

**REGARDING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL AND THE NEED FOR AN INCREASE IN  
FUNDING FOR  
AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS**

Good afternoon. My name is William Davenport, and I have been teaching agriscience (formerly vocational agriculture) at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury for the past 27 years. I am also the director of the program and just finished recruiting 90 students for next year's freshman class. The dilemma I had was that we had over 170 applications of worthy candidates for those 90 spots. These students come from over 24 different cities and towns surrounding Region 14, ranging from Danbury, Ansonia, Bethel, Newtown and Bethany to Watertown, New Milford, Prospect and Naugatuck. We currently have a total of 325 students in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology program, which represents one third of the Nonnewaug High School population. Sounds like a magnet school, doesn't it? Students coming together from a variety of diverse backgrounds and locations to learn a specialty subject and pursue in-depth career training while attending a comprehensive high school!

Two years ago, I was one of 12 citizens appointed to the Governor's Task Force to Study State Education Funding. According to Public Act 11-48, An Act Implementing Provisions of the Budget Concerning General Government, this task force was established to study issues relating to state funding for education in the context of state constitutional requirements. The act specifically required the task force to focus on the Education Cost Sharing formula with consideration to state grants to interdistrict magnet schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, and funding issues relating to the cost of special education for the state and municipalities. During this endeavor, the committee was divided into three separate subcommittees, each with a specific purpose as we divided up the task force's charge into these three areas: the ECS formula subcommittee, the Special education subcommittee, and the School choice subcommittee. I chaired the School choice subcommittee and my fellow subcommittee members being Senator Andrea Stillman and OPM Secretary Ben Barnes. After nearly two years and at least 26 meetings later, the Task force released our final report in early January.

The committee's goal was to finish our work before the beginning of the session and in enough time for the Governor to consider using some if not all of our recommendations in his proposed budget. When the Governor's budget was released, it contained some of our recommendations on the ECS formula, some on special education, but for some reason forgot about the school choice recommendations that were unanimously approved in the Task Force's final report.

As a Task Force member, and as the chair of the school choice subcommittee of the task force, I respectfully ask that the appropriations committee and the legislature please include the school choice subcommittee's recommendation as well into your adjustments to the Governors' Budget. The recommendations called for increasing the funding for the state's original magnet school programs, the 19 regional agriscience and technology programs, so that they will be funded at the same level as the non-sheff magnet schools are now, since these programs are very similar in their operation and purposes. All of the reasons are explained in detail in our final report. The cost of this recommendation is estimated at 3 million per year, phased in over the next four years, for a total of 12 million dollars. This was deemed by the entire Task Force as a "reasonable ask."

The Governor's budget proposal includes more than 70 million dollars more for magnet schools, 30 million more for charter schools, 30 million more for Open choice schools, yet less than \$200,000 more for agriscience programs

the first year, and no increase for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. I think these programs were forgotten about in the development of this budget. That is the only reason I can come up with when I see that over 220 million dollars of new money has been dedicated to education funding, and I think that it is reasonable to request that 12 million of that new money (3 million per year, phased on over the next four years) go towards funding the Task Force's school choice recommendation.

I need to remind the education committee that besides the vo-tech schools, the agriscience programs are the only school choice programs that have a direct impact on job growth in Connecticut, as our sole purpose is to prepare students for careers in the 5 Billion Dollar Connecticut agricultural industry, an industry that has over 5,00 job openings per year that go unfilled and that employers must go out of state to find suitable employees to fill these positions, yet we have already built these 19 regional agriscience programs that are one third empty due to lack of funding, yet have waiting lists of 8<sup>th</sup> graders interested in attending. So we have the programs to teach these students, we have the Connecticut jobs waiting for them once they graduate, yet I just sent out 80 letters telling these students we cannot accept them into our program. This needs to end, and the ECS Task Force's school choice recommendation will do so if the legislature will act on this and include this recommendation into your adjusted version of the budget in front of you.

The Governor also mentioned his interest in investing in the field of Biotechnology as a potential growth sector in our state that can help stimulate the economic growth our state so desperately needs. Did you know that all 19 regional agriscience programs teach biotechnology in their curriculum, and that the Sound school agriscience program in New Haven has its own Biotechnology lab where its students work with Yale professors in biotechnology research as a part of the agriscience curriculum? I don't know of many high schools in the state that offer biotechnology as a major course of study like the agriscience programs offer.

