



Addressing Connecticut's Educational Divides: The Key to Success in the Global Economy

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K-12 Education in Connecticut: The Basics

- There are over 577,000 students in Connecticut's K-12 educational system
- Connecticut's K-12 student population increased by 11.5 % in the past 10 years; 88% of all children in Connecticut are enrolled in public schools.
- Connecticut has 17 technical schools, 14 charter schools, 40 full-time magnet schools, 6 part-time magnet schools, and 166 school districts.¹
- Connecticut's 166 school districts are organized into 9 groupings called DRGs (District Reference Groups) based on socio-economic similarities such as median family income, level of parents' education and a primary language other than English being spoken in the home. The State Department of Education has said, "Reference group A contains the state's most affluent districts, while reference group I contains the state's poorest districts."²

Higher Education in Connecticut: The Basics

- Connecticut has over 75,904 full-time undergraduate students in its public higher educational system.³
- The University of Connecticut has 6 campuses. There also are 4 state universities, 12 community-technical colleges, and one non-traditional college – Charter Oak – in Connecticut.⁴
- In addition, there are approximately 54,897 full-time undergraduate students enrolled at Connecticut's two and four year independent colleges and universities.
- There are 4 national, independent colleges and universities, 19 regional, independent colleges and universities and 5 two-year independent colleges and universities in Connecticut.

While Connecticut's public K-12 and higher educational systems have long been regarded as among the best in the nation, Connecticut, like the United States, faces increasing challenges at home and abroad. The competitiveness of the global economy, our changing population, and the growing disparities among our cities and towns make clear the reality that Connecticut will not be the same place in 2020 as it is today unless we take dramatic steps to change our current course.

Here are just a few of the challenges facing Connecticut:

- **There are deep divides between Connecticut's cities and towns.** Students in the lowest income districts (DRG I, e.g. New Haven) as compared to the highest income districts (DRG A, e.g., Darien) are more than one and a half times less likely to attend preschool, five times less likely to pass the CMTs in Grades 4, 6, and 8 and 15 times more likely to drop out of high school.⁵
- Connecticut is one of the ten states with the worst racial disparity in high school graduation rates.⁶

Connecticut's demographics are changing.

- More than one in ten children in our K-12 schools live in homes where English is not the primary language. In some towns, the proportion is even greater, including Hartford (47%), New Britain (43%), and Bridgeport (38%).⁷
- Between 2000 and 2004, the number of English Language Learners in Connecticut's K-12 schools grew from 20,499 to 27,962. Almost half (13,030) of these 27,962 English Language Learners live in DRG I school districts.⁸
- Connecticut's median age is 7th highest in the nation (37.4 years). As the Baby Boomers reach

retirement age, the number of residents over age 65 is projected to grow by 44% (an additional 204,000 elderly) between 1995 and 2025.⁹ During this same time, Connecticut is expected to gain 337,000 people through international migration, a *doubling* of Connecticut's foreign-born population (and the 12th greatest increase in immigrants among the fifty states and Washington DC).¹⁰

- The Connecticut Economic Resource Center estimates that by 2020, 40% of new workers in the state will come from urban centers such as Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London and Waterbury.¹¹

Connecticut is losing a significant portion of its young adult population. The increasing costs of Connecticut higher education play a role in the out-migration.

- Between 1990 and 2000 Connecticut's out-migration of individuals between the ages of 18-34 was greater than in any other state in the nation.¹² Though it is widely accepted that university attendance in a particular state increases the likelihood that students will remain in that

state upon graduation, the cost of attending Connecticut's public colleges and universities has soared.

- Between 1989 and 2006, tuition and fees at the University of Connecticut system grew by 264%, at Connecticut State University by 316%, and at the Community-Technical Colleges by 238%.¹³
- According to the State Department of Higher Education, the University of Connecticut consistently ranks among the top 10 most expensive state universities tuition and fees, nationally and regionally.¹⁴

With an increasingly international population, Connecticut is well-positioned to compete in the global economy. However, it is clear that we must address the challenges presented by our changing demographics and persistent divides, particularly through increased attention and investment in education, to maintain Connecticut's place in the global economy and its status as a highly desired place for children, families and businesses to grow and thrive.

¹ Connecticut State Department of Education, *The Condition of Education in Connecticut*. (August 2006), pp 2-3.

² Connecticut State Department of Education, *The Condition of Education in Connecticut*. (August 2006), p. 5.

³ This enrollment estimate includes The University of Connecticut, the Connecticut State University system and the Community-Technical college system.

⁴ Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, *Connecticut Public Higher Education 2006 System Trends*.(2006), pp. 19-28.

⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut Education Database 2004 data, