



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker *CRJ*

DATE: November 29, 2021

SUBJECT: Student recruitment for Choice programs and specialized schools

The Connecticut State Department of Education (“CSDE” or the “Department”) is issuing this correspondence to remind districts of their legal obligation to provide “full access” to district students for purposes of recruitment to specialized public schools and school choice programs.¹ As indicated in the attached 2019 communication from Commissioner Cardona, we all agree that students deserve to have access to information and resources about available educational options that will help them to grow and thrive as learners and as human beings. The Department’s specific expectations around this requirement are outlined more fully in the attached letter from Commissioner Cardona, although several points are worth emphasizing here.

First, Connecticut law requires that boards of education provide “full access” to specialized schools for purposes of non-athletic recruitment of students. It is expected that school representatives be able to communicate with prospective students and families, which ordinarily would occur through an in-person presentation. However, the Department understands that the evolving pandemic presents unique challenges to schools and districts, and recognizes that a remote option may be preferable as schools and districts continue to rely on safety protocols to prevent the spread of COVID. Thus, for the duration of the pandemic, districts must give specialized school representatives opportunities to either enter district buildings and access students to provide in-person information within appropriate schedules during and after school hours or afford such representatives access to students and their families for a remote experience.

As noted, districts can and should provide information to prospective students and families through avenues that do not require entry into school buildings. For example, school districts can hold virtual fairs via the internet to provide specialized schools with access to students who may wish to attend them. In addition, districts can choose to arrange for “live chats” that would allow representatives from specialized schools to communicate with prospective students and families virtually, such as through a computer or via a mobile device. Districts may also choose to provide students with written materials, such as brochures and informational handouts, as a means of providing background information about these opportunities with some other form of direct access as well. These are just a few examples of the ways in which districts can connect

¹ The term “specialized schools” is used here to refer to the collection of interdistrict educational opportunities pertinent here, which include the following: technical education and career schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools and interdistrict student attendance programs.

students and families with specialized school representatives. We encourage you to develop additional innovative ways to inform families of the options available to them.

In addition to affording access to specialized schools for purposes of informing prospective students of their educational options, school districts also must inform students and parents of middle and high school students of the availability of these programs. Districts can comply with this requirement through standard written and electronic communications and/or through in-person or virtual presentations with students and families.

Finally, the law requires that districts provide “information relating to” these specialized schools “on the board’s web site.” Districts can comply with this requirement by providing general information about each of the programs on the district website along with a link to each of these specialized programs as set forth below:

- Interdistrict magnet schools and Open Choice: www.choiceeducation.org
- Technical education and career schools: <https://www.cttech.org/admissions/ctecs-applications/>
- Regional agricultural science and technology education centers: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE>


Thank you in advance for your efforts to ensure that students are aware of these valuable opportunities available to students that are an important part of the educational landscape in Connecticut. If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact CSDE staff attorney Matthew Venhorst at matthew.venhorst@ct.gov. Thank you.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: December 2, 2019

SUBJECT: Student Recruitment for Choice Programs

School and district representatives, including those from the interdistrict magnet schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, Open Choice districts, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), and charter schools, have begun their recruitment period for the 2020-21 school year. Your school counselors have likely been contacted by staff members to arrange for visits to meet with your students and parents/guardians.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is reaching out to remind you of the importance of ensuring that students and families become aware and gain knowledge of the full range of public school and choice program options available, so they may determine the appropriate path for each student to be successful. In the spirit of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-220d, “full access” should allow representatives to communicate with and/or make presentations to students and their families who are eligible and interested in participation in one of the programs mentioned above.

The CSDE encourages you to provide the recruitment teams with student directory information, as is appropriate within the state and federal standards for student privacy. While mailings or distribution of printed information does not satisfy the condition of full access, districts have various options to allow choice programs a chance to interact with resident students and families. For example, your district may consider coordinating access to all choice programs at a school fair, or accessibility in shared spaces during the school day without disrupting the daily educational programming.

We all agree that our students deserve full access to the information about all available programs that will best fuel their passion for success. Therefore, the CSDE encourages choice programs and districts to work cooperatively to ensure that the right to full access is balanced with the equally important goal of limiting disruption to our students’ core programming. The CSDE further reminds choice programs of their responsibility to ensure students have access to their educational programming, regardless of a child’s potential need for special education resources, accommodations, English Learner needs, or larger growth potential. These responsibilities should be clearly communicated by choice program representatives with students and families during the recruitment process.

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Families interested in Regional School Choice options, such as interdistrict magnet schools and Open Choice programming should be encouraged to visit choiceeducation.org to learn about times and locations of the fairs and other information sessions. Families interested in CTECS will find information at <http://www.cttech.org/>. Information related to regional science and technology education is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Career-and-Technical-Education/ASTE/Agricultural-Science-and-Technology-Education>.

If you have any questions related generally to access of choice program recruiting, please contact Jessa Mirtle, Legal Director, CSDE at (860) 713-6517 or jessa.mirtle@ct.gov; questions specific to CTECS should be directed to Susan Scott, Legal Director, at the CTECS at 860-807-2181 or susan.scott@ct.gov.

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