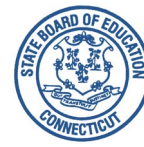




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships  
Policy 2024-2

TO: Interdistrict Magnet Schools (IMS) and Open Choice (OC) Program Operators in the Greater Hartford Region (Sheff Region)

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

DATE: August 5, 2024

SUBJECT: Enrollment Policies for Interdistrict Magnet Schools (IMS) and the Open Choice (OC) Programs in the Sheff Region

This memorandum articulates the 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 new legislation.

## Sheff Region Enrollment Policies

IMS and OC programs 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. Exceptions must be specifically approved by the CSDE.

### Direct Enrollment

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

### Single School and Dual Enrollment

IMS operators may not dually enroll students in school choice programs unless specifically approved by the CSDE. For the 2024-25 school year, the CSDE has revised the dual enrollment policy for OC, Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) schools, and Public Charter school students enrolling in a part-time IMS. Please review the revised policy that was posted on July 30, 2024, to ensure compliance with CSDE requirements.

[View the Single School and Dual Enrollment Policies.](#)

### **Foreign Student Enrollment**

The CSDE limits the enrollment of foreign students in an IMS to no more than five (5) students at any point during the academic school year. All foreign students attending an IMS must be reported in the Public School Information System (PSIS). In accordance with C.G.S. §10-264i and §10-264l, the CSDE does not include students identified as foreign students in the operating and student transportation magnet grant payments. Please review the policy that was posted on May 1, 2019, to ensure compliance with CSDE requirements.

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

### **Student Withdrawals**

In the case where a student withdraws from an IMS or OC during the academic school year, the IMS or OC shall re-enroll the student outside of the placement process during the same academic school year without penalty to grant funding pursuant to C.G.S. Sections 10-264l and 10-266aa to accommodate students relocating to another town or a documented student medical emergency that requires a student to withdraw. Given the purpose of the policy, this exception does not apply to students who request to re-enroll in an IMS or OC from another IMS or OC school.

## **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) provide 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, and define a reduced isolation setting for purposes of compliance as an interdistrict magnet school that maximizes socioeconomic diversity. For 2024-25, 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. However, 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 2024-25 school year, the 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% enrollment from the low socioeconomic tier. Any Sheff 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 immediate negative consequences for any school or school operator that does not meet the standards for a reduced isolation

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

setting, except that the CCP adds terms that require the state to reallocate resources if a school does not meet the socioeconomic diversity goals after reformulation.

The CCP continues the ongoing commitment to meeting the 25% reduced isolation goals from the prior stipulations and the Superior Court ruling from August 7, 2017 in the *Sheff* case, which defines the reduced isolation enrollment goal 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.

## **Enrollment of Hartford-Resident Students in Accordance with CSDE Guidance**

Pursuant to the CCP, an IMS in the Sheff Region must enroll a minimum percentage of the incoming students, in any grade served by the school, with Hartford-residents each academic school year based on the placement protocol guidance issued by the CSDE. Generally, the guidance will require a minimum enrollment of at least 50% Hartford-resident students in the incoming enrollments.

### **Enrollment Targets**

Beginning July 1, 2021, the Legislature did not continue previous maximum limits on enrollment. As a result, 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 and in accordance with the terms of the CCP. Enrollment growth for fiscal year (FY) 25 will be approved by CSDE in the ED614 Application for Interdistrict Magnet Funds by the Commissioner of Education, subject to available appropriations and the terms of the CCP.

### **Interdistrict Magnet Operating Grant Formula**

The interdistrict magnet formula set forth in Sections 112 and 114 of Public Act (PA) 24-81, an amendment to C.G.S 10-264*l*, mirrors the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula and dictates how funds are to be distributed in FY25. The new funding framework replaces the per-pupil rates formerly used for interdistrict magnet school funding.

The webinar provided by the CSDE includes those estimates as well as a detailed explanation of the formula calculation.

[View the Magnet School Formula Changes and Grant Estimates Per PA 24-81 webinar.](#)

The following Interdistrict Magnet Operators are eligible to receive a calculated grant award amount for students enrolled in accordance with the standards for operating an interdistrict magnet school program.

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<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.