In his State of the Union address, President Obama called for an increase in career and technical education, and for need for funding for vocational training in high school to improve the economy. Once again, agriscience programs invented this concept, and have been succeeding in doing so since 1920. This is yet another reason why these are model programs that need adequate funding in order to reach more students.

Again, as a Task Force member, as the chair of the school choice subcommittee of the task force, as the 2004 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, and as a dedicated 27 year veteran educator who for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row, just had to send 80 rejection letters to 8<sup>th</sup> graders who want to pursue a career in the Connecticut agricultural industry, I respectfully ask that the appropriations committee and the legislature please include the school choice subcommittee's recommendation as well into your adjustments to the Governors' Budget. Those 8<sup>th</sup> graders deserve a chance to become productive citizens and valuable employees in this industry where the jobs are waiting for them.

Thank you for your time.

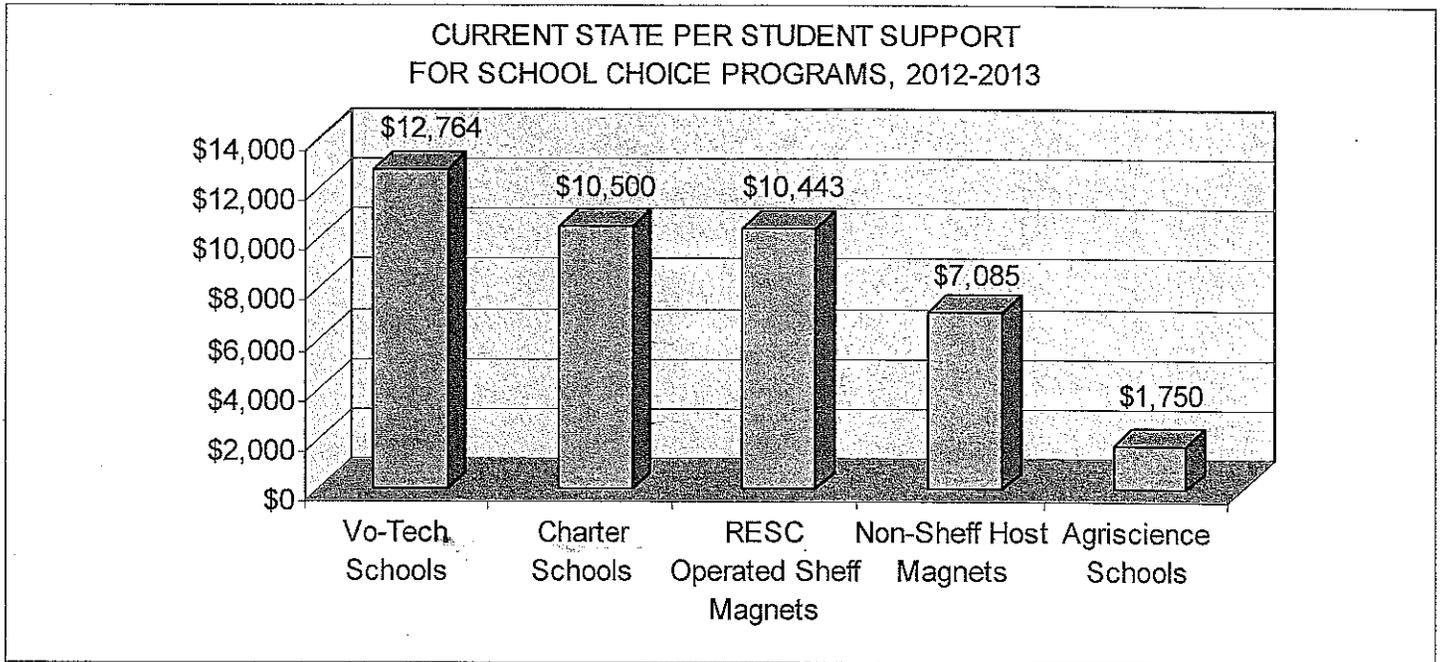
William Davenport, Director

2004 Connecticut Teacher of the Year

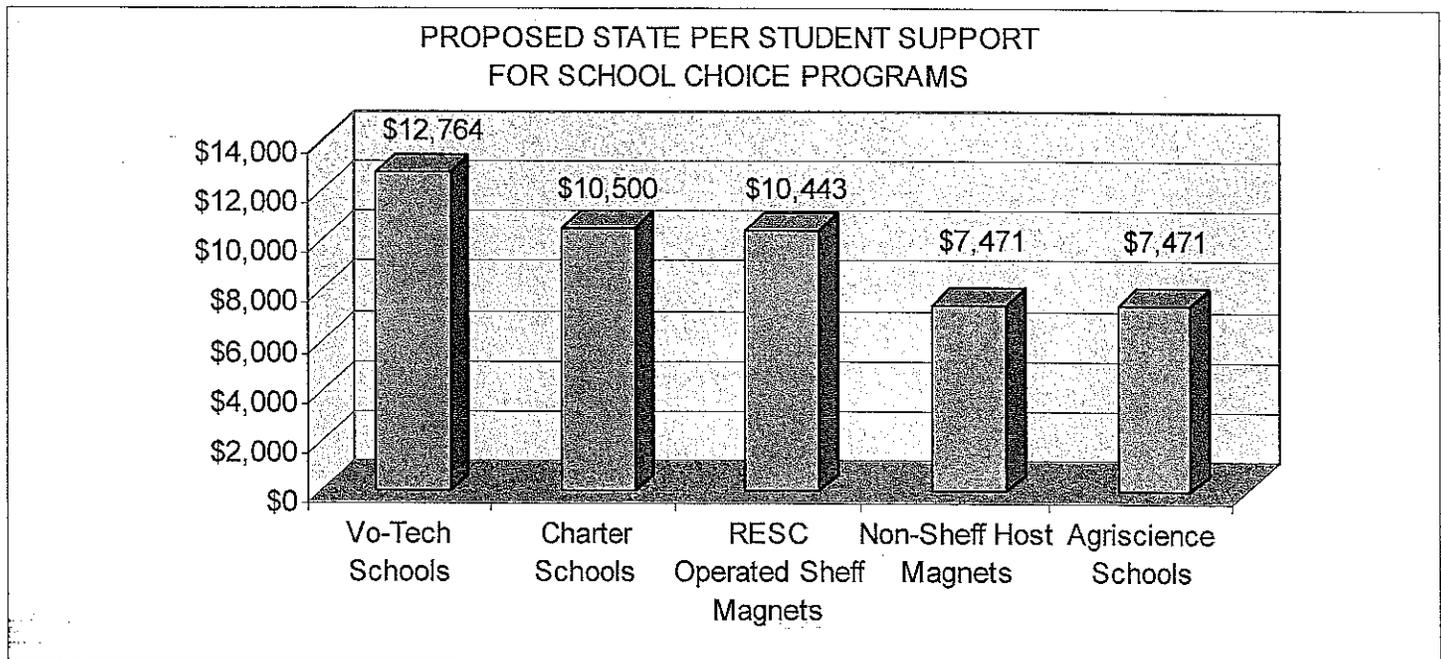
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# ECS TASK FORCE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

## BEFORE



## AFTER



## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Senator Andrea Stillman  
Task Force Co-Chair and Co-Chair of the Education Committee

Benjamin Barnes  
Task Force Co-Chair and Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management

