

CONNECTICUT 2018

Candidate's Guide to Public Education:

The Facts and Why They Matter for Our Future



The
FACTS

vs.

The
FUTURE



on Key Education Issues

- Funding Transparency and Resources
- Supporting CT's Teachers of Tomorrow
- Competitiveness for All CT Students



CANDIDATE'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CT:

The Facts and Why They Matter for Our Future

We can all agree: Connecticut is looking ahead to the future and planning for new fiscal and social realities. Students must be at the center of these game-changing initiatives, and meeting their needs will secure the fiscal health and growth of our state for generations to come.

Connecticut's progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress appears to have stagnated for the past few years. Our results show wide achievement gaps and low-performance among high-need communities, even as compared nationally to their peers.¹

At every level, candidates running in the Connecticut 2018 elections are uniquely positioned with platforms to raise the critical issues that presently face public education, and to consider solutions for preparing the students and schools of the future.

Discussing these issues on the campaign trail will help to foster debate and inform the public about key levers for improving public education.

Specifically, we look at:

- **Funding Transparency and Resources**
- **Supporting CT's Teachers of Tomorrow**
- **Competitiveness for All CT Students**



Funding Transparency & Resources

Article 8 of the Connecticut Constitution tasks the General Assembly with implementing free, public elementary and secondary education in Connecticut, as well as a perpetual school fund to support public schools—for the equal benefit of all. However, it has been clear for some time that students across our state do not benefit equitably from the funding system in existence today.

In the future, CT needs a funding system that:

- **Is transparent and consistent; and**
- **Sends increased resources to the schools/districts with greatest need.**

Funding Allocation:

The Facts

In CT, approximately 96% of public education funding comes from state and local sources. However, the amount of per-student spending still varies widely between districts and among type of schools.



CT uses 11 different funding formulas to allocate dollars to different types of public schools.²

The Future

Our education funding system should offer more transparency, should consistently allocate funding among different districts and types of schools, and should effectively track how those funds are being spent.

Student Need:

The Facts

CT's persistent achievement gap demonstrates an ongoing struggle to educate high-need student populations.³ However, these are precisely the demographics that are growing in our state.



Even as our public school student population is decreasing,⁴ the number of students with higher needs is increasing⁵.

The Future

Our education funding system should transparently and consistently allocate funding so that the students and school districts with the greatest need get the resources they require.

Supporting CT's Teachers

Research shows that teachers are the most important school-based factor influencing student learning.⁶
The second most important factor is educational leadership.⁷

Our school system should be built to develop, recruit, and empower the best teachers and leaders.

In the future, CT needs a human capital system that:

- Decreases certification barriers and increases talent pipelines;
- Brings more educators of color to our schools; and
- Uses evaluations to individualize professional learning.

Teacher and Administrator Certification:



The Facts

Every year, CT school districts face shortage areas and must leave positions unfilled. The lowest-performing districts are disproportionately impacted by shortages, often having to staff their classrooms with long-term substitutes.⁸ The State Department of Education has suggested that over-regulation may be a cause.⁹



The Future

We should reduce certification hurdles that prevent qualified educators from working in our schools, and build pipelines to bring in the high-quality professionals we need.



Between 1999-2016, the population of English learners saw a large increase, but there was a 60% drop in the number of teachers working in bilingual classrooms—with many openings resulting from recruitment barriers.¹⁰

Recruiting Educators of Color:



The Facts

Students in public schools should see adults of color as educators and role models.



The Future

We should promote diversity in the education workforce by finding ways to recruit and retain more educators of color.



While about 46% of the student population in CT is made up of students of color,¹¹ the state has under 9% teachers of color¹².

Career Development:



The Facts

Research shows that professional development based on evaluation results can impact teacher performance.¹³ However, CT's existing evaluation and support practices are uneven among districts and do not reward professional growth.



The Future

We should build a robust human capital system that provides educators with training and leadership opportunities, incentivizes working in high-need schools, and differentiates professional learning that responds to educators' individual needs and evaluations.



In 2016, CT's teacher evaluation model identified 98% of teachers as either "proficient" or exemplary.¹⁶

For principals, professional development has the potential to reduce leader turnover,¹⁴ which is detrimental to school performance¹⁵.

Competitiveness for All CT Students

As CT plans for an economy of the future, skilled job vacancies throughout our state indicate a need for workforce development. In fact, a Connecticut Business & Industry Association survey at the end of 2017 indicates that 48% of employers seeking to hire in 2017 couldn't fill open positions.¹⁷

We should monitor student progress throughout the public education system, and ensure that students are on track to graduate with the skills to succeed in college and their careers.

In the future, CT needs to ensure competitiveness by:

- **Using a variety of methods to frequently monitor student progress and intervene early; and**
- **Increasing accountability through state-led supervision.**

Academics:

The Facts

On the latest statewide standardized test, students across CT struggled to meet academic expectations.



On the 2017 state test, less than half of students statewide met expectations in Math.¹⁸

The Future

We should use a variety of methods to frequently track students' growth, and address their preparedness when they are falling behind.

