funded by the district that operates them.⁸⁵ Intradistrict magnet schools do not receive specific grants from the State of Connecticut.⁸⁶

Student Eligibility

Students residing in districts that maintain intradistrict magnet schools can apply through their district to attend those schools.⁸⁷ If more students apply than there is available space, districts use lotteries to determine the students eligible to enroll.⁸⁸

Funding

For funding purposes, intradistrict magnet schools are funded like traditional local public schools. As a result, students who attend intradistrict magnet schools are included in resident student counts for the purposes of calculating a municipality's ECS grant amount,⁸⁹ and intradistrict magnet schools are funded as part of the local or regional board of education's regular school district budget, which includes a mix of local, state, and federal funding and varies by town. Intradistrict magnet schools do not receive state magnet school operating grants or magnet school transportation grants.

School Construction

Intradistrict magnet school building projects developed for the purposes of increasing diversity are eligible to have up to 80 percent of the costs of school construction reimbursed by the State.^{90,J}

^J For a more detailed overview of school construction in Connecticut, please see: Connecticut School Finance Project. (2018). *Comparing Connecticut's School Construction Program*. New Haven, CT: Author. Retrieved from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/assets/uploads/files/Comparing-CTs-School-Construction-Program.pdf>.

Appendix

***Sheff v. O'Neill* Stipulated Agreements**

Since the 1996 Connecticut Supreme Court ruling in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case, further stipulated agreements have been mediated between the case's plaintiffs and the State. Stipulated agreements were reached between the parties in 2003, 2008, 2013, 2015, and 2020 in an effort to ensure the State of Connecticut adhered to the Court's 1996 ruling and made progress in its attempts to create racially integrated learning environments for students in Hartford.⁹¹

The stipulated agreements between the plaintiffs and the State of Connecticut put into place objectives that the State must achieve in terms of reducing the racial, ethnic, and economic isolation of Hartford students.⁹² Discussions between the State of Connecticut and the *Sheff* plaintiffs over the details of future stipulated agreements remain unresolved and the parties are currently in court to determine the future of the case and future integration efforts.

Figure 4 below summarizes the *Sheff* stipulations since the Connecticut Supreme Court ruling in 1996.

Figure 4

Summary of <i>Sheff</i> Stipulated Agreements	
Year of Stipulation	Summary of Goals and Changes in the Agreement
2003	The 2003 stipulation (known as the Phase I agreement) initiated the planning processes and goal measurements for the State to achieve. This stipulation also added provisions that required the State to spend \$45 million over four years to establish eight additional magnet schools in the Hartford area. Additionally, these provisions allowed for students from suburban towns in the <i>Sheff</i> region to attend interdistrict magnet schools once the required percentage of students from Hartford were enrolled, ^k and allowed for the suburban districts sending students to the magnet schools to be charged tuition for the cost of educating the students. Finally, the 2003 stipulated agreement required the State to increase the percentage of Hartford students attending integrated schools to 30 percent by 2007. ⁹³
2008	The 2008 <i>Sheff v. O'Neill</i> stipulation required the State to create the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) to oversee school choice options for the Hartford region. The goal for reduced isolation was for the State to meet 80 percent of the demand for a reduced-isolation setting. The stipulation also required the RSCO to develop a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) to set up yearly goals for achieving desegregation in the <i>Sheff</i> region and determine educational funding needs. Additionally, the five-year, Phase II agreement called for building more magnet schools in the Hartford suburbs and expanding the number of openings available for Hartford children through Project Choice (formerly Project Concern). ⁹⁴
April 2013	In April 2013, the parties in <i>Sheff v. O'Neill</i> adopted a one-year, court-ordered stipulation allowing the State an additional year to reach the 2012-13 goal of 41 percent of Hartford's minority students being in reduced-isolation settings. ⁹⁵
December 2013	In December 2013, the parties in <i>Sheff v. O'Neill</i> announced a one-year Phase III settlement, which increased the number of magnet school seats, expanded Open Choice, and allocated funds to strengthen a Hartford neighborhood "Lighthouse School." ⁹⁶
2015	The 2015 <i>Sheff v. O'Neill</i> stipulation added provisions that required the CSDE to provide, within available appropriations, the full per-pupil grant amounts and planned approved increases because of an expanded enrollment cap set by the legislature for the operators of interdistrict magnet schools in the <i>Sheff</i> region. The percentage of Hartford students in a reduced-isolation setting was increased to 47.5 percent. This stipulation further required the State to withhold operating grants from any Voluntary Interdistrict Program ^l whose percentage of racial minority students was greater than 75 percent of its enrollment in accordance with the <i>Sheff</i> CMP. ⁹⁷
2017	Hartford Superior Court Judge Marshall Berger ruled the State of Connecticut could not raise, for the 2017-18 school year, the percent of minority enrollment