Mark D. Benigni, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools, Meriden

Portia Bonner, Ph.D.  
Education Consultant, Wolcott Public Schools and former New Bedford Massachusetts Superintendent of Schools

Bill Davenport  
Director of the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience & Technology Program, Agriscience Teacher, Nonnewaug High School, Woodbury

Senator Toni Harp  
Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee and member of the Education Committee

Len Miller  
Certified Public Accountant, Co-Founder of Fairfield County Collaborative Alliance, and Treasurer of Kids in Crisis

Representative Michael Molgano  
Member of the Education, Transportation, and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees

Dr. Elsa Núñez  
President, Eastern Connecticut State University

Ray Rossomando  
Research and Policy Development Specialist, Office of Policy and Professional Practice  
Connecticut Education Association

Theodore Sergi, Ph.D.  
Former Connecticut State Education Commissioner

Dudley Williams  
Director, Corporate Citizenship and Diversity  
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## TASK FORCE STAFF

Subira Gordon, Chris Calabrese, and Sue Driscoll  
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Alan Shepard

Education Committee  
State Department of Education  
Office of Policy and Management  
Office of Legislative Research  
Office of Fiscal Analysis

## RECOMMENDATIONS/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOTE: Due to the state's current budget constraints, the Task Force offers its recommendations without a specific recommendation for more ECS funding and with the understanding that implementation of the recommendations may be hindered or delayed.

