

**SCHOOL CHOICE PROPOSAL for CONNECTICUT.  
Addendum for how it affects Hartford Students**

1. Connecticut's K – 12 students shall carry an "EV" for Education Value, amounting to 80% for the pro-rata cost of educating all of CT's K-12 students from the current year.

a. Every Connecticut school that is able to accept new students shall welcome the student and the EV funds the student carries.

b. The 20% remainder represents the "buffer" funding that the state shall insure goes to a departing student's old school.

In future years, this 80/20 split will be altered towards a higher share for the EV and a lower "buffer" share. Schools that are serving their students well will see little to no enrollment drop-offs and thus will have no need for the buffer.

The goal is to mix good business practices with a government assurance that some expected institutions will still be there for the year ahead. Serving special needs students becomes a good business practice (rather than a draining obligation), and the vision is for Special Needs students to carry vouchers with two to five times the regular EV amount.

2. Each school shall offer price-points for each category of student. Families considering use of transportation, athletic facilities, other extracurricular activities, and special needs shall see the pricing of their area school and neighboring schools. This menu shall be available throughout March and April. Schools can choose whether to admit on a rolling basis or using a firm deadline, but the final statewide deadline shall be April 30.

3. Schools shall roughly determine their funding needs by May 15 each year, following enlistment commitments from parents that are due by April 30. The state will facilitate hirings by schools for new teachers to meet high demand,

and for transfers of good teachers in schools where demand for the school has fallen off.

4. There is no distinction among "type" of school. Any school meeting the minimum state standard for schooling, whether oriented towards a career-type, a learning-type, a curriculum-type, or a socialization-type is eligible to receive EV funds.

5. Out-of-state students are welcome. If they carry EV funds from their state, Connecticut shall credit their schools with 100% of the EV they carry, so long as the funds are received by Jul 15.

6. The program envisions wide TEACHER choice and staffer choice as well. Those wishing to teach in another Connecticut town shall have their accrued benefits applied seamlessly to another town, just as they currently would if switching to another building within the school district. Since many parent decisions are based on the teachers and administrators their children will be seeing, Administrator and Teacher movements among CT schools shall be made public in the September – February period, to make transparent for the March & April parent choices.

7. Children transferring from one CT school to another during the school year shall have their EV reduced by 15% for every calendar month that has passed since July. An October withdrawal means 45% (15% x 3 months) stays with the school and the family has 55% EV to use at another school for the rest of the year.

8. UNUSED EV. Some schools will be able to price their services below EV and even below 80% of EV. Parents choosing that more frugal school can apply the excess EV to future years at a more expensive school or present years funding approved after-school activities.

9. ACCUMULATION. It is suggested that parents who envision their child attending an expensive high school but content in a less-expensive middle school accumulate their EV credits
10. TRANSFER. It is suggested that parents with multiple children who have a child needing extra services (travel athletic teams, specialized courses, special ed instruction) be allowed to fully transfer EV credits among family members. A promising child who aspires to an expensive college prep school might have it fully funded using the unused portions of siblings' EV credits.
11. As with universities, parents have complete choice for their students. Should no choice be appealing in the current year, parents are urged to band together to create a neighborhood school, which will, after one year, be allowed the same EV funding as established schools.
12. Since new students at a school are fully funded via EVs and supplemental parent funds, this regimen creates no "budget crunch". If the marginal cost to educate a new student is \$11,000, the current EV of \$16,800 more than covers it. If parents are coming to a specialized school where the marginal cost of adding a student is \$20,000, then parents are asked to pay \$3200 to supplement the \$16,800 EV.
13. Special learning needs students will almost certainly see better options. Currently, districts FIGHT to not accept students with special learning needs. A regimen of parent choice means some schools will broadly welcome special needs students, and their high EV funds. There will be more such students in the welcoming schools (making these students less isolated) and there will be more teachers to spread their expertise.

14. In conclusion, Connecticut is offering its families choices in the manner used by universities. As with universities, K-12 schools will have the flexibility to alter their offerings to meet perceived demand. As with universities, K – 12 schools will have their enrollments based partly on outside funding; here EVs are taking the place of guaranteed student loans.

## 15. ADDRESSING CONCERNS

*What if a school sees a large drop in committed attendees?*

All schools have the 20% buffer, with which they can continue to fund salaries and materials. Should the drop exceed 20%, the school will need to reduce payroll, but a well-managed school can typically run on reduced payroll if there is a large reduction in students. Should a VERY large drop occur...that school probably deserves to close. Its students are clearly showing preferences for other nearby schools.

*What if a school sees a large INCREASE in committed attendees?*

Similar to university admission, schools that are physically limited may have to defer students for a year. More likely, they can add a few teachers or part-time instructors. Some can offer every student admission in "annexed space" nearby, offering the same good teachers in an underused library, community center, or office building. Physical space is typically the least important factor in parents' decisions.

*Can EV be used for a private school?*

Yes. If a private school's opportunity for a child is best, the child can attend, with the EV going to the private school and 20% going to the child's last public school.

*What if many MA, RI or NY kids choose CT?*

Good!. It's for each school near the state border to assess whether it wants the out-of-staters and their 100% EV funds.

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## How School Choice affects West Hartford students and schools.

Because of its locale adjacent to two highly-financed cities with many families wanting to escape their home schools, if embracing school choice, West Hartford will see improvements to its finances, student options, and “diversity”.

In order of finances, options, and diversity, here is what West Hartford can expect at a minimum:

**Finances:** somewhere between \$6,000,000 and \$15,000,000 a year, depending on the number of students the town chooses to enlist and the largesse / frugality of its additional teachers and para-professional expansions.

