

ONE STATE, ONE FUTURE

August 2016

Every child deserves the right to an excellent education that provides him or her with the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to be successful and have a positive impact on the future of our state. Our current method of funding does not provide for that opportunity equitably.

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

In the state of Connecticut, several factors intersect to create a system of public school funding that is not only failing, but is also incredibly challenging to navigate and consequently difficult to reform:

- Funding public schools through 11 cumbersome funding formulas that create a piecemeal system that lacks adequacy, equity, and transparency.
- Not adequately providing for unique student populations, as only one formula—the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula—takes into account student need, defined as eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL).
- Neither fully funding nor using the ECS formula to allocate education aid to municipalities, which means not adjusting funds to address changing enrollment numbers and demographics.
- A year-end deficit of over \$200 million with anticipated ongoing deficits in future fiscal years meant lowering the 2016-17 Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) budget by \$108.6 million, or 3.5 percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REIMAGINING SCHOOL FINANCE IN CONNECTICUT

Adequacy & Equity

Establish an adequacy-based funding system

1. Define the dollar amount necessary to achieve an adequate education.
2. Condense the 11 funding formulas into one comprehensive, evidence-based formula.

Adjust the comprehensive formula for equity

3. Replace the hold-harmless provision with a declining-enrollment provision.
4. Adjust funding disbursement based on student attendance.

Student Impact

Provide accurately and sufficiently for student need

1. Include weights in a new, comprehensive funding formula for special education, English-language learners, and low-income needs.
2. Evaluate the impact of the formula weights on students.

Ensure state funding effectively serves kids

3. Provide nonfinancial incentives to districts that demonstrate positive student outcomes.
4. Continue to support Alliance Districts in improving student outcomes.

Support & Accountability

Support districts with fiscal accountability and transparency

1. Require a single, uniform chart of accounts.
2. Model fiscal transparency for districts.
3. Hold districts accountable for effective and transparent funding.