



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Strategic Planning Division  
Policy 2019-4

**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

**DATE:** August 26, 2019

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

This memorandum articulates important 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.

### **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.

### 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” and the IMS operators<sup>1</sup> and/or OC school districts will not receive the applicable operating and/or enrollment grants for such students through the entire term of the students’ enrollment in such school.

### **IMS Residency and Reduced-Isolation Setting Goals<sup>2</sup>**

Generally, IMS remain eligible for an IMS operating grant if, based on the October 1 student enrollment data, they comply with *both* of the following criteria.

#### Residency:

Per statute, an IMS **may not** enroll more than 75% of its total school enrollment from a single participating district.

#### Reduced-Isolation Setting:

Per statute, CSDE also considers reduced-isolation (RI) enrollment goals set by the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) for grant eligibility. In accordance with these goals, and the Order of the

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<sup>1</sup> CGS §10-264l, as amended by Public Act 19-117, §270, and CGS §10-266aa

<sup>2</sup> CGS §10-264l and CGS §10-264r

Connecticut Superior Court, IMS in the Sheff Region provide a Reduced-Isolation Setting (RIS) if the percentage of RI students enrolled at the school equals to at least 25% of total school enrollment.<sup>3</sup> The Commissioner’s standards recognize that up to three IMS in the Sheff Region that are within 1% of the RI enrollment goal provide a RIS, so long as the school is operating pursuant to a compliance plan approved by the Commissioner.

Generally, an IMS in the Sheff Region must maintain a total school enrollment in accordance with the Commissioner’s RIS goals to remain eligible for the operating grant. The Commissioner may award a grant to a non-compliant school for an additional year or years (a) for purposes of increasing access to RI educational opportunities; and/or (b) if it is determined that special circumstances exist to continue a grant based on evidence of other indices of diversity. In such circumstances, the school must be operating pursuant to an approved compliance plan approved by the Commissioner by December 1 of the applicable school year.

**Enrollment of at Least 50 Percent Hartford-Resident Students in RESC IMS**

An IMS operated by a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) in the Sheff Region, including Goodwin College, 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>4</sup>

Absent of the written exception from the CSDE pursuant to the phase-in policy provided via an April 24, 2019 correspondence, failure to comply with the stated criteria shall result 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 shall remain eligible to receive the per pupil grant in the amount of \$10,652, subject to available appropriations.

**IMS Per Pupil Rates**

Consistent with the IMS enrollment criteria and within available appropriations, the Sheff Region per pupil rates for 2019-20 are as follows:

Region	Type of Operator/ Specific IMS	Enrollment Criteria	Per Pupil Rates	
Sheff	Host Magnet/ District Operated	No more than 75% student enrollment from a single participating school district; at least 25% RI enrollment	In-District \$0	Non-District \$13,315
Sheff	RESC	No more than 75% from a single participating school district; no more than 60% Hartford-resident enrollment; at least 25% RI enrollment; enroll at least 50% incoming students from Hartford	\$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 ½ of non-Hartford student enrollments over 50% of total school enrollment; receives Sheff rate for the remainder of enrollments	Non-Sheff Rate \$8,058	Sheff Rate \$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	

*Source: Public Act 19-117, §270*

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of the Commissioner’s standard, 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. The standards, as set by the Commissioner, are subject to change by Order of the Court or stipulation of the parties.

<sup>4</sup> CGS §10-264I(c)(3)(D), as amended by Public Act 19-117, §270, such section also limits for RESC IMS, including Goodwin College, enrollment of Hartford-resident students to 60% of total school enrollment. This 60% maximum for Hartford-resident enrollment does not apply to Sheff magnets operated by local boards of education (Host Magnets).

## **Fiscal Caps**

Since 2014 per statute,<sup>5</sup> IMS operators are eligible to receive a total grant payment in an amount up to the grant the operator was eligible to receive based on the aggregate enrollment of the operator's individual magnet schools in a prior school year. The "capped" enrollment is set by the CSDE and is subject to available appropriations. IMS operators will not receive the applicable operating grant for enrollments above such "capped" aggregate enrollments without prior authorization from the CSDE.

## **Financial Reduction or Financial Penalty**

Failure to comply with any of the above criteria may result in a reduction of the grant or financial penalty based on CSDE's review of October 1 enrollment data. Prior to applying any financial reduction or penalty, 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. Any statutorily required reduction or penalty is applied to the final annual operating grant payment.

### Residency:

If an IMS does not meet the 75% residency requirement, the Commissioner shall not award the grant, up to the amount of the applicable interdistrict magnet operating grant.

### Reduced-Isolation Setting:

If an IMS does not meet the RIS goals for two or more consecutive years<sup>6</sup>, the Commissioner may impose a financial penalty on the operator, up to the amount of the applicable IMS grant, or take any other measure, in consultation with such operator, as may be appropriate to assist the operator in complying with the RIS goals.

## **Operator/District Actions**

IMS operators and OC districts must implement and include the contents of this policy in school and/or district documents and publications (e.g., operations plans, enrollment policies, and public resources/communications).

## **CSDE Contact**

Please contact the Office of Strategic Planning at [SDE.StrategicPlanning@ct.gov](mailto:SDE.StrategicPlanning@ct.gov) or [860-713-6465](tel:860-713-6465) with questions.

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<sup>5</sup> CGS §10-264I, as amended by PA 19-117, §270

<sup>6</sup> CGS §10-264I, as amended by Public Act 19-117, §270