

## House Republican Press Release

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### **A View From Inside: Connecticut's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula**



*By State Representative Ruth Fahrbach*

There is always a fair amount of discussion concerning education funding at the Capitol, and the conversation usually revolves around the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula. This year is no exception. The formula, enacted in 1988, was created to replace the Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) education funding formula and the Education Enhancement Act grants.

According to a report by the legislature's non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR), the ECS formula was designed to help towns spend a required minimum amount of money for each student based the percentage of state aid it receives, and on a town's relative wealth. The formula uses mastery test scores in addition to a poverty measure to indicate educational need, providing more funds to towns whose students do poorly on tests and requiring them to spend more, and providing a financial reward for student improvement over time.

There are over 50 calculations that go into figuring out how much state education aid a specific town receives. Simply put, the ECS formula takes the number of students in each school district, multiplied first by the amount that the state has determined a district should spend to provide an adequate education and then by an aid percentage determined by the district's wealth. The result of this calculation is the district's ECS grant.

According to OLR report 2000 R-0967, the ECS formula also recognizes that not all students are the same, and some cost more to educate than others do. For example, it is assumed students who come from poor economic backgrounds or who lack proficiency in

English cost more to educate because they need more services. These students tend to be concentrated in large cities and poorer communities. The formula seeks to take this situation into account by weighting districts' student counts for educational need to drive more money to the needier communities.

Currently, in addition to receiving a base of state aid, some towns receive supplemental grants if they have high concentrations of remedial and poor students. Towns that are members of regional school districts receive a regional aid bonus.

The ECS formula was to be phased in over four years starting in 1989. But the state began to change the formula, mostly to reduce its fiscal impact, even before it took effect. The formula was substantially revised in 1995 and has been changed nearly every session since then, according to the Office of Legislative Research.

It should be noted that while the two budget proposals currently before the legislature tout increasing education funding to towns, most municipalities, including my towns of East Granby, Suffield and Windsor would send more money to Hartford in the form of a state income tax increase than they would receive back from Hartford in the form of education funding.

If you would like to read the full OLR report, please contact my office at 240-8700 and request a copy of the OLR ECS Report 2000-R-0967.

*Rep. Ruth Fahrbach represents the 61<sup>st</sup> District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby in the General Assembly.*