

CONNECTICUT COALITION FOR ***JUSTICE*** IN EDUCATION FUNDING

Letter to the Editor, *Hartford Courant*
September 1, 2007

Are Funds Sufficient To Ensure Vision?

Seismic transformation of the Hartford schools is indeed overdue [editorial, Aug. 27, "Buy Into School Change"]. Nevertheless, many important policy questions deserve to be raised about the new plan for an "all-choice" system.

Foremost is the question of whether fiscal reality matches the long-term costs of the ambitious reforms being envisioned. Quite simply, where will the money come from to cover the extra costs?

However educationally promising and strikingly bold this new vision may be, transforming neighborhood schools into a system of specialized schools and programs can be expected to magnify the district's current fiscal distress. Well-implemented magnet programs cost significantly more to operate than regular schools.

State aid increases recently passed by the General Assembly and governor amount to less than \$550 per pupil in new money for Hartford instructional operations in 2007-08, and even less in 2008-09. In terms of educational adequacy, the state will still be shortchanging the district by more than 40 percent. That's \$150 million annually, or \$6,700 per pupil, in nonexistent state funding for classroom operations that could, if available, turn the tide and finally support a first-rate education for every Hartford pre-K-12 student.

Adequate funding alone cannot ensure high-performing schools. But the absence of adequate funding most assuredly will sour enthusiasm and soon scuttle even the best-laid plans for Hartford's turnaround.

Successfully implementing and sustaining this or some other daring plan within this academically floundering district is key to the city's revitalization and the health of the entire region and state.

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