### ECS Formula

- Eliminate uncertainty of annual ECS grants by establishing a target for the total grant amount and criteria to maintain the grants over a period of years.
- Adopt a new ECS formula that:
  - weighs income more heavily in determining town wealth than under current formula,
  - uses Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) eligibility to determine student need,
  - raises per-student foundation amount, and
  - freezes minimum aid to wealthiest towns.
- Reserve part of the ECS grant for low-performing districts and create incentives to adopt best practices.

### School Choice Programs

- Increase state per student grants for non-Sheff host magnets and regional agriscience center programs, and fund them equally to help provide more equitable funding of school choice programs.
- Phase-in the grant increase over four years at annual steps of 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% of the difference between the current grant and the new target.
- Maintain existing funding structures for (1) Connecticut technical high schools, (2) state charter schools, (3) host and regional education service center (RESC)-operated Sheff magnet schools, and (4) RESC-operated non-Sheff magnet schools.

### Special Education

- Provide state funding for 100% of both the regular and special education costs of state-agency placed students.
- Increase and guarantee the special education excess cost grant and include a fixed definition of "excess" for all districts, such as \$50,000.
- Increase state monitoring of districts with a disproportionate percentage of special education students for numerous aspects of special education including percentage of students in each special education classification, percentage of local budget spent on special education, cost of out-of-district placements, and special education students' achievement and participation in assessments.

TABLE 6: FUNDING FOR CHOICE PROGRAMS

Type of School	State Per-Student Operating Grant	ECS Grants to Sending Town	Tuition Charged to Sending District
Connecticut Technical High Schools	Schools are 100% state-funded	No	None
Hartford Host Magnet School	\$13,054 for each student from outside Hartford	Yes	None
State charter schools*	\$10,200 per student**	No	None
RESC-Operated <i>Sheff</i> Magnet School (Hartford region)	\$10,443 per student	Yes	Yes
Edison Magnet School, Meriden	\$8,180 per student	Yes	Yes
Non- <i>Sheff</i> RESC Magnet enrolling less than 55% of students from a single town	\$7,900 per student	Yes	Yes Amount varies by school
Non- <i>Sheff</i> RESC Magnet enrolling 55% or more of students from a single town (other than Edison)	\$7,085 for each student from outside the dominant town/\$3,000 for each student from the dominant town	Yes	Yes
Non- <i>Sheff</i> Host Magnet School	\$7,085 for each student from outside host town/\$3,000 for each student from the host town	Yes	Sometimes
Regional Agriscience Centers	\$1,750 per student, plus per-student supplemental grants of (a) either \$500 or \$60 depending on enrollment and (b) \$100 per student if funds are available.	Yes	Yes, up to a maximum of \$7,992 per student

\* Although state law allows for local charter schools, no local charter schools are currently operating so they are not included in this table.  
 \*\* Under current law, this amount is for FY 13 only. It is scheduled to increase to \$11,000 in FY 14 and to \$11,500 in FY 15 and thereafter. (The FY 13 increase had been \$10,500, but PA 12-1, December Special Session (deficit mitigation act), reduced it to \$10,200.)  
 Sources: CT General Statutes, PA 12-116, and PA 12-1, December Special Session.

*Recommendations*

The Task Force recommends that the state:

- Provide a consistent and equitable level of state support for school choice programs.
- Maintain existing funding structures for (1) Connecticut technical high schools, (2) state charter schools, (3) host and RESC-operated *Sheff* magnet schools, and (4) RESC-operated non-*Sheff* magnet schools.
- Based on the similarities of their current funding structures and relatively low current state operating grants (see Table 6), fund non-*Sheff* host magnet schools and regional agriscience programs equally as follows:

APPENDIX B: ECS TASK FORCE SCHOOL CHOICE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

1. Provide a consistent and more equitable level of state support among school choice programs.
2. Fund non-Sheff host magnet school programs and regional agriscience programs equally by providing the following:
  - a. For In-District (host school) students, the state would provide a standard \$3,000 per student grant for each program.
  - b. For Out-of-District (sending town) students, use the state average regular program expenditures (RPE) plus 10% (to compensate for more expensive specialized programs) as the true cost, and the state would provide a grant for 2/3 of this amount for each out-of-district student attending these schools. Their sending towns would be responsible for paying tuition for the amount up to, but not to exceed, the difference between the average NCEP and the state's contribution.
3. Allow each sending town's current ECS per pupil grant to reflect its ability to pay and give some relief to less wealthy towns.