^k According to Connecticut's General Statutes, interdistrict magnet schools in operation prior to July 1, 2005 cannot have the percentage of students in attendance from a single district exceed 80 percent of the magnet school's total enrollment. Schools in operation on or after July 1, 2005 cannot have the percentage of students in attendance from a single district exceed 75 percent of the magnet school's total enrollment. Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264f.

^l Voluntary interdistrict programs include technical high schools, vocational agricultural centers, charter schools, endowed private schools, designated high schools, the Open Choice Program, and magnet schools.

Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Public School Choice In Connecticut. Retrieved from <http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/School-Choice/CT-School-Choice/Public-School-Choice-in-Connecticut>.

Summary of Sheff Stipulated Agreements	
	<p>a <i>Sheff</i> magnet school may have for the school to be considered racially integrated.⁹⁸ Under the rules worked out for implementing the decision in <i>Sheff v. O'Neill</i>, a school is deemed desegregated if students who are racial minorities (specifically Black and Hispanic students) make up no more than 75 percent of the school's total enrollment. The State had planned to raise the limit to 80 percent, but the <i>Sheff</i> plaintiffs filed for an injunction, which was granted by Judge Berger.⁹⁹</p>
2020	<p>On January 10, 2020, the parties in the case agreed to a new stipulated agreement that runs through June 30, 2022 and provides a pathway for potentially ending the litigation and judicial oversight of the case. Among its many components, the stipulated agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates up to 1,052 new magnet school seats, including nearly 600 reserved for Hartford resident students; • Changes the Regional School Choice student assignment protocols so student lottery selection is based solely on socioeconomic status; • Provides additional state funding to diversify student bodies, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$1.1 million in funding for development of new magnet school themes; ○ \$800,000 over two years to offer academic and social support for Hartford students participating in the Open Choice program; ○ \$300,000 to incentivize suburban districts to increase the number of Open Choice seats they make available for Hartford students by 20 percent; • Simplifies the Regional School Choice application process to be more user-friendly and transparent for families; • Creates an Advisory Committee to review Sheff programs and make non-binding recommendations for improvement; and • Requires the Connecticut State Department of Education to develop a long-term, comprehensive school choice plan that helps ensure the stability, sustainability, and predictable and efficient operation of Sheff programs, as well as offers strategies for: providing a seat for every student who applies through the lottery, increasing teacher diversity, and addressing racial disparities in student discipline and academic achievement.¹⁰⁰

Interdistrict Magnet School Per-Pupil Tuition Amounts

Figure 5 below details the per-pupil tuition amounts charged to sending districts for individual interdistrict magnet schools.¹⁰¹