In every upper grade, an estimated 250 Hartford and 100 New Britain families are looking to get their kids out of their current schools. At two children per family and say 25% willing to be in a suburban school, it's 175 children per grade. (These are conservative estimates; indeed, at the high school level, New Britain's numbers are more likely higher, as NBHS has been ranked the worst high school in the state.)

West Hartford is the best suburban alternative for all these families. While some neighboring families will choose Farmington, Glastonbury, and Newington, likely 40 to 100 children per grade per year will be eagerly riding to West Hartford.

Since West Hartford has overcapacity in space and with its good reputation and good salaries can fairly easily expand its teaching and para-professional staff, a 40 – 100 per grade growth is relatively easy to accommodate (WH had nearly 1000 more students three, four and five decades ago).

At just the 40 per grade number (and add 20 for Kindergarten), this is 500 children. The vouchers they carry in Year One will be at least \$16,000 (the suggested plan for the legislature is \$20,000 to \$25,000). This is at least \$8,000,000 annually.

Costs to serve these added students are modest in grades K – 8 and **low** in grades 9-12, where larger class sizes are expected and students are mature enough to imbibe knowledge without hand-holding. But even if West Hartford wishes to keep its current student : teacher ratio, financially it's a net gain.

Every 20 students brings in \$320,000 to \$500,000 – plenty to fund an extra teacher, para, software, and lab equipment. Because CT Transit from Hartford to W.H is ample, and because Dattco is based in New Britain, per student transport costs here are minimal.

**Student Options:** at the middle and high school levels, under-unrolled classes can be filled. Indeed, some class offerings not currently available can reach “critical mass”. Bristow, Conard, Hall, K.P., and Sedgwick can become “mini-universities” in terms of course offerings.

Sports teams and other after-school offerings reach critical mass, so our students, current and new, have more after-school options as well.

**Diversity:** Students from neighboring towns add diversity of background, mindset, race, and talent. To the extent “diversity is strength”, West Hartford enhances it strength instantaneously. To the extent that West Hartford residents want to see a “rising tide” lift the whole area, more back-and-forth travel, thought, and experiences by students does this.

The return direction becomes more comfortable too. Students with new classmates from Hartford and New Britain lose their reluctance to do things across the town borders, from events, to extracurricular activities, to just play dates.

For some students, the outbound direction may apply. Hartford's Learning Corridor and Windsor's tech magnet offer WH students some opportunities unavailable now in West Hartford.

**Bottom line.** West Hartford has built itself to a high reputation. At no cost, and likely substantial gain, the town can use it to attract more students and turn high reputation to marquee status. The current status, plus a school choice regimen means an uplift in finances, choices, and diversity.

More on the Legislative proposal:  
Please email [firmconnect@gmail.com](mailto:firmconnect@gmail.com)

More on Hartford, N.B. & West Hartford:  
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## **How School Choice likely affects metro Hartford students**

Because Hartford County is the most compact of CT's eight counties, School Choice gives metro Hartford students more options than anywhere else. Parents need not drive more than 30 minutes to enlist in a school that's right for their children. Many parents will not need to drive anywhere thanks to the very good CT Transit system already in place.

This School Choice program envisions schools that chaperone their youngsters to CT Transit stops, either on foot or by van where the stop is distant. Some schools may do it officially, while others will enlist parents to do old-fashioned "car-pooling".

With ample choices, parents in metro Hartford will likely see five or more schools at each grade level to attend with no long commute. Armed with an EV of \$16,800, the cost-conscious parent will almost certainly have multiple schools whose tuitions are below this, leaving these parents EV money to spend on arts, athletics, music, or other education endeavors. Armed with an EV of \$16,800, parents who are willing to spend a bit more on their own can now meet private school tuitions in the \$18,000 - \$22,000 range. This puts many more schools in realistic reach.

The 80% formula, if broken out narrowly instead of statewide, would yield some higher EVs for urban students and rural students. Should the state use regional 80% thresholds instead of one statewide threshold, Hartford parents would see a \$20,000 per student voucher. This owes to the \$25,000 cost per student in Hartford.

(A third alternative, matching EVs to "special needs" may be deemed fairest by the legislature).

In ANY scenario, city of Hartford students will be in play for almost every private school in Hartford County. This owes to the tradition of well-funded schools desiring a wide mix of students and giving need-based scholarships to land them. Our founders have experience with tuition policies at five area private schools:

Aspire Academy  
Avon Old Farms  
Independent Day School  
Kingswood-Oxford  
Loomis Chaffee  
St. Timothy's

Among these six (two K-8, two 9 – 12, and two 6 – 12) every one of them offers steep discounts to children from supportive families, almost irrespective of their finances. Even a \$40,000 tuition means a \$16,800 voucher plus 5% to 10% from the family will allow admission offers.

The founders have also interviewed public school superintendents and town managers in metro Hartford. Every one of them stated that their schools could accommodate many outside students if full voucher money came with the students. (Currently Hartford students enlisting in West Hartford or Wethersfield schools bring only \$4000 to the hosting district. \$16,800 makes a monumental difference).

Finally, at least two City of Hartford officials have stated that vouchers to allow Hartford children to easily move to a school in another part of the city would be easy to facilitate and welcome.

Aside from private schools, public suburban schools, and public Hartford schools, a fourth choice arises thanks to the vouchers: new schools, right in Hartford. The triple benefit of parents forming their own neighborhood schools is:

Parents' choice of subjects to teach  
Parents' choice of rules, and  
Parents' criteria for hiring teachers.

Buildings with vacant space for classrooms abound in Hartford. Distances are close. And the population is dense. This confluence almost assures critical mass for parents who want to start a neighborhood school.

An element for every Connecticut school in a dense area is diversity of interests. Parents wanting a school for Classics, for Bio-sciences, or for computing wizardry all will find a critical mass from Hartford and the surrounding suburbs.

