Choice and Consequences: Public Schools of Choice in Connecticut
MANY CHOICES = MANY TENSIONS

Public schools of choice

Broad spectrum of school choice programs serve different educational goals

Different types of choice programs exist in addition to neighborhood public schools

Multitude of choices create certain tensions
WHY SO MANY CHOICES?
Over 100 years of school choice

Each type of school has its own legislative history:

1917: Statewide Technical High School System
1933: Statewide Vocational Agriculture Program
1993: Interdistrict Magnet Schools
1996: Charter Schools
WHY SO MANY CHOICES?

Over 100 years of school choice

Once each program is established, it:

- becomes a part of the Connecticut education landscape

- develops constituencies of students, parents, teachers, and administrators who come to depend on, and often advocate for, the program
SCHOOL CHOICE TENSIONS
The direct consequences of choice

1. Competition for students
   Students leaving for choice programs means fewer enrolled at the local (sending) district
   Shrinking statewide student body means heightened competition for students

2. Competition for funds
   Some choice programs cause the local district to receive a reduced Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant
   Choice programs also compete for funds in the state budget process
SCHOOL CHOICE TENSIONS
The direct consequences of choice

3. Tuition costs
Participation in some choice programs mean the local (sending) district must pay tuition to the receiving choice program

4. Demand outpaces supply
Demand for placement is greater than available slots
Long waits on waiting lists lead to frustration/disillusionment with programs
TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS
Formally the "Technical Education and Career System"

DESCRIPTION

Curriculum: traditional high school curriculum with technical and career instruction

Funding: 100% state-funded

Organization: state-run system in the process of becoming an independent agency by the 2020-21 school year

TENSIONS

Competition for students (application process)

Competition for funds (agency status)
AGRISCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTERS
AGRICIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

Formally "regional agricultural science and technology education centers"

DESCRIPTION

Curriculum: Vo-ag curriculum in addition to traditional high school curriculum

Funding: Sending district pays tuition, state provides a per-student grant, and sponsoring (host) district provides remaining support

Organization: Most centers embedded in existing local high schools

Sponsoring local district's board of education operates

TENSIONS

Competition for funds (per student grant recently increased; sending district pays student tuition)
Charter Schools
CHARTER SCHOOLS
Offering greater operational freedom

DESCRIPTION

Curriculum: traditional curriculum; many have college preparation theme

Funding: state per student grant; private sources, including foundations

Organization: school governing council made up of private citizens; state charters are independent of local districts, while local charters are part of local districts

TENSIONS

Competition for state funds (per student grant increase)

Competition for students (discipline)
MAGNET SCHOOLS
MAGNET SCHOOLS
Assisting in desegregation

DESCRIPTION

Curriculum: themed curriculum designed to draw students from multiple school districts to promote racial, ethnic, and economic diversity

Funding: per-pupil state grants, with tuition from sending districts for most magnets as permitted by law

Organization: operated by school districts ("host magnets") or regional education service centers or other nonprofit entities ("RESC magnets")

TENSIONS

Competition for students (self-selection; shrinking suburban enrollment)
Competition for funds (Sheff effect; tuition costs)
Demand outpaces supply (enrollment lottery/waiting lists)
CHOICE PROGRAM FUNDING
# Choice Program Funding

The state's contribution

<table>
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<th>Fiscal Year (FY)</th>
<th>Charter Schools</th>
<th>Vo-Ag Centers</th>
<th>Magnet Schools</th>
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| Five-Year Growth Rate | 25.0 % | 19.9% | 4.9% | -1.4% |

* Reflects appropriated funds, not actual expenditures.
CHOICE PROGRAM FUNDING

The state's contribution

FY 18 STATE FUNDING COMPARISON: SELECTED CHOICE PROGRAMS VERSUS ECS*

- Agriscience: 0.4%
- Charter schools: 4.3%
- Tech schools: 6.0%
- Magnet schools: 12.4%

Total Funding: $2.5 billion

ECS: 76.9%

* Values rounded to the nearest tenth.
QUESTIONS?

Thank You

We hope you found our presentation informative.

Supplemental resources on these topics are available from our Legislative Library:
