Department of Education

Agency Description

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education, which is responsible for implementing the educational interests of the state from preschool through grade 12.

The State Board of Education provides leadership and promotes the improvement of education in the state. Specific functions carried out by the Department of Education include leadership and communication with the state’s 196 school districts, research, planning, administrator and teacher evaluation and support, educational technology (including telecommunications), the publishing of guides to curriculum development and other technical assistance materials, the presentation of workshops, and assessment.

*An Act Concerning Educational Reform*

The Department of Education is committed to being a national leader in narrowing the achievement gap and creating academic excellence for all students. Public Act No. 12-116, *AN ACT* *CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL REFORM,* was enacted in 2012 which included several key measures aimed at creating a system focused on preparing students for success in college and careers and on closing a worst-in-the-nation achievement gap.

The department, through technical support and funding, helps to ensure equal educational opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students – 550,354 (pre-kindergarten through grade 12). The State Board and Department of Education protect the educational interests of the state by providing leadership and service to the 196 school districts and to the teacher preparation programs at Connecticut’s public and private higher education institutions.

Included among the department’s many partners are parent and teacher groups; the six regional educational service centers; nonpublic schools; public and independent colleges and universities; and the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services and Correction.

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) is the state’s largest secondary school system serving over 10,700 high school students and 440 adult learners. The CTHSS was overseen by the State Board of Education as a division of SDE and effective July 1, 2012, in accordance with Public Act 12-116, a new 11-member Connecticut Technical High School System Board was created. The new board includes members from education and industry as well as the commissioners from the Department of Labor and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

***The programs that support early childhood in Connecticut are recommended for transfer to and consolidation within the new Office of Early Childhood in the Governor’s budget as part of his proposal to restructure and transform state government.***

Basic School Program

## Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-4, 10-4a; 10-14n; 10-54, 10-97, 10-266m, 10-266ee, 10-273a, 10-277, 10-281; 10-262 through 10-262i; 10-217a.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

To ensure that every child in Connecticut has an equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences. To ensure that the state’s public schools offer a planned, ongoing and systematic program of instruction that guarantees a breadth and depth of curriculum provided by competent professionals in a safe and supportive school setting.

## Program Description

The primary purpose of this program is to ensure that each of Connecticut’s 554,732 public school children, of whom 40.5 percent are minority, has an equal opportunity to receive a suitable and high-quality program of educational experiences. The department provides significant support to local education agencies for this purpose through various grant programs and technical assistance.

While there is a mandate to provide suitable educational programming, the availability of local resources to accomplish this task is anything but uniform. The disparities in local tax bases and personal income place many communities at a significant disadvantage in financing public schools. To compensate for these differences, the state grant formulas in the basic school program group are designed specifically to distribute more funds to the towns with the greatest need.

The Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant accounts for more than two-thirds of the department’s general fund appropriation. The primary components of the ECS grant are the foundation spending level per student; the “need student” count of each town, which adds weighting based on poverty and limited English; the wealth of the town determined by its tax base and the income of its residents, and a state-guaranteed wealth level. In this manner, the ECS formula equalizes each town’s ability to finance school programs at the foundation level with a comparable tax effort.

Other basic program grants with equalizing formulas include public and nonpublic school transportation, school construction (funded through the capital budget), and nonpublic health services (more than 65,000 children attend nonpublic schools). Each of these programs has its own statutorily set scale of reimbursement rates, which assigns the highest rates to the neediest districts and the lowest rates to the most affluent. Combined, these programs compose about 18 percent of total department funding (general funds and bond funds), with school construction responsible for over 90 percent of the combined amount.

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) is administered statewide to students in grades 3 through 8 to measure their performance in mathematics, writing and reading. About 250,000 students take the tests each year. Science testing was added in 2008 for students in grades 5 and 8.

The Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) is administered annually to all students in grade 10 (about 45,000).  The CAPT assesses students in the areas of mathematics, science, and reading and writing across the disciplines.  Students who meet or exceed these standards receive certification of mastery on their high school transcripts.  Students who do not meet the standards in one or more areas may voluntarily retake those portions of the test in grade 11 and/or grade 12.

Dedicated Special Education Resources

## Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-76a through 10-76s, 10-253 and 10-262f through 10-262j.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

To assure that each eligible child with a disability receives a free, appropriate public education. The state provides training and technical assistance to localities, conducts oversight activities to ensure compliance with federal and state requirements and distributes grants to support local special education and support services for students with disabilities.