Accountability:

The Facts

In 2012, CT launched the Alliance District program, a state-led turnaround effort that gives low-performing districts extra resources for improvement.¹⁹ A recent study found that the state has made annual changes to the scope and requirements of the Alliance District program,²⁰ reducing accountability.



In the 1990s, CT and Massachusetts were producing similar academic outcomes for students from low-income families. However, MA started to show significant progress when it undertook bold reforms—including significant accountability measures and tiered intervention authorities when schools fail to improve.²⁰

The Future

We should establish increased levels of accountability and support for low-performing schools and districts. The state also needs adequate staffing and resources to supervise turnaround efforts.

Sources

¹ Governor Malloy Press Release (2018). *State's Results on National Assessment Show Reduction in Some Achievement Gaps Since 2011*. Retrieved April 2018 at portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2018/04-2018/Gov-Malloy-States-Results-on-National-Assessment-Shows-Reduction-in-Some-Achievement-Gaps-Since-2011. See also, e.g: Mass.gov (2018). Press Release: *Massachusetts NAEP Results Lead the Nation for 12th Year*. Retrieved April 2018 at <https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-naep-results-lead-nation-for-12th-year> (describing Massachusetts' top scores on NAEP, and identifying Hispanic and Black students as having their best results ever on the 2017 Reading NAEP).

² Connecticut's different funding formulas are for: Local School Districts, State Charter Schools, Local Charter Schools, CT Technical High School System, Regional Agriscience Centers, District Host Magnet Schools, RESC-Operated Sheff Magnet Schools, Edison Magnet School, Non-Sheff RESC Magnets enrolling less than 55% of students from 1 town, Non-Sheff RESC Magnets enrolling 55% of students or more from 1 town, Non-Sheff Host Magnet Schools. (Connecticut School Finance Project. (2017). *School Finance 101: An introduction to how public schools are funded in Connecticut*. Retrieved March 2018 at ctschoolfinance.org/reports/school-finance-101).

³ Thomas, R. (CT Mirror, 2017). *CT's Report Card: Achievement Gap Shrinks But for Wrong Reason*. Retrieved March 2018 at <https://ctmirror.org/2015/10/28/cts-report-card-achievement-gap-shrinks-but-for-wrong-reason/> ("Connecticut still has some of the largest gaps in the United States..."); National Assessment of Educational Progress website. *NAEP Data Explorer*. Retrieved March 2018 at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/naeptools.aspx> (exploring Connecticut's achievement gaps by grade, year, and subgroup—and comparing results to other states).

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⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2017). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Retrieved March 2018 at <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment> (demonstrating increase in Connecticut's number of low-income students, English learners, and students receiving special education services).

⁶ Rand Education (2012). *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement*. Retrieved March 2018 at https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP69321-2012-09.html.

⁷ National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013). *Leadership Matters: What the Research Says About the Importance of Principal Leadership*. Retrieved March 2018 at <http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/LeadershipMatters.pdf>.

⁸ Connecticut State Department of Education Performance Office (2015). *Data Bulletin*. Retrieved March 2018 at <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3143774/Change-in-teacher-count-shortage-areas-Exhibit.pdf> (Page 3 graph showing that Education Reform districts have the highest number of vacancies due to lack of qualified applicants in the 2014-15 school year).

⁹ Thomas, J. (CT Mirror, 2017). *Facing Teacher Shortages, State to Propose Certification Overhaul*. Retrieved March 2018 at <https://ctmirror.org/2017/08/08/facing-teacher-shortages-state-to-propose-certification-overhaul/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Connecticut State Department of Education. *Public School Enrollment Tables*. Retrieved March 2018 at <http://edsight.ct.gov/>.

¹² Connecticut State Department of Education. *Educator Demographics: Race/Ethnicity*. Retrieved March 2018 <http://edsight.ct.gov/>.

¹³ See e.g. Taylor, E. and Tyler J. (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011). *The Effect of Evaluation on Performance: Evidence from Longitudinal Student Achievement Data of Mid-Career Teachers*. Retrieved March 2018 at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16877> (finding that quality classroom-observation-based evaluations can improve mid-career teacher performance during and subsequent to the period of evaluation).

¹⁴ Rowland, C. (Education Policy Center, 2017). *Principal Professional Development: New Opportunities for a Renewed State Focus*. Retrieved March 2018 at <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Principal-Professional-Development-New-Opportunities-State-Focus-February-2017.pdf>.

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¹⁶ Megan, K. (Hartford Courant, 2016). *State Released Some Evaluation Ratings for Teachers*. Retrieved March 2018 at <http://www.courant.com/education/hc-teacher-evaluation-data-0202-20160202-story.html>.

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¹⁸ On the 2017 administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, 54.2% of students met or exceeded expectations in English, 45.6% in Math. (Data retrieved from: Connecticut State Department of Education. EdSight. Retrieved March 2018 at edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do.)

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²⁰ Weiner, J. (UConn Neag School of Education, 2017). *Focus: How Long-term Planning Processes Can Improve State-Led Turnaround in Connecticut*. Retrieved March 2018 at https://cepa.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/399/2017/04/alliance-district-study__1_.pdf.