

SCHOOL + STATE
FINANCE PROJECT

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THE PATH TO PROGRESS: EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR ALL STUDENTS

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Policy Ideas We'll Discuss Today

- 1. Student-Centered Funding:** Creating one equitable, need-based funding formula — based on the ECS formula — for all public school students.
- 2. More Funding for English Learners and Districts with Concentrated Poverty:** Increasing the ECS formula's weight for English Learners, and lowering the threshold and increasing the weight for concentrated poverty in school districts.
- 3. Fully Funding ECS:** While the current ECS formula takes steps in the right direction, its long phase-in schedule means students in second grade today will not see full funding until they are in high school.

Policy solutions are currently in development and are transforming through feedback.

STUDENT-CENTERED FUNDING

What opportunity exists for the ECS grant to enhance equity?

- **An expanded, more inclusive ECS formula would provide all public school students with weighted funding based on their learning needs.**
- This would eliminate Connecticut's 11 disjointed funding formulas by including all students under one student-centered, transparent funding formula that is already designed for providing more equitable education funding to students and communities.

Mitigating the Impact from Pandemic-Related Reductions in Resident Student Counts

- Data from the State Department of Education show a significant reduction in resident student counts across the state between October 2019 and October 2020.
- Similar to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic generally, the reduction in resident student counts and need students has disproportionately impacted Connecticut's students of color and students with additional learning needs.
- As a result, if the October 2020 resident student count figures were to be utilized, the grant amounts of districts that educate a large number of students of color would be negatively impacted.
- To prevent these negative impacts, we recommend the FY 2022 ECS grant be based on the resident student count from October 2019 or October 2020, whichever is greater as well as utilizing the greater of the individual need components between the two years.

MORE FUNDING FOR
CONCENTRATED POVERTY
AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

How does increasing weights and lowering the concentrated poverty threshold support equity?

1. By enhancing the weights to educate students with additional learning needs, districts will have greater funding to **provide higher-need students with the resources, opportunities, and support they deserve.**
2. By lowering the threshold for concentrated poverty, the number of eligible districts is expanded and communities serving higher-need students are better funded.

Recommended changes to ECS student need weights

- In order to provide additional resources to the school districts that educate many of the state's highest-need students, the following modifications to the existing ECS formula weights are recommended.
 - Increase the English Learner weight from 15% to 25%
 - Increase the concentrated poverty rate from 5% to 15%
 - Reduce the threshold, from 75% to 60%, for a district to qualify for additional funding through the formula's concentrated poverty weight

Student Need	Current Weight	Current Funding Per Student	Proposed New Weight	Proposed New Funding
General Education (Non-need) Student	N/A	\$11,525	N/A	\$11,525
Low-income Student	30%	\$14,983	30%	\$14,983
Concentrated Low-income Student	Weight 5%; Threshold 75%	\$15,559	Weight 15%; Threshold: 60%	\$16,711 (+\$1,152)
Low-income and English Learner	45%	\$16,711	55%	\$17,864 (+\$1,153)
English Learner	15%	\$13,254	25%	\$14,406 (+\$1,152)
Concentrated Low-income English Learner	50%	\$17,288	70%	\$19,593 (+2,305)

What towns are impacted from the change in the concentrated poverty threshold?

Previously Eligible Towns	Proposed Eligible Towns (New in Bold)
Hartford	Ansonia
Meriden	Bridgeport
New London	East Hartford
Waterbury	Hartford
Windham	Manchester
	Meriden
	Naugatuck
	New Britain
	New Haven
	New London
	Norwich
	Torrington
	Waterbury
	West Haven
	Windham

Districts with at least 10% of their student population identified as English Learners

Bridgeport

New Britain

Torrington

Danbury

New Haven

Waterbury

East Hartford

New London

West Haven

Hartford

Norwalk

Westbrook

Meriden

Stamford

Windham

FULL PHASE IN OF THE
ECS GRANT IN
FISCAL YEAR 2022

Full Funding of the ECS Grant

- The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the extreme inequities in funding between school districts in Connecticut.
- Students who live in a property-poor municipality have not been equitably funded by the State for far too long.
- The State has an opportunity to acknowledge chronic underfunding, and the resulting inequities, by fully funding the ECS grant in fiscal year 2022.
- Students cannot wait for another six years to get the educational experiences, opportunities, and resources they need and deserve.

Additional Note on the Impact to the ECS Grant

- This proposal builds off of the ECS grant that was passed with wide bi-partisan support in 2017.
- This proposal does not change the underlying formula with the exception of the recommended weight changes.
- Towns that are currently over-funded according to the formula will continue to be phased-out according to the current statutory phase out until fiscal year 2028.
- 179 of 180 school districts receive increased ECS funding under this initiative upon full funding of the grant.

FISCAL IMPACT TO THE STATE

How much does this equity package cost?

- To institute a truly student-centered formula and fund all public school students according to their learning needs, the State would need to contribute an estimated additional \$445 million.
- Connecticut currently has a \$639 million funding gap between its Majority White Districts and all other public school districts. Enacting these reforms would reduce this gap by an estimated 68% or \$437 million.
- While this package does not address the totality of the funding gap, it is a significant step toward addressing the longstanding, inequitable system that has harmed Connecticut's students of color and has not provided all students with the appropriate educational experiences, opportunities, and resources.

FISCAL IMPACT TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Increase in net support*, over FY 2021 funding levels, for select municipalities

- **Bridgeport:** \$16.7 million
- **Danbury:** \$15.5 million
- **East Hartford:** \$16.7 million
- **Hamden:** \$10.7 million
- **Hartford:** \$34.6 million
- **Manchester:** \$13.9 million
- **Meriden:** \$18.6 million
- **New Britain:** \$29.3 million
- **New Haven:** \$15 million
- **New London:** \$9.4 million
- **Torrington:** \$8.1 million
- **Waterbury:** \$48.3 million

* Net support equals the increase in a district's ECS grant, plus the savings the district receives from the elimination of regular tuition billing.

Increase in net support* over full funding (in FY 2028) based on the current formula in statute

- **Bridgeport:** \$14.7 million
- **Danbury:** \$1.5 million
- **East Hartford:** \$4.7 million
- **Hamden:** \$3.4 million
- **Hartford:** \$23.5 million
- **Manchester:** \$5.4 million
- **Meriden:** \$7.1 million
- **New Britain:** \$9.3 million
- **New Haven:** \$6.2 million
- **New London:** \$4.5 million
- **Torrington:** \$3.6 million
- **Waterbury:** \$10.8 million

* Net support equals the increase in a district's ECS grant, plus the savings the district receives from the elimination of regular tuition billing.