Figure 5¹⁰²

Per-Pupil Tuition Amounts Charged to Sending Districts, 2017-18 School Year		
Operator	School Name	K-12 Tuition
ACES	Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School (K-Grade 8)	\$4,565
ACES	Thomas Edison Middle School (Grades 6-8)	\$4,700
ACES	Educational Center for the Arts (Part-time) (Grades 9-12)	\$5,278
C.E.S.	Regional Center for the Arts (Part-time) (Grades 9-12)	\$2,600
C.E.S.	Six to Six Interdistrict Magnet School (PK4-Grade 8)	\$6,500
CREC	Glastonbury-East Hartford Elementary Magnet School (PK3-Grade 5)	\$3,600
CREC	Montessori Magnet School (PK3-Grade 6)	\$3,700
CREC	University of Hartford Magnet School (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,025
CREC	Metropolitan Learning Center (Grades 6-12)	\$4,230
CREC	Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	Discovery Academy (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	International Magnet School for Global Citizenship (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	Museum Academy (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	Reggio Magnet School of the Arts (PK3-Grade 5)	\$4,440
CREC	Two Rivers Magnet Middle (Grades 6-8)	\$4,440
CREC	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts (Grades 9-12 Part-time)	\$4,795
CREC	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School (Grades 6-8)	\$5,090
CREC	Greater Hartford Academy of Math & Science (Grades 11-12 Part-time)	\$5,270
CREC	Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts (Grades 9-12)	\$5,280
CREC	Public Safety Academy (Grades 7-12)	\$5,300
CREC	Academy of Science & Innovation, Medical Profession & Teacher Preparation (Grades 6-12)	\$5,435
CREC	Academy of Aerospace & Engineering (Grades 6-12)	\$5,500
EASTCONN	Quinebaug Valley Middle College Magnet (Grades 9-12)	\$5,050
EASTCONN	Arts at the Capitol Theater (Grades 9-12)	\$6,650
LEARN	Dual Language Arts Academy (Grades 6-8)	\$2,652
LEARN	Regional Multicultural Magnet (K-Grade 5)	\$2,999
LEARN	The Friendship School (PK3-Grade K)	\$3,960
LEARN	Marine Science Magnet HS of Southeast CT (Grades 9-12)	\$5,980
LEARN	Three Rivers Middle College (Grades 11-12)	\$5,980
Goodwin College/LEARN	Conn. River Academy (Grades 9-12)	\$5,450
Goodwin College/LEARN	Riverside Magnet School, Goodwin Early Childhood (PK3-Grade 3)	\$5,450
Danbury Public Schools	Western Connecticut Academy for International Studies (K-Grade 5)	\$1,900
Hartford Public Schools	Great Path Academy at Manchester CC (Grades 9-12)	\$3,465
New London Public Schools	Science and Technology of SE CT (Grades 6-7 and Grade 9-12)	\$3,000
New London Public Schools	Visual and Performing Arts Magnet (Grades 6-7)	\$3,000
New London Public Schools	Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School (K-Grade 5)	\$3,000
New London Public Schools	Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School (K-Grade 5)	\$3,000
Windham Public Schools	Charles Barrows STEM Academy (K-Grade 8)	\$4,600

Magnet School Enrollment by Operator and Operator Type

Figure 6 below details the operators and types of operators for Connecticut's interdistrict and intradistrict magnet schools. The chart below also shows the number of magnet schools for each operator and the number of students enrolled by type of magnet school for a given operator.