For the following **RESC and/or College Affiliated Magnet School Operators**, the operating grant formula is detailed below and is included in the linked presentation above:  
Capital Region Education Council (CREC), and Goodwin University Educational Services (GUES).

**FY25 Grant - RESC Operators & College Affiliated Operators Formula**

**Base Funding** (FY24 Per Pupil (PP) Statutory Grants *multiplied by* the FY25 Magnet Enrollment)  
**PLUS**  
**New Funding** (42% of \$11,525 *multiplied by* Total Magnet School Need Students<sup>(A)</sup> *minus* Base Funding)  
**PLUS** a hold harmless amount if needed based on FY24 PP revenue *less* FY25 PP revenue

**(A) Total Magnet School Need Students:**

# Part-Time (PT) & Full-Time (FT) students enrolled in RESC Magnet School

**PLUS**

30% of the # of PT & FT students eligible for Free & Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL)

**PLUS**

15% of the # of PT & FT students eligible for FRPL in excess of the # of PT & FT eligible for FRPL that is equal to 60% of the total # of students enrolled in program

**PLUS**

25% of the # of PT & FT students who are English Language Learners (ELL)

**PLUS**

30% of the # of PT & FT student enrolled in CREC or Goodwin Operated program

*Note: A hold harmless provision is in place for all operators, if applicable, in accordance with the terms of the PA.*

For the following **Board of Education (BOE) Interdistrict Magnet School Operators**, the operating grant formula is detailed below and is included in the linked presentation above:  
Bloomfield Public Schools, East Hartford Public Schools, and Hartford Public Schools

**FY25 - Grant District/BOE District Operators Formula**

**Base Funding** (FY24 PP Statutory Grants *multiplied by* the FY25 In-District & Out-of-District Enrollment)  
**PLUS**

**New Funding** (42% of the Sum of Sending Town Adjustment Factors for Each Sending Town<sup>(B)</sup> *plus* FY24 PP Grants *multiplied by* In-District Enrollment *minus* Base Funding)

**(B) Sum for all Sending Towns Adjustment Factors:**

# of Resident Choice Program Students

**MULTIPLIED BY**

*The Greater of* Total Revenue PP for FY24 *OR* Weighted Funding Amount PP (\$11,525 *multiplied by* town's Total Need Students *divided by* resident students)

*Note: A hold harmless provision is incorporated in the grant calculation, if applicable, in accordance with the terms of the PA.*

## **Maximum Student Tuition Charge**

Pursuant to C.G.S. Sections 10-264l(k) and 10-264o, as amended by PA 24-81 Sections 114(k) and 115(c), (d), for the 2024-25 school year, the per student tuition charged to a local or regional board of education shall not exceed 58% of the student tuition charged for school year 2023-24.

[View the attached memo and the maximum 2024-25 tuition rates.](#)

## **Financial Reduction or Financial Penalty**

Failure to comply with certain criteria set forth in this memorandum may result in an impact to the IMS operating grant based on the CSDE's review of October 1 enrollment data based on noncompliance with enrollment standards per statute and the Commissioner's Standards. IMS operators operating pursuant to a timely compliance plan approved by the CSDE will not receive a penalty to their grant allocation due to noncompliance with residency requirements or RI goals.

[View the attached Interdistrict Magnet Schools Reduced Isolation Setting Standards.](#)

Irrespective of the CSDE waiver policies, the CSDE expects the IMS operator to monitor enrollments to attempt to reconcile non-compliance. The CSDE will notify operators of discrepancies it becomes aware of through its own concurrent monitoring of enrollment data.

### **Residency**

An IMS that does not meet the 75% residency requirement, is required by C.G.S 10-264l(b)(3) to operate pursuant to an approved compliance plan which is designed to bring the school into compliance with the residency enrollment requirements in order to remain eligible for the IMS operating grant. For the 2024-25 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 the CSDE. Pursuant to C.G.S. 10-264l(b)(4), the CSDE may impose fiscal penalties or other remedies for noncompliance with residency requirements for more than one year.

### **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., school website, student application, electronic notification messages, acceptance letters, printed publications) to facilitate compliance with the enrollment policies.

## **CSDE Contact**

Please contact the Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships at [Meliha.Korkutovic@ct.gov](mailto:Meliha.Korkutovic@ct.gov) or [860-713-6939](tel:860-713-6939) with questions.

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