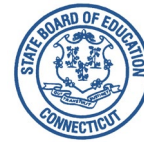




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Office of Strategic Planning and Partnerships
Policy 2025-1

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: July 17, 2025

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 §§ 10-264f 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

To ensure fair enrollment opportunities for Connecticut residents students, the CSDE has implemented a single school and dual enrollment policy for enrollment in choice programs. Please review the revised Single and Dual Enrollment 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. § 10-264*i* and § 10-264*l*, 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.](#)

New Students Enrolled in a New School District - Transfer of Records

IMS and OC Programs **must follow** Connecticut public school statutes regarding enrolling new students within the district. In accordance with § 10-220*h* of the C.G.S., when a student enrolls in a new school in a new school district, the new school district shall provide written notification of such enrollment to the previous school district **no later than two business days after the student enrolls**. This occurs at registration. The previous school district (1) shall transfer the student's education records to the new school no later than ten days after receipt of such notification, and (2) if the student's parent or guardian did not give written authorization for the transfer of such records, shall send notification of the transfer to the parent or guardian at the same time it transfers the records.

For registrations that occur during the placement process for the upcoming school year, the previous school district must send the student's education record (1) within ten days after receipt of notification from the new school district if such notification is sent during the summer break or at the start of the new school year; and (2) within ten days after the end of the current school year if such notification is sent during the current school year.

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. §§ 10-264*l* and 10-266*aa* to accommodate students relocating back to Connecticut from another state 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.

Excused and Unexcused Absences - Extended Leave of Absence

If a parent or guardian requests an extended leave of absence for a student, and it extends for more than 10 days, a parent or guardian must submit documentation explaining the absence and indicate a date of return. The IMS or OC should follow its absentee policies to determine if the student absence is excused or unexcused. If the submitted documentation indicates that the student will be enrolled in another school during the leave of absence, then the student should be withdrawn from the IMS or OC.

If the documentation explaining the absence determines that the student will not be enrolled in another school during the leave of absence, then the IMS or OC should continue to report the student's absence. In cases where the extended leave of absence extends for more than 10 days, and the date of return is after the last day of school, the student must reapply in the lottery for the upcoming school year.

If any special circumstances arise around an extended leave of absence case, CSDE and the IMS or OC will review each circumstance on a case-by-case basis.

[View the full Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences.](#)

Dual Enrollment within an IMS

Students outplaced in a special education facility or program

Pursuant to § 10-264l of C.G.S., the IMS is responsible for ensuring that special education services are provided to students attending an IMS on a full-time basis as mandated by the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These services may be provided directly by the IMS or in cooperation with the sending district. If, through the IEP process, a student attending an IMS is outplaced into a special education facility or program, including a program in the sending district, the IMS may continue to enroll and report the student in the PSIS until they withdraw or graduate from the IMS. The IMS remains responsible for ensuring the IEP is implemented.

Expelled students receiving alternative education services

Pursuant to C.G.S. § 10-233d(d), when a student is expelled from an IMS, the IMS district must provide an “alternative educational opportunity” to (1) any student under 16 years old who has been expelled for any reason; and (2) any student between the 16-18 years old who has been expelled for the first time for any reason, wishes to continue their education, and complies with the conditions set by their respective board of education. Expelled IMS students that attend an alternative educational program should still be reported by the IMS in PSIS during the duration of the expulsion, even if the student receives academic programming through the sending district. The student may register in the sending district for purposes of the programming, but the IMS may continue to report the student in PSIS.

An expelled student assigned to an alternative educational program should continue to receive transportation services through the IMS’s services during the period of the expulsion.

[View the full Guidance Regarding Student Expulsions.](#)

Early college enrollment

High school students may receive early admission to attend a college or university during their senior year of high school. This opportunity allows high school students to attend classes at a college or university while still completing their senior year of high school. In these cases, students should still be reported in PSIS as enrolled at the IMS while attending classes at a college or university.

IMS Residency and Reduced Isolation Setting Goals¹

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. 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 IMS 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.

¹ C.G.S. §10-264l and C.G.S. §10-264r.

Residency

Per statute, an IMS may not enroll more than 75% of its total school enrollment from a single participating district. 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 setting, except that the CCP adds terms that authorize 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.² 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 each fiscal year (FY) 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.

² 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.

Interdistrict Magnet Operating Grant Formula

The interdistrict magnet formula set forth in C.G.S. § 10-252a mirrors the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula and dictates how funds are to be distributed in each FY to IMS. This funding framework replaces the per-pupil rates formerly used for interdistrict magnet school funding.

The webinar provided by the CSDE includes a detailed explanation of the formula calculation.

[View the Magnet School Formula 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. 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).

Current Year Grant - RESC Operators & College Affiliated Operators Formula

Base Funding (FY 24 Per Pupil (PP) Statutory Grants *multiplied by* the Current Year Magnet Enrollment)*

PLUS

New Funding (42% of \$11,525 *multiplied by* Total Magnet School Need Students^(A) *minus* Base Funding)

PLUS a hold harmless amount if needed based on FY 24 PP revenue *less* Current Year 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 Public Act (PA).

** For new Magnet School programs started after July 1, 2024, the per pupil grant amount used in base funding shall be the per student amount of other magnet schools in the same region.*

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

Current Year - Grant District/BOE District Operators Formula

Base Funding (FY 24 PP Statutory Grants *multiplied by* the Current Year In-District & Out-of-District Enrollment)*

PLUS

New Funding (42% of the Sum of Sending Town Adjustment Factors for Each Sending Town^(B) *plus* FY 24 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 FY 24 *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.

** For new Magnet School programs started after July 1, 2024, the per pupil grant amount used in base funding shall be the per student amount of other magnet schools in the same region.*

Maximum Student Tuition Charge

Pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 10-264l(k) and 10-264o, 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 and each FY thereafter. For new magnet programs started after July 1, 2024 that are authorized to charge tuition, the per student tuition shall not exceed the per student average tuition charged by other magnet schools serving similar grade ranges in the same region.

[View the attached memo and the maximum 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 as described above, is required 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 and thereafter, 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. § 10-264/(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 does not meet the reduced isolation goals, as described above, 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

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KMN:mk

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