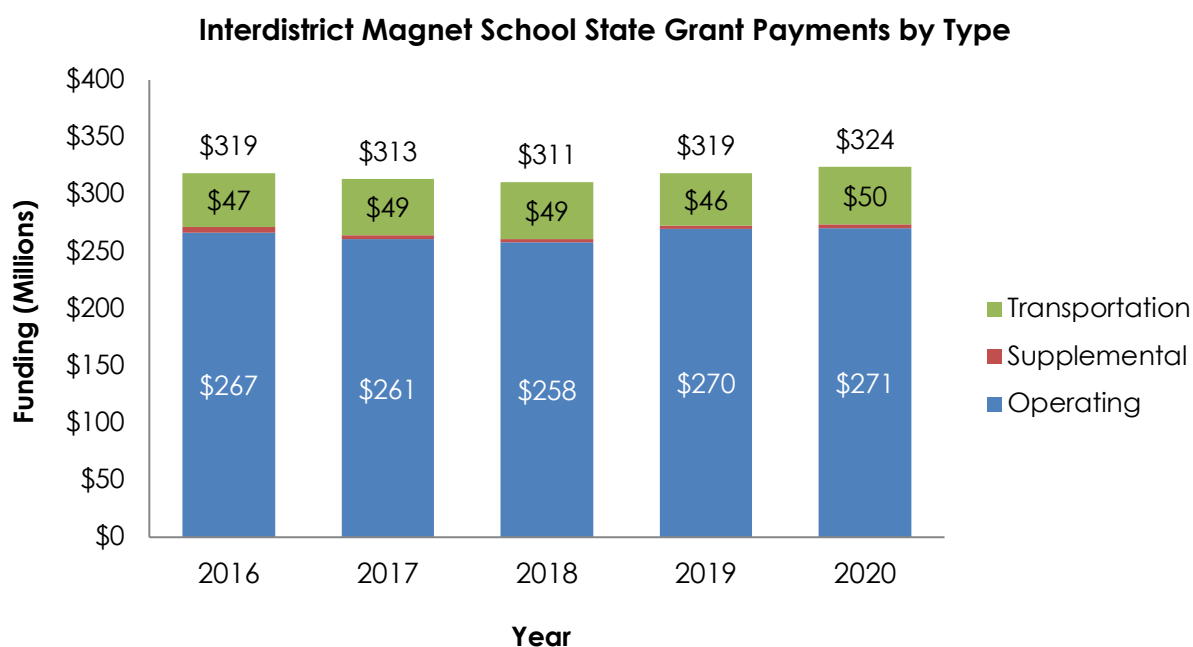
Figure 6¹⁰³

Magnet School Enrollment by School Type and Operator Type, 2019-20 School Year					
Operator	Operator Type	Interdistrict Schools	Intradistrict Schools	Interdistrict Enrollment	Intradistrict Enrollment
ACES	RESC	3	0	1,516	0
C.E.S.	RESC	2	0	630	0
CREC	RESC	17	0	8,601	0
EASTCONN	RESC	2	0	326	0
LEARN	RESC	5	0	1,495	0
Goodwin College/LEARN	RESC	2	0	957	0
Bloomfield Public Schools	Host District	2	0	499	0
Bridgeport Public Schools	Host District	4	4	1,683	1,883
Danbury Public Schools	Host District	1	1	365	691
East Hartford Public Schools	Host District	1	1	182	333
East Haven Public Schools	Host District	0	1	0	306
Greenwich Public Schools	Host District	0	3	0	1368
Groton Public Schools	Host District	0	2	0	857
Hartford Public Schools	Host District	18	0	8,398	0
New Haven Public Schools	Host District	16	8	7,661	3,723
New London Public Schools	Host District	4	0	1,793	0
Norwalk Public Schools	Host District	1	3	277	1,278
Norwich Public Schools	Host District	0	4	0	1,694
Stamford Public Schools	Host District	3	4	1,992	2,517
Stratford Public Schools	Host District	0	2	0	720
Waterbury Public Schools	Host District	4	0	2,026	0
West Hartford Public Schools	Host District	0	2	0	880
Windham Public Schools	Host District	1	0	554	0
Total	N/A	86	33	38,955	16,250

Interdistrict Magnet School State Grant Payments by Type

Figure 7 below details the total state grant expenditure for magnet school programs per grant type per year. The total state expenditure on magnet school programs increased by approximately two percent from 2016 to 2020 while state spending remained relatively constant from 2016 to 2019. From 2016 to 2020, spending on operating grants increased by approximately one percent and spending on transportation grants increased by approximately six percent. Connecticut's biennial state budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 reallocates \$30,085,635 from Magnet Schools, \$13,864,786 from the Open Choice program, and \$800,000 from the *Sheff* Settlement line items to support transportation in the *Sheff* region under the new *Sheff* Transportation line item, which is funded at \$44,750,421 in fiscal year 2020 and \$45,781,798 in fiscal year 2021.¹⁰⁴ There are no ECS funds included in these grants.