For Example: Direct cost = \$11,150    2/3 = \$7,471(state aid)    1/3 = \$3,679(sending town tuition)

TABLE 1: ECS GRANTS AND MAXIMUM TUITIONS

<i>Town</i>	<i>ECS grant (2011-2012)</i>	<i>Maximum tuition charged</i>	<i>"ECS money retained" (even though student leaves)</i>
Ansonia	\$5,241	\$3,679	\$1,562
Naugatuck	\$5,719	\$3,679	\$2,040
Southbury	\$755	\$3,679	none
Bridgewater	\$592	\$3,679	none

(2/3 cost - existing grant = \$386 new funds X 4,646 students = \$1.8 million more for magnets)

YEAR ONE: 25% of the increase = \$450,000 for magnets

YEAR TWO: 25% of the increase = \$450,000 for magnets

YEAR THREE: 25% of the increase = \$450,000 for magnets

YEAR FOUR: 25% of the increase = \$450,000 for magnets

TOTAL AFTER FOUR YEARS: \$1.8 million for more for magnets

Regional Agriscience Schools - Total new money needed: \$12.4 million dollars

a.  $\$7,471 - \$1,750 = \$5,721 \times 1,838$  out of district students = \$10.5 million dollars for out of district students

(2/3 cost - existing grant = \$5,721 new funds X 1,838 students = 10.5 million more)

b.  $\$3,000 - \$1,750 = \$1,250 \times 1,407$  in district students = \$1.8 million dollars for in-district students

(new in-district funding level - existing grant = \$1,250 new funds X 1,407 students = \$1.8 million)

YEAR ONE: 25% of the increase = \$3.1 million for agriscience

YEAR TWO: 25% of the increase = \$3.1 million for agriscience

YEAR THREE: 25% of the increase = \$3.1 million for agriscience

YEAR FOUR: 25% of the increase = \$3.1 million for agriscience

- Total new money needed in 1<sup>st</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 2<sup>nd</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 3<sup>rd</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 4<sup>th</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million

TOTAL NEW MONEY TO ACCOMPLISH MORE EQUITY AFTER FOUR YEARS: \$14.2 million

Recommendation #3: Allow each sending town's current ECS per pupil grant to reflect their ability to pay and give some relief to less wealthy towns.

Result #3:

Sending towns, regardless of which program they send their students to, will get a reduction in tuition payments required (because of the increased level of state support per student). Also, since they have always "retained" the ECS payments for these students even though they leave their towns, the current ECS structure reflects their ability to pay, thus this concurs with the current SDE practice of ushering more state support to towns with more financial need. (i.e. less wealthy cities like Naugatuck get to "keep" much more of their larger piece of ECS money than wealthier towns like Southbury.)

Recommendation #4: The increased subsidy for both schools would be phased in equally over four years (25% each year).

Result #4:

- Total new money needed in 1<sup>st</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 2<sup>nd</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 3<sup>rd</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million
- Total new money needed in 4<sup>th</sup> year: \$450,000 (magnets) plus 3.1 million (agriscience) = \$3.55 million

TOTAL NEW MONEY TO ACCOMPLISH MORE EQUITY AFTER FOUR YEARS: \$14.2 million

Recommendation #5: Due to their unique funding structures, charter schools and vocational technical schools would be left out of the ECS formula.

Result #5:

Because their current funding mechanisms are unique and vastly different from the regional magnet schools and the agriscience programs, charter schools and Vocational Technical schools are left as they are, and would remain out of the ECS formula.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Although this proposal will cost the state more money, it is actually relieving the 150+ sending towns of that same amount of money due to decreasing the tuition charged to these towns, since

