

VII.I.

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

To Be Proposed:
June 5, 2024

Resolved, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Sections 10-226a and 10-226b of the Connecticut General Statutes, accepts the Racial Imbalance Report for the 2023-24 school year.

Approved by a vote of _____ this fifth day of June, Two Thousand Twenty-four.

Signed: _____
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

To: State Board of Education

From: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

Date: June 5, 2024

Subject: Receipt of Racial Imbalance Report

Executive Summary

Introduction

Attached is the Racial Imbalance Report for the 2023-24 school year,¹ attached as Exhibit A, which lists the schools that are racially imbalanced and the schools that have impending imbalance pursuant to Section 10-226e-1, *et seq.* of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (Regulations,) attached as Exhibit B. The Performance Office compiled the report based on school enrollments as of October 1, 2023.

Under Connecticut law, racial imbalance exists when the proportion of students of color² for any school exceeds twenty-five percentage points more than the comparable proportion for the school district. For all grades of a given school, the total number of students of color enrolled in the same grades throughout the school district is divided by the districtwide total student enrollment in such grades, and the resulting percentage is the comparable proportion for the school district. If a school is identified as racially imbalanced, the board of education must file a plan to correct the imbalance with the State Board of Education (SBE). Impending racial imbalance exists when the proportion for a school falls outside a range from fifteen percentage points less to fifteen percentage points more than the comparable proportion for the school district.

Section 10-226e-3 of the Regulations requires the SBE to provide notice to any board of education having jurisdiction over one or more schools that the SBE has determined to be racially

¹ The attached Racial Imbalance Report is an excerpt (pages 1 through 3) of the full report that lists each school in the state, excluding the “unique schools” defined by the Regulations as “an interdistrict or intradistrict magnet, local or state charter, lighthouse, regional vocational agriculture, regional vocational-technical, alternative, or special education school or other school designated by the Commissioner which offers specialized programs or provides for the voluntary enrollment of students.”

² The statute and regulations use the term “minority students.” This report shall use the term “students of color” in lieu of “minority students.”

imbalanced. However, Senate Bill 154³ amended Section 10-226b(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) to remove such notification requirement until July 1, 2025. Without such notice, school districts will not be required to take action to correct a school's racial imbalance.

Racially Imbalanced Schools – New

This year there are no schools newly identified with racial imbalance.

Racially Imbalanced Schools – Continuing Imbalance

The schools that continue to be racially imbalanced this year are:

- New Lebanon School in Greenwich
- Hamilton Avenue School in Greenwich
- McKinley School in Fairfield
- Charter Oak Academy in West Hartford

The Legislation Policy and Development Committee (LPDC) of the SBE has met with the boards of education with racially imbalanced schools to provide an update on their progress with implementing their plans. Below is a summary of the districts' reports to the LPDC.

New Lebanon School (identified in 2006) and Hamilton Avenue School (identified in 1999) in Greenwich continue to be racially imbalanced. The SBE approved the Greenwich Board of Education's (GBOE) amendment to its plan on July 9, 2014. Pursuant to this amended plan, the GBOE expanded the New Lebanon School with a school construction project, which opened in February 2019. The GBOE extended the deadline for magnet applications and invested in an enhanced marketing plan, which increased the number of applications for the 2019-20 school year. With respect to Hamilton Avenue School, the GBOE implemented a new STEM theme during the 2015-16 school year. The GBOE was in the process of conducting an audit of its plan, programs, and initiatives to determine whether an amendment to the Racial Imbalance Plan would be appropriate.

The GBOE met with the LPDC in January and with the CSBE in April to discuss the district's plan to address the imbalances. The Board Chair and the Superintendent noted the community's concerns regarding heavy traffic and long bus rides involved in transporting elementary students to different attendance zones in the district. They also discussed the town's plans to develop affordable housing that could allow families to live in other school attendance zones in the town. Noting the lack of a cohesive plan to address the racial imbalance at the schools as well as the impending imbalances at other elementary schools, the CSBE required the GBOE to submit an amendment to its plan within 120 days, or by August 3, 2024. The GBOE has been informed that such submission will not be required until 2025.

³ As of the submission date of this report, the Public Act number was not yet assigned.

In November 2022, the SBE conditionally approved the Fairfield Board of Education's (FBOE) amendment to its plan contingent upon the FBOE providing updates to the Commissioner of Education every three months. The FBOE planned to implement a redistricting plan to (1) address the disparity in building utilization, and (2) to address the disparity in the racial composition of the elementary schools, including McKinley. However, due to community opposition to redistricting, the FBOE decided not to implement this plan. At the CSBE meeting on March 6, 2024, the CSBE required the FBOE to submit an amendment to its plan within 120 days, or by July 3, 2024. The FBOE has been informed that such submission will not be required until 2025.

At its meeting on October 4, 2023, the LPDC met with the Superintendent of West Hartford Public Schools to discuss its progress in reducing the racial imbalance at Charter Oak International Academy (Charter Oak). Charter Oak was in impending imbalance in 2022, but it was again racially imbalanced in 2023. The West Hartford Board of Education expanded Charter Oak through a school construction project to allow more students outside the school's attendance zone to enroll in the magnet program. As a result of this expansion, the absolute imbalance at Charter Oak decreased for several years, but it is imbalanced again for a second year. The district has focused on new and enhanced programming to attract magnet students and improve diversity. It also has engaged in an annual outreach campaign to attract applicants.

The Hamden Board of Education (HBOE) currently has a racial imbalance plan in place for Church Street School. Although the school was not on the list of racially imbalanced schools this year, it is in impending imbalance. In December 2022, the Hamden Superintendent met with the LPDC to discuss the HBOE's decision to explore alternative measures to achieve racial balance rather than the actions currently in the plan. Superintendent Highsmith stated that the HBOE remains committed to adding 6th Grade to the middle school as provided in the current racial imbalance plan. The HBOE received a priority school construction grant to expand the middle school facility and is moving forward with that project. However, the HBOE has determined that is not feasible to open a magnet school, which was another element in the racial imbalance plan.

The HBOE is considering the reconfiguration of its elementary schools to house Grades Kindergarten through 2 in one or more buildings and Grades 3 through 5 in one or more buildings. On September 6, 2023, the Hamden Superintendent and the HBOE Chair met with the CSBE to propose amending their plan. The HBOE proposed contracting with DMG, SLR International Corporation, to analyze the demographics, housing, economic and enrollment trends in Hamden. Such analytics will assist the HBOE in determining whether it should move forward with reconfiguring the elementary schools. Due to the amendment to Section 10-226b of the CGS, the HBOE will not be required to amend, submit, or take further action pursuant to its plan until 2025.

Follow-up Activities

While the SBE is still required to calculate the racial imbalance statistics pursuant to Section 10-226a of the CGS, the SBE shall not notify a school district when a racial imbalance exists within one of its schools until July 1, 2025. Without such notification, school districts will not be required to submit plans or plan amendments during this time.

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