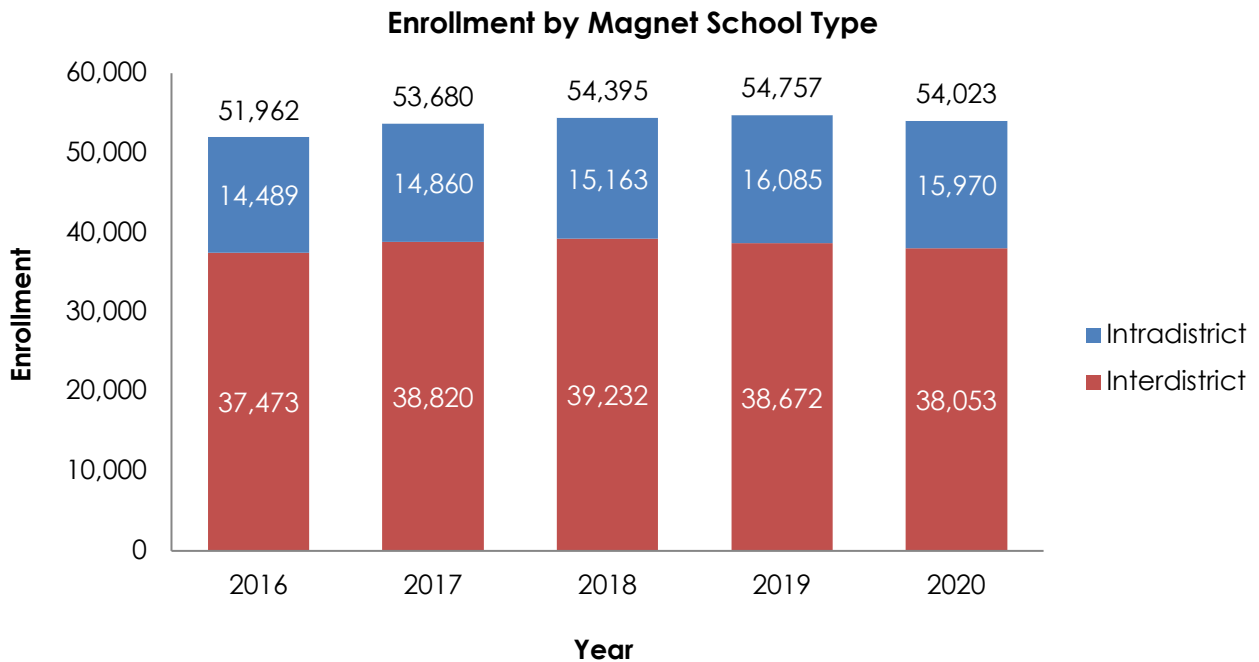
Figure 7¹⁰⁵



Enrollment by Magnet School Type

Figure 8 below details the number of students enrolled in interdistrict and intradistrict magnet schools per year. The number of students attending interdistrict and intradistrict magnet schools increased from 2016 to 2020 with total enrollment increasing by approximately four percent. Specifically, interdistrict enrollment increased by approximately two percent and intradistrict enrollment increased by approximately 10 percent.

Figure 8¹⁰⁶



Student Demographics

For the 2019-20 school, 76 percent of the students attending Connecticut's magnet schools were identified as BIPOC,^M while 24 percent were identified as White.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, 13 percent of magnet school students required special education services; 10 percent were identified as English Learners; and 61 percent were classified as low-income due to their eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Below are the totals and percentages of magnet school students by demographic compared to the demographics of all of Connecticut's 527,829 public school students.

Figure 9: Magnet School Demographics Compared to All Connecticut Public School Students, 2019-20¹⁰⁸

Demographic	Total Magnet Students	Magnet School Percentage	Total Public School Students	State Percentage
White	13,187	24%	269,789	51%
BIPOC	41,850	76%	258,040	49%
Special Education	7,099	13%	84,398	16%
English Learner	5,285	10%	43,479	8%
Low-Income	33,209	61%	228,535	43%

^M BIPOC is an acronym that stands for "Black, Indigenous, People of Color." In this report, BIPOC is used to represent students who, according to Connecticut State Department of Education data, identify as: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino of any race; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; or two or more races.

Endnotes

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- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
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- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*
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