



MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT BULLETIN



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EDUCATION FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS SENT TO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Ad Hoc Committee to Study ECS and Choice Funding completed its work this past Monday. The report now goes to the State Board of Education for discussion and action. The “Core Values” and “Design Principles” for a public education funding system adopted by the Committee are below.

Newspaper reports have failed to provide an accurate description of the Committee’s recommendations. These recommendations were adopted as a package, and thus must be read together – not in isolation. They provide the framework for a funding system – they do not necessarily call for a new formula.

The recommendations that the State pay at least 50% of the cost of operating public schools, and that the funding calculations for children enrolled in a public school outside their district be scaled to reflect actual savings and costs, are designed to ensure a stable state funding base, and to respect the right to an adequate public educational opportunity for all children.

CCM opposed the last phrase in Design Principle #6 as it was interpreted by some to mean that it would mandate -- as does the present Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) -- municipalities and their property taxpayers to make up for inadequate state education funding with local property tax dollars.

Ad Hoc Committee to Study ECS and Choice Funding Core Values

1. Every student has a right to, and the state has an obligation to ensure that every student receives, a high-quality education provided by highly qualified and effective educators, irrespective of his/her race, ethnicity, wealth, zip code and individual needs, which means targeting a larger percentage of funding for students in need.
2. Within limitations, parents should be able to enroll their student in any public school choice opportunity.
3. State public school funding decisions should primarily focus on individual students and their learning needs while accounting for different fiscal capacities and other conditions of communities.
4. In addition to highly functioning traditional schools, inter- and intra-district public school choice is an effective part of a strong, diverse statewide public school system that has the potential to improve student outcomes, reduce racial and economic isolation, foster regionalism and contain system costs, including transportation.

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This bulletin has been sent to CCM-member mayors, first selectmen, and town/city managers.

5. Excluding federal funds, the State should pay for at least 50 percent of the cost of operating public schools and state funds allocated for education should be spent on education locally.
6. The ECS formula and accompanying programs are not functioning effectively, thereby disadvantaging many different types of communities.

Design Principles for a Public Education Funding System

1. The system must be student based and transparent with both the need factors of students and the income, the property wealth and property tax burden of the communities in which the students reside consistently included as significant factors.
2. When children are enrolled in a public school outside of their school district, the funding calculations for those children must be scaled to reflect actual savings and costs.
3. While serving programmatic goals, school districts must have flexibility to deploy categorical and other funding in ways that respond to student need and to develop incentives to economize.
4. Given that access to choice options is in the interest of the state, then the state must accept responsibility for the additional associated costs and provide a greater portion of school funding statewide.
5. Any funding system must ensure that the state provides at least 50% of non-federal funding for education statewide. Given that all children must receive an equal opportunity for a free public education, the proportion of state funding must be related to the wealth and need of a community, but all communities must receive a minimum amount of state funding regardless of wealth.
6. Variables in any funding formula, including the foundation amount, weights for student need, and share ratios, should be based on a rigorous analysis that considers effective spending patterns and promising student outcomes to determine the appropriate level of state aid, ensuring that students will be funded at least at the level the formula dictates at whatever public school they attend.
7. The transition to any new system should be phased in to give the state, local districts and choice options an opportunity to adjust.

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For more information regarding this or other state-local issues, please contact Jim Finley, Executive Director and CEO of CCM, at (203) 498-3000.