



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Series: 2010-2011
Circular Letter: C-11

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: George A. Coleman, Acting Commissioner of Education

DATE: April 10, 2011

SUBJECT: Tuition Payments for Part-time Interdistrict Magnet Programs

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has recently received numerous inquiries regarding district responsibility for tuition costs associated with student enrollment in part-time interdistrict magnet programs operated by a regional educational service center (RESC). The purpose of this circular letter is to clarify district responsibility for these tuition costs.

The general assembly recently reaffirmed its expectation that a sending school district pay the tuition costs associated with student enrollment in an interdistrict magnet school operated by a RESC by enacting Section 42 of P.A. 07-3 of the June Special Session, *An Act Concerning Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Education*. That section is codified as Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-264l(k) and provides, in relevant part, as follows:

“ . . . For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, and each fiscal year thereafter, any tuition charged to a local or regional board of education by a regional educational service center operating an interdistrict magnet school for any student enrolled in such interdistrict magnet school shall be in an amount equal to the difference between (i) the average per pupil expenditure of the magnet school for the prior fiscal year, and (ii) the amount of any per pupil state subsidy calculated under subsection (c) of this section plus any revenue from other sources calculated on a per pupil basis. If any such board of education fails to pay such tuition, the commissioner may withhold from such board's town or towns a sum payable under section 10-262i in an amount not to exceed the amount of the unpaid tuition to the magnet school and pay such money to the fiscal agent for the magnet school as a supplementary grant for the operation of the interdistrict magnet school program.”

The parent choice language of C.G.S. Section 10-264l(j) similarly requires a sending district to pay tuition costs associated with resident students' enrollment in an interdistrict magnet program on the same basis as participating districts. That section provides, in relevant part:

“ . . . The local or regional board of education otherwise responsible for educating such student shall contribute funds to support the operation of the interdistrict magnet school in an amount equal to the per student tuition, if any, charged to participating districts.”

Circular Letter: C-11

April 10, 2011

Page 2

For purposes of the tuition requirement and other magnet school provisions of C.G.S. Section 10-264l, the statute defines an interdistrict magnet school program as a “program which (i) supports racial, ethnic and economic diversity, (ii) offers a special and high quality curriculum, and (iii) requires students who are enrolled to attend at least half-time.” Based on this plain language, part-time programs fall within the magnet school provisions, including the provisions regarding tuition, as long as the program operates at least half the time.

Notwithstanding the statutory language, some sending districts have charged the tuition costs associated with a part-time, partial tuition interdistrict arts magnet school to the parents of students attending those programs. The statute, however, does not provide any basis for this exception to district responsibility for tuition costs. The statute requires the sending district to pay tuition costs for all interdistrict programs operated by a RESC, which include part-time programs that operate at least half the time. There is no limiting language that exempts a district from this responsibility based on the program theme. Accordingly, it is expected that districts will not charge back to parents those tuition costs incurred as a result of student enrollment in any part-time interdistrict magnet programs that operate at least half the time, regardless of theme.

Please contact Mark Linabury, Chief, Bureau of Choice Programs, at 860-713-6556 or by e-mail at mark.linabury@ct.gov or William Magnotta, Magnet Schools Program Manager, at 860-713-6575 or by e-mail at william.magnotta@ct.gov, if you have further questions.

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