

CONNECTICUT SCHOOL FINANCE PROJECT

FAQs: UNIFIED EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA

Issue Summary

While the Connecticut General Assembly has taken steps toward equitably funding Connecticut's public school students, Connecticut still faces several obstacles to implementing and maintaining a fully equitable school finance system. One of these obstacles is that Connecticut does not have a consistent and uniform method for determining how much state support it will provide for the education of students attending public schools.

Rather, Connecticut continues to use more than 10 different education funding formulas to distribute state education funding to public schools. These formulas differ based on where a school is located and what type of school it is (local district, magnet, charter, etc.). Only one of these formulas takes student and community needs fully into consideration, with the remaining formulas being inconsistent and arbitrary.

Q: How does the State of Connecticut distribute education funding to public schools?

A: Connecticut's legislature has established more than 10 different funding formulas to determine how much money public schools should receive. The formula that distributes funding to local public school districts is called the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula, which the state legislature has established to distribute approximately \$2 billion in state education funding to local public school districts.¹ In addition to ECS formula, Connecticut has different funding formulas for each "type" of school choice program. In addition to the ECS formula, Connecticut uses five different formulas for magnet schools, two different formulas for charter schools, and individual formulas for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, agriscience programs, and the Open Choice program.²

Q: What are the state funding formulas for each type of public school or program?

A: The formula used to determine state education funding for a public school is based on a number of factors including the type of school, the location of the school, the school's operator, and whether the school is part of the State of Connecticut's response to the 1996 Connecticut Supreme Court ruling in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* court case related to reducing racial segregation and isolation in the Hartford region.³ Below is a table detailing the formulas currently used to distribute state education funding to Connecticut's public schools.⁴

Type of School or Program	State Per-pupil Operating Grant
Local Public School	Varies based on ECS formula ⁵
State Charter School	\$11,250 per student ⁶
Local Charter School	\$3,000 per student ⁷
Connecticut Technical High Schools	Schools are fully state funded by state grant ⁸
Regional Agricultural Centers	\$4,200 per student ⁹
Hartford Host Magnet Schools (under Sheff) ¹⁰	\$13,315 for each non-Hartford student ¹¹
Regional Education Service Center (RESC) - operated Sheff magnet School ¹²	\$8,058– \$10,652 per student ¹³
RESC-operated non-Sheff magnet school that began operations prior to 2008 (Thomas Edison Magnet School)	\$8,344 per student ¹⁴
Non-Sheff RESC magnet school enrolling less than 55% of students from one town	\$8,058 per student ¹⁵
Non-Sheff RESC magnet school enrolling 55% or more of students from one town (other than Edison)	\$7,227 for each student from outside the host town; \$3,060 for each student from the dominant town ¹⁶
Open Choice program	\$3,000 – \$8,000 per student ¹⁷

Q: Why does Connecticut need a unified funding formula?

A: While the ECS formula takes student and community needs into account and provides additional resources for students who are low-income or English Learners, this is not the case for Connecticut's other school funding formulas. These formulas continue to not be based on student and community needs, and are instead largely arbitrary. Additionally, these 10 different formulas interact with funding for local and regional school districts in disparate ways, distorting the equity created by the ECS formula. A unified funding formula for all students that is based on individual student needs, not type of school, would help Connecticut better address educational inequities and improve the state's complex and disjointed school finance system.

¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264h.

² 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>.

³ After the 1996 Connecticut Supreme Court ruling in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, the State of Connecticut established interdistrict magnet schools in the Hartford region (Hartford and surrounding towns) to help the State comply with the Connecticut Supreme Court's findings and related 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).

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

⁴ For more information, visit www.ctschoolfinance.org/obstacles-to-equity/formulas.

⁵ Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).

⁶ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-66ee.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-95.

⁹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, §§ 10-64-65.

¹⁰ A Hartford magnet host school is one that is administrated by Hartford Public Schools but open to students outside of the City of Hartford.

¹¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264l, as amended by Conn. Acts 19-117 § 270.

¹² A Regional Education Service Center (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.

¹³ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-264l, as amended by Conn. Acts 19-117 § 270.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-2666aa.