

What will our children lose?

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Impact Of Mid-Year ECS Reductions In State Financial Aid To Education In 2016-17 & Anticipated Further Reduction In State Financial Aid To Education In 2017-18

The What Will Our Children Lose Coalition (WWOCLC), composed of the CT Association of School Business Officials (CASBO), the CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the CT Association of Schools (CAS) and the CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), is concerned about the impact that the mid-year reduction in state financial aid to education in 2016-17 and the anticipated further reduction in state financial aid to education in 2017-18 is having on the quality of the educational programs that are being offered to Connecticut children. While the WWOCLC recognizes the apparently severe fiscal restraints that Connecticut now faces and does not second guess Governor Malloy or the Legislature in regards to how much governmental services they can provide, the WWOCLC wants to make it clear to all Connecticut residents the impact these reductions in state aid for education will have on the programs offered to public school children. That impact will be felt primarily in the following areas:

- **Support Services for Children Not Yet Qualifying for Special Education Services**

All school systems in Connecticut provide support for children whose acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills is not progressing as quickly as it should. These children are not so far behind that they qualify for mandated special education services. These support services not only help these children accelerate their learning to a satisfactory pace but also enable school districts to save money by not having to qualify the children for special education services. ***Reducing or eliminating these support services will result in decreased learning opportunities for some students and eventual mandated expense increases for school systems.***

- **Extra-Curricular Activities**

School districts attempt to provide a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to offer a well-rounded educational program for children and to involve children in learning who would not otherwise be engaged. These activities that include athletic, arts and academic pursuits are often what children remember most in their educational experiences because the activities are well aligned with their interests. ***Reducing or eliminating these extra-curricular activities will result in students being less engaged in the entire educational process and in absorbing less even when they are engaged.***

- **Curricular Offerings**

When faced with difficult budget decisions, school districts make every effort to preserve all curricular offerings, even non-mandated courses that serve relatively few students. If there is a noticeable reduction in state aid to education over the next two school years, several districts will be forced to consider reducing or eliminating at least some of these offerings entirely. This action is currently being considered as districts design their budget requests for the next school year. Curricular offerings that may be affected include elective high school courses for which there are relatively low student enrollments and all-day kindergarten which is not mandated by statute or regulation. The high school elective classes that may be cut are ones that allow students to complete a multi-year experience in modern languages and/or enable some students to complete college level classes in high school and/or courses that serve as major sources of educational engagement. All day kindergarten has proven to be very effective for providing young children the time they need to get prepared for the more formal school setting that will follow. ***Reduction or elimination of curricular offerings, therefore, could compromise children as they begin their education and could reduce both their learning and engagement as they finish their public education.***

- **Maintenance of Facilities**

Since school districts want to preserve as many programs as possible that directly affect children in difficult economic circumstances, they almost always postpone as many facilities maintenance projects. While this action saves money in the short run, it inevitably results in greater expenditures in the future. Maintenance issues that are not addressed do not go away and do not remain static. They increase over time, if they are not addressed. As a result, a maintenance project postponed one year will result in a much larger and more expensive project in future years. ***Postponing maintenance projects, therefore, will result in greater expenditures over time as opposed to implementing the projects when they are first needed.***

The WWOCLC remains ready to discuss any of these issues with any and all state policy makers and is ready to assist them as they meet the difficult challenge of crafting a state budget for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

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