## Program Description

Towns receive reimbursement for special education costs through the Excess Cost grant and through funding from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For extraordinary special education costs, towns are paid on a current basis.

For the most current year of which audited data is available (2008-09), a total of $1.72 billion was spent on the provision of special education and related services to students with disabilities. This represents 21.7 percent of the total expenditures for education.

Equal EducationAL Opportunity

## Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-215, 10-215a through 10-215c, 10-266w; 10-74c, 10-76t through 10-76x; 10-17a through 10-17j; 10-4 and 10-4a, 10-265f, 10-265g, 10-266p through 10-266u; 10-74d, 10-266aa, 10-266bb, 10-276b; 10-264l; 10-16n; 10-40; 10-66aa; 10-16x; 10-16o through 10-16u; 10-19m through 10-19p; 10-66a through 10-66n; 10-245, 10-245a and 10-215b.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

To provide quality early childhood programs, particularly when families cannot afford preschool programs; and to ensure that young mothers and fathers have access to a suitable educational program while fulfilling their obligations to their young children. To increase learning capability by providing at least one balanced meal per day to those students who would not otherwise receive adequate daily nutrition. To improve students’ English proficiency and to assist local school districts with the extra costs incurred when serving students who have limited English proficiency. To ensure that the state’s public school instructional program is adequate to enable students to meet expectations as defined by state and national measures. To meet the requirements of the stipulated agreement under *Sheff v. O’Neill*.

In order to improve the effectiveness of teachers and teaching, the state continually reviews and revises the certification and beginning teacher induction process to ensure that prospective teachers have requisite job-related competencies.

## Program Description

*Nutrition Programs* provide healthy breakfasts, lunches and/or snacks to children in a number of ways. Variable prices allow children from low-income families to purchase reduced-price meals or receive free meals.

School Readiness Programs for Children 3 to 5 provide early education and care to eligible children. The Department of Education and Department of Social Services issue grants to increase slot availability in priority school districts and in some towns with either a priority school or low wealth ranking. The department also funds enhanced quality in participating grant programs.

The Young Parents Program allows teenage parents to continue their education, including courses on parenting skills, while providing school-based day care for their children.

The Priority School District (PSD) grant program assists certain districts in improving student achievement and enhancing educational opportunities.  The focus is on improving educational programs, providing early childhood education or early reading intervention programs.  Priority is also given to the development or expansion of extended day kindergarten programs.

Bilingual Education Grants are distributed to local school districts in recognition of the extra costs associated with educating pupils with language barriers. Districts required to offer bilingual education are those with 20 or more pupils in a given school from a single non-English speaking background.

Interdistrict Grant Programs provide funding for interdistrict programs that increase student achievement and reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation while also promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. It is a highly successful program, with more than 47,789 students participating in the 2011-12 school year.

Interdistrict Magnet School Grants are distributed to magnet schools which support racial, ethnic and economic diversity and offer a unique, high-quality curriculum.

College and Career readiness

## Statutory Reference

C. G. S. Sections 10-5, 10-67 through 10-73c, 10-64 through 10-66; Sections 10-20a through 10-20f.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

## To ensure that every student graduates and receives a diploma indicating that they are college and career ready. To provide a continuum of secondary school activities developed under Career and Technical Education and documented in the Student Success Plan (SSP) that places all students on a trajectory leading to post-secondary education and careers. To provide leadership in the development of these activities, implemented in the context of a personal learning plan, which may also lead to the attainment of the Connecticut Career Certificate (CCC); these activities include: rigorous academic courses, guided career development and structured work-based learning aligned to the 21st Century global workplace. To increase the literacy levels of the adult population by ensuring accessibility to high-quality adult education programs, including secondary school completion, family literacy, citizenship, English as a Second Language, and workplace readiness. To increase the number of Connecticut adults who have the basic skills to become college and career ready and to promote economic self-sufficiency.

## Program Description

The School to Career Program, now aligned under Connecticut’s Career and Technical Education/ Career Pathways Program*,* gives students the academic, technical and employability skills needed for success in higher education and the workplace. It allows all students to explore a range of post secondary education and career options, and to acquire specific knowledge and experience in one (or more) of the sixteen nationally-recognized career clusters.

Career and Technical Education Programsoffered by local and regional boards of education and the community colleges under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 prepare students with the college and career readiness skills required for success in post-secondary education and careers. Academic attainment, technical skill attainment, graduation rate, and placement in employment, postsecondary education and the military on students who participate in career and technical education programs are annual federal reporting requirements.

The State Vocational Agriculture Grants assist local or regional school districts operating a vocational agriculture center through reimbursements of about $1,800 to $2,200 per agriculture student.

Local School District Adult Education classes and activities, supported by federal, state and local funds, provide learning opportunities in citizenship, English for the limited English proficient and elementary and secondary school completion. State grants, based on relative town wealth, range from 0 to 65 percent of annual expenditures. Annually, over 26,000 individuals statewide enroll in about 65,000 mandated adult education classes.

High School Diplomas are awarded to those adults who demonstrate their competence in a variety of subject areas on the General Educational Development (GED) examination to a level considered equivalent to that of a high school graduate. High school diplomas are also awarded to adults who complete a high school credit diploma program or an external diploma program. Annually, over 2,000 individuals are awarded State High School Diplomas for passing the General Educational Development (GED) Tests. Local adult education diplomas are awarded to nearly 1,600 individuals for completing the Adult High School Credit Diploma program and to around over 500 individuals for completing the National External Diploma Program.

Connecticut Technical HIGH SchooLs

## Statutory Reference

C. G. S. Sections 10-15d, and 10-95 through 10-99.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) is committed to providing quality and challenging academic and technical programs. Its mission is to ensure that students are successful in the workplace, take advantage of postsecondary educational opportunities, and secure advanced apprenticeship training that prepare them for the 21st century workplace. Therefore, the CTHSS has developed a challenging program of study for each of the 36 technical programs (secondary and adult). These areas include: construction, manufacturing, electronics, information technology, culinary arts, health tech, and other service areas. Each program of study meets or exceeds state‐mandated graduation requirements and prepares students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills that they require as reflected in Connecticut’s Common Core of Learning.

## Program Description

The 16 schools serve over 10,700 high school students of which 47 percent are racially diverse and 38 percent are female. The high school experience includes extracurricular activities, including National Honor Society, male and female varsity sports and numerous clubs and community service organizations. About 59 percent of CTHSS graduates go on to additional education and another 35 percent are either employed or in the military. Additionally, the system serves over 440 adult students in evening courses that lead to apprenticeships and trade and technology skills.

Management Services

## Statutory Reference

C.G.S. Sections 10-3a, 10-4 and 10-292o.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

To promote the State Board of Education’s goals and policies efficiently and effectively by providing instructional leadership and a coordinated administrative direction.

## Program Description

The primary purpose of this program is to provide for the efficient and effective administration, coordination and supervision of the activities of the Department that have been defined by the State Board of Education through its five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education. In addition, funds are received for the continuation of major pass-through grants and the American School for the Deaf.

Teacher Preparation, Professional and Curriculum Development

## Statutory Reference

C. G. S. Section 10-14m through 10-14r; 10-145 through 10-146c; 10-155 through 10-155gg; 10-220a.

## Statement of Need and Program Objectives:

To help districts ensure that high-quality educators are appropriately prepared to teach Connecticut’s public school students. To identify educational needs early enough to allow students to receive extra help and, at the same time, to implement desirable changes to curriculum in order to enrich future students’ learning.

## Program Description

The state, in collaboration with advisory groups, continually reviews and revises the teacher preparation approval and certification process to ensure that prospective teachers have requisite job-related competencies, subject knowledge and teaching skills under the proposed new teacher certification requirements.  Additionally, the state is changing the induction process for beginning teachers by requiring them to be mentored for a two-year period while they successfully complete five professional growth modules in classroom management, planning, instruction, assessment of learning and professional responsibility.  Initiatives include cooperative efforts with Connecticut’s 16 (plus three alternate routes to initial certification) teacher preparation programs; an entrance examination for prospective teachers to assess essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics; and subject matter knowledge and successful completion of the state’s newly developed Teacher Education And Mentoring (TEAM) Program. Additionally, the state is currently piloting a newly designed educator evaluation system that will be implemented by all districts beginning in school year 2013-2014 in which teacher performance and practice and student outcomes are included in the annual evaluation of individual educators.  Teacher recruitment and retention is also a focus of the CSDE.