



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Series 2007-08

Circular letter: C-12

TO: Superintendents of Schools, RESC Executive Directors, Host and RESC Operators of Interdistrict Magnet Schools

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner of Education

DATE: February 28, 2008

SUBJECT: Revised Guidance on Interdistrict Magnet School Parent Choice Legislation (For the 2008-09 School Year)

Background

Earlier this year, the General Assembly re-affirmed its commitment to fully enrolling its magnet schools by adopting Section 42 of P.A. 07-3 of the June Special Session, *An Act Concerning Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Education*. The section provides, in part, as follows:

“After accommodating students from participating districts in accordance with the approved enrollment agreement, an interdistrict magnet school that has unused student capacity may enroll directly into its program any interested student. A student from a district that is not participating in the interdistrict magnet school shall be given preference. The local or regional board of education otherwise responsible for educating such student shall contribute funds to support the operation of the interdistrict magnet school in an amount equal to the per student tuition, if any, charged to participating districts.”

On August 8, 2007, Circular Letter C-4 was issued regarding Interdistrict Magnet School Parent Choice Legislation. Since the law was passed by the General Assembly so late in the session, magnet school operators had a limited time to implement the new provision before the beginning of the 2007-08 school year. After review of the current legislation, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has determined that it would be helpful to provide further guidance, as more parents and families explore this new option. A working group of magnet school operators, superintendents and CSDE staff discussed the parameters of parent choice guidance in December of 2007. This revised guidance is designed for the 2008-09 school year. It is possible that the statute will be clarified in the 2008 session of the General Assembly; in the meantime, we hope this revised guidance will be helpful to magnet school operators in implementing the legislation.

Revised Parent Choice Guidance for Magnet School Operators

If magnet school operators have open seats in any magnet schools, the parent choice option will allow operators to enroll students from nonparticipating districts, which will

then be required to pay tuition. Should operators choose to exercise this option, CSDE recommends the following:

1. Interdistrict magnet school operators should contact participating districts with which they partner. These districts may be considered exempt from the parent choice option. For purposes of this guidance, CSDE will consider any school districts that enroll five percent of its students in interdistrict magnet schools and the Open Choice program participating districts. (See chart for town-by-town enrollment calculations.) CSDE urges magnet school operators to recruit in towns not meeting this target. Districts participating at five percent and above should be recruited by magnet school operators only as a final effort to address unused student capacity.
2. Interdistrict magnet school operators are urged to target recruitment efforts in underrepresented school districts (nonparticipating school districts). This is important in light of the provision in the new law that requires interdistrict magnet schools to give preference for unused student capacity to nonparticipating school districts. Students remaining on waiting lists cannot be offered slots in magnet schools in favor of a student from a nonparticipating school district unless the participating school district is willing and financially able to increase its number of enrolled students as part of its enrollment commitment. Recruitment of students should occur in a reasonable geographic area determined by the magnet school operator.
3. Students who apply to attend interdistrict magnet schools from nonparticipating districts will be given preference to attend these schools, and an obligation has been created for tuition to be paid. Nonparticipating school districts have had experience with this new legislation and received tuition bills they did not anticipate. CSDE hopes that these unanticipated costs may change districts' interest in magnet schools and may motivate participation in order to protect against unplanned tuition expenses.

Other Key Considerations Regarding Parent Choice

1. Section 10-220d of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that "Each local and regional board of education shall provide full access to regional vocational-technical schools, regional vocational agriculture centers, interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools and interdistrict student attendance programs for the recruitment of students attending the schools under the board's jurisdiction, provided such recruitment is not for the purpose of interscholastic athletic competition."
2. The parent choice option will also assist magnet school operators in meeting or maintaining *Sheff* desegregation goals and magnet school enrollment requirements. In addition, operations plans for all new interdistrict magnet schools will require written commitment from partner school districts.

3. One purpose of the parent choice option is to enable operators of magnet schools to fully finance their schools without the need for supplemental funding from the state. Should magnet school operators seek such funding in the future, the CSDE will want to know whether the operator has implemented the parent choice option to eliminate the need for additional funding to operate interdistrict magnet schools. It should be noted that there is no funding for supplemental grants for fiscal year 2008-09.
4. Should magnet school operators decide to implement this option, CSDE urges magnet school operators to notify partner districts and districts intended for recruitment as soon as possible and have a process in place, which should include a lottery, to select students who will be able to enroll in those slots.

Part-Time Magnet Programs

Tuition arrangements are sometimes made through mutual agreements between the sending district and the parent whose student attends a part-time, partial tuition interdistrict arts magnet school. It is expected that operators will receive full tuition for its students. If not, then operators may declare the seat open, recruit a student, and then bill the sending school district. CSDE will require a full tuition to the interdistrict magnet school for purposes of eligibility for any state funding shortfall.

Contact Information

Please contact Mark Linabury, Chief, Bureau of Choice Programs, at (860) 807-2119 or by e-mail at mark.linabury@ct.gov or William Magnotta, Magnet Schools program manager, at (860) 807-2057 or by e-mail at william.magnotta@ct.gov, if you have further questions.

MKM:mla

Attachment

Connecticut State Department of Education
Participation in Magnet
And OPEN Choice Programs for October 2006

Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate	Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate	Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate
1	Andover	1.88%	33	Cromwell	2.87%	65	Hartland	0.56%
2	Ansonia	5.02%	34	Danbury	1.74%	66	Harwinton	0.49%
3	Ashford	0.13%	35	Darien	0.13%	67	Hebron	0.34%
4	Avon	2.56%	36	Deep River	0.29%	68	Kent	0.00%
5	Barkhamsted	0.15%	37	Derby	3.82%	69	Killingly	0.04%
6	Beacon Falls	0.19%	38	Durham	1.03%	70	Killingworth	0.09%
7	Berlin	0.76%	39	Eastford	0.00%	71	Lebanon	0.15%
8	Bethany	1.14%	40	East Granby	2.91%	72	Ledyard	1.01%
9	Bethel	0.03%	41	East Haddam	0.98%	73	Lisbon	0.35%
10	Bethlehem	0.18%	42	East Hampton	0.33%	74	Litchfield	0.39%
11	Bloomfield	17.48%	43	East Hartford	9.18%	75	Lyme	1.17%
12	Bolton	4.83%	44	East Haven	3.71%	76	Madison	0.28%
13	Bozrah	0.00%	45	East Lyme	1.30%	77	Manchester	5.17%
14	Branford	1.47%	46	Easton	0.50%	78	Mansfield	0.50%
15	Bridgeport	1.52%	47	East Windsor	6.40%	79	Marlborough	0.86%
16	Bridgewater	0.00%	48	Ellington	1.21%	80	Meriden	6.32%
17	Bristol	0.57%	49	Enfield	1.94%	81	Middlebury	0.84%
18	Brookfield	1.04%	50	Essex	0.00%	82	Middlefield	1.74%
19	Brooklyn	0.07%	51	Fairfield	1.61%	83	Middletown	3.65%
20	Burlington	0.60%	52	Farmington	3.09%	84	Milford	1.21%
21	Canaan	0.00%	53	Franklin	0.00%	85	Monroe	1.22%
22	Canterbury	0.12%	54	Glastonbury	4.04%	86	Montville	1.27%
23	Canton	3.35%	55	Goshen	0.24%	87	Morris	0.00%
24	Chaplin	0.27%	56	Granby	3.71%	88	Naugatuck	2.10%
25	Cheshire	0.66%	57	Greenwich	0.13%	89	New Britain	2.55%
26	Chester	0.17%	58	Griswold	0.00%	90	New Canaan	0.05%
27	Clinton	0.61%	59	Groton	1.76%	91	New Fairfield	0.49%
28	Colchester	0.06%	60	Guilford	0.47%	92	New Hartford	0.09%
29	Colebrook	0.00%	61	Haddam	0.15%	93	New Haven	16.55%
30	Columbia	0.43%	62	Hamden	12.45%	94	Newington	2.05%
31	Cornwall	0.00%	63	Hampton	1.50%	95	New London	14.76%
32	Coventry	0.86%	64	Hartford	14.34%	96	New Milford	0.28%

Connecticut State Department of Education

**Participation in Magnet
And OPEN Choice Programs for October 2006**

Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate	Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate	Town Code	Town Name	Magnet/Choice Participation Rate
97	Newton	0.38%	123	Scotland	0.34%	149	Warren	0.51%
98	Norfolk	0.00%	124	Seymour	0.79%	150	Washington	0.00%
99	North Branford	2.79%	125	Sharon	0.00%	151	Waterbury	7.64%
100	North Canaan	0.00%	126	Shelton	0.36%	152	Waterford	9.55%
101	North Haven	3.52%	127	Sherman	0.00%	153	Watertown	0.42%
102	North Stonington	0.48%	128	Simsbury	3.39%	154	Westbrook	0.10%
103	Norwalk	1.71%	129	Somers	1.16%	155	West Hartford	2.15%
104	Norwich	0.19%	130	Southbury	0.82%	156	West Haven	8.13%
105	Old Lyme	1.09%	131	Southington	0.82%	157	Weston	0.46%
106	Old Saybrook	0.00%	132	South Windsor	3.30%	158	Westport	0.74%
107	Orange	1.56%	133	Sprague	0.82%	159	Wethersfield	3.27%
108	Oxford	0.57%	134	Stafford	0.15%	160	Willington	0.12%
109	Plainfield	0.11%	135	Stamford	1.79%	161	Wilton	0.20%
110	Plainville	2.44%	136	Sterling	0.00%	162	Winchester	0.31%
111	Plymouth	5.65%	137	Stonington	0.77%	163	Windham	0.22%
112	Pomfret	0.00%	138	Stratford	1.32%	164	Windsor	8.72%
113	Portland	0.41%	139	Suffield	1.38%	165	Windsor Locks	5.89%
114	Preston	0.92%	140	Thomaston	6.16%	166	Wolcott	7.17%
115	Prospect	0.77%	141	Thompson	0.00%	167	Woodbridge	2.00%
116	Putnam	0.22%	142	Tolland	0.50%	168	Woodbury	0.39%
117	Redding	0.44%	143	Torrington	0.06%	169	Woodstock	0.14%
118	Ridgefield	0.32%	144	Trumbull	2.04%			
119	Rocky Hill	4.51%	145	Union	0.88%			
120	Roxbury	0.00%	146	Vernon	2.16%			
121	Salem	1.59%	147	Voluntown	0.00%			
122	Salisbury	0.00%	148	Wallingford	3.15%			