

Rediker

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The Hon. Andrew M. Fleischmann
The Hon. Thomas P. Gaffey
Chairmen State Education Committees
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Funding of Non-Traditional School Students

Dear Chairmen Fleischmann and Gaffey:

Currently, charter, magnet, and technical school students are funded through special line items in the state budget. I advocate a policy change so that all students would be funded under the same line item as those students attending traditional district schools.

Connecticut is one of only a very few states that adheres to this philosophy. There are several considerations that hopefully would influence your deliberations on this issue:

1. Current law allows funding changes that could specifically affect students who are judged by all standards to require the most educational aid. In times of economic difficulties, it is much easier economically and politically to cut allocations for smaller groups of students such as those attending magnet schools than to legislate changes affecting the general student population.

By doing this, not only would the legislature appear to be discriminating against the most economically disenfranchised segment of the population, which does not have the wherewithal (the least powerful voice) to advocate for themselves, but also it would appear that the legislature is not truly interested in closing the heralded achievement gap. In the current economic and political climate, to avoid the appearance of discrimination and/or apathy, all students should be funded equally.

2. The current guidelines make it virtually impossible to conduct an effective cost/benefit analysis of our schools, an essential component in order to qualify for *Race to the Top* funding. This creates adverse ramifications such as the difficulty of using data to determine teacher and administrator efficacy when measured in budgetary dollars. Quantification of program results within each school and school district as well as the comparison of results for school districts throughout the state becomes virtually impossible because of this fragmented system.

Currently, there is also difficulty in measuring the allocation of funds per staff position in schools due to different funding streams and measuring guidelines.

In summary—if one of our goals is to measure overall school district productivity (as well as the individual elements within each school and district), the funding process must be streamlined in order to both collect accurate and quantifiable data and also to conform to new federal guidelines and standards.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Rediker