



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Strategic Planning Division  
Policy 2023-1

**TO:** Interdistrict Magnet School and Open Choice Program Operators in the Greater Hartford Region (Sheff Region)

**FROM:** Keith M. Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer *KMN*  
Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships

**DATE:** February 15, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Enrollment Policies for Interdistrict Magnet Schools and the Open Choice Programs in the Sheff Region

This memorandum articulates important updated enrollment and grant payment policies relevant to school choice programs in the Greater Hartford Region (hereinafter referred to as “Sheff Region”). We provide these policies as a reminder of Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) procedures and to ensure consistent enrollment practices among operators. These updated policies reflect adjustments to accommodate enrollment shifts resulting from public reaction to the pandemic and new legislation.

### **Regional School Choice Office Enrollment**

Interdistrict Magnet Schools (IMS) and Open Choice Programs (OC) operating in the Sheff Region **must** use the CSDE’s Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) application, placement process, and lottery protocols to enroll all students unless specifically approved by the CSDE.

#### Direct Enrollment

Students enrolled outside of this enrollment process, including those that are enrolled after October 1 of each school year, are considered “directly enrolled” for IMS operators. Students enrolled outside of this enrollment process, including those that are enrolled after December 1 of each school year, are considered “directly enrolled” for OC school districts. IMS Operators and OC will not receive the applicable operating and/or enrollment grants pursuant to Sections 10-264l and 10-266aa of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) for such students through the entire term of the students’ enrollment in such school unless specifically approved in writing by CSDE.

In the case where a student withdraws from an IMS or OC during the academic school year, the IMS or OC may re-enroll the student during the same academic school year without going through the placement process or have it considered a direct enrollment.

#### Dual Enrollment

IMS operators may not dually enroll students in school choice programs unless specifically approved by CSDE. IMS operators will not receive the applicable operating and/or enrollment grants for such students through the entire term of the students’ enrollment in such school.

[View the full Single School Enrollment Standard policy.](#)

[View the full Dual Enrollment policy.](#)

## Foreign Student Enrollment

All foreign students attending an IMS must be reported in the Public School Information System (PSIS). IMS operators will not receive the applicable operating and/or enrollment grants for foreign students through the entire term of the students' enrollment in such school.

[View the full Foreign Student Enrollment policy.](#)

## **IMS Residency and Reduced-Isolation Setting Goals<sup>1</sup>**

The Comprehensive School Choice Plan (CCP), approved by the Connecticut Superior Court on March 21, 2022, and the Phase IV Stipulation and Order (Phase IV Stipulation), effective through June 30, 2022, provides the Reduced Isolation (RI) goals and standards for IMS in the Greater Hartford Region that assist the state in meeting its obligations pursuant to the decision in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1 (1996). The Phase IV Stipulation and CCP explicitly acknowledge the ongoing commitment to meeting the desegregation goals from the prior stipulations and Superior Court ruling from August 7, 2017 in the *Sheff* case, but define a reduced isolation setting for purposes of compliance as a magnet school that maximizes socioeconomic diversity. For 2022-23, the CCP does not authorize any negative consequences for any school or school operator that does not meet the standards for a reduced isolation setting. Sheff Magnets are expected to comply with residency and socioeconomic diversity goals from the CCP and to seek to achieve and maintain the CCP's RI goals.

### Residency:

Per statute, an IMS **may not** enroll more than 75% of its total school enrollment from a single participating district. For the 2022-23 school year, CSDE will waive fiscal penalties associated with noncompliance with the residency standard for good cause as determined by the CSDE if the IMS is operating pursuant to a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) approved by the CSDE.

### Reduced-Isolation Setting:

Per the CCP, an IMS provides a reduced isolation setting if its incoming enrollment does not exceed 60% enrollments from the low socioeconomic tier. Any magnet school that enrolls more than 58% of its incoming students from the low socioeconomic tier and/or less than 30% of its incoming enrollment from the high socioeconomic tier must be operating pursuant to a CAP that demonstrates reasonable efforts to meet the socioeconomic diversity goals for a reduced isolation setting within an established compliance period. As noted above, the CCP does not authorize any negative consequences for any school or school operator that does not meet the standards for a reduced isolation setting.

The CCP continues the ongoing commitment to meeting the 25% reduced-isolation goals from the prior stipulations and Superior Court ruling from August 7, 2017 in the *Sheff* case, which define reduced-isolation enrollment goals as a percentage RI enrollment equal to at least 25% of total school enrollment.<sup>2</sup> The CSDE will continue to annually report school-by-school data regarding this goal based on October 1 PSIS data.

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<sup>1</sup> C.G.S. §10-264l and C.G.S. §10-264r.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of the CCP, a "reduced-isolation" student is defined as a student who self-identifies as Native American, Asian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, and/or White, and does not identify as Black/African American, or Hispanic.

## **Enrollment of at Least 50 Percent Hartford-Resident Students in Regional Educational Service Center or Goodwin University IMS**

An IMS operated by a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) in the Sheff Region, including Hartford Public Schools for purposes of Great Path Magnet School, or Goodwin University must enroll a minimum of 50% of the incoming students, in any grade served by the school, with Hartford-residents each academic school year.<sup>3</sup> Failure to comply with the stated criteria typically results in a per pupil grant in the amount of \$8,058 (the non-Sheff rate) for one-half of the total number of non-Hartford students enrolled in the school over 50% of the total school enrollment. The remainder of the total school enrollment remains eligible to receive the per pupil grant in the amount of \$10,652, subject to available appropriations. For the 2022-23 school year, CSDE will waive fiscal penalties associated with noncompliance with the 50% Hartford-resident enrollment requirement if approved by the Commissioner of Education based on enrollment guidance from the CSDE or for other for good cause, including compliance goals, upon written request by the IMS operator. See C.G.S. §10-264l(c)(3)(D)(ii).

### **IMS per Pupil Rates**

Consistent with the IMS enrollment criteria and within available appropriations, the Sheff Region per pupil rates for 2022-23 are as follows:

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Type of Operator/<br/>Specific IMS</b> | <b>Enrollment Criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Per Pupil Rates</b>             |                           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sheff         | Host Magnet/<br>District Operated         | No more than 75% student enrollment from a single participating school district; incoming enrollment reflects SES diversity goals (incoming enrollment should not exceed 60% incoming enrollment from the low socioeconomic tier).                                                                                                                          | In-District<br>\$0                 | Non-District<br>\$13,315  |
| Sheff         | RESC                                      | No more than 75% from a single participating school district; no more than 60% Hartford-resident enrollment; incoming enrollment reflects SES diversity goals (incoming enrollment should not exceed 60% incoming enrollment from the low socioeconomic tier); enroll at least 50% incoming students from Hartford, subject to exception per CSDE Guidance. | \$10,652                           |                           |
| Sheff         | RESC                                      | An IMS that meets other eligibility goals but enrolls less than 50% incoming students from Hartford receives non-Sheff rate for $\frac{1}{2}$ of non-Hartford student enrollments over 50% of total school enrollment; receives Sheff rate for the remainder of enrollments. Penalty waived for 2022-23 based on CSDE Guidance or other good cause.         | Non-Sheff<br>Rate<br>\$8,058       | Sheff<br>Rate<br>\$10,652 |
| Sheff         | Part-Time Programs                        | Meets other eligibility goals and enrolls students in a part-time interdistrict magnet program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 65% of the applicable grant amount |                           |

<sup>3</sup> For RESC IMS, including Goodwin University, C.G.S. §10-264l(c)(3)(D) also limits enrollment of Hartford-resident students to 60% of total school enrollment for purposes of the grant rate. This 60% maximum for Hartford-resident enrollment does not apply to Sheff magnets operated by local boards of education (Host Magnets).

## **Fiscal Target**

Beginning July 1, 2021, the Legislature did not continue previous maximum limits on the operating grant based on actual enrollments in C.G.S. §10-264*l*. Given the change in the legislation, IMS operators may increase enrollment at their respective schools within available appropriations based on a phase-in over time as approved by the CSDE and subject to compliance with residency and diversity goals. To plan for increased financial requirements, the CSDE expects operators to provide a five-year enrollment projection per school and district that is aligned with the school's building capacity and reflects compliance with diversity and residency goals and the CCP. Schools and districts should use the Application for Interdistrict Magnet Funds-ED614 to share enrollment projections. Proposed enrollment expansion must reflect a phase-in approach over a minimum of three to five years to reach full building capacity as approved by the CSDE within compliance goals. Enrollment growth for FY 23 will be approved by CSDE in the ED614 Application for Interdistrict Magnet Funds by the Commissioner of Education, subject to available appropriations.

## **Financial Reduction or Financial Penalty**

Typically, failure to comply with the various criteria covered herein might impact the IMS operator's grant based on CSDE's review of October 1 enrollment data. However, for 2022-23, IMS operators will not receive a penalty to their grant allocation due to noncompliance with residency or the 50% Hartford-resident enrollment requirements if the IMS operator's enrollment reflects CSDE Guidance on incoming enrollment goals and/or the IMS receives a waiver from noncompliance for good cause. In addition, the CCP does not authorize any negative consequences for any school or school operator that does not meet the standards for a reduced isolation setting for the 2022-23 school year but does require IMS operators to submit a CAP for noncompliance with the socioeconomic diversity goals as indicated above within the timeframe required by the CSDE as a condition for grant payment. Irrespective of waiver policies, CSDE expects the IMS operator to monitor enrollments to attempt to reconcile non-compliance. CSDE will notify operators of discrepancies it becomes aware of through its own concurrent monitoring of enrollment data.

### Residency:

An interdistrict magnet school that does not meet the 75% Residency Standard as set forth herein, must be operating pursuant to an approved CAP designed to bring the school into compliance with the residency enrollment requirements in order to remain eligible for the IMS operating grant. For the 2022-23 school year, the CSDE will waive fiscal impacts from residency noncompliance for good cause if the IMS completes and submits an approved CAP within the timeframe required by CSDE.

### Reduced-Isolation Setting:

Any magnet school that enrolls more than 58% of its incoming students from the low socioeconomic tier and/or less than 30% of its incoming enrollment from the high socioeconomic tier must be operating pursuant to a CAP that demonstrates reasonable efforts to meet the socioeconomic diversity goals for a reduced isolation setting within an established compliance period. The IMS must complete and submit an approved CAP within the timeframe required by CSDE.

## **Operator/District Actions**

IMS operators and OC districts must implement and communicate the contents of this policy in school and/or district administrative documents and publications (e.g., operations plans and enrollment policies) to facilitate compliance with the enrollment policies.

**CSDE Contact**

Please contact the Office of Strategic Planning at [SDE.StrategicPlanning@ct.gov](mailto:SDE.StrategicPlanning@ct.gov) or [860-713-6532](tel:860-713-6532) with questions.

KMN:rcc

cc: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education  
Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff, CSDE  
Kathy Demsey, Chief Financial Officer, CSDE  
Robin Colombo Cecere, Division Director of School Choice, CSDE  
Roger Persson, Chief of Fiscal and Administrative Services, CSDE  
Matthew Venhorst, Staff Attorney, CSDE  
Shola Freeman, Program Manager, CSDE  
Janet Foster, Program Manager, CSDE  
Leah Greiner, Program Manager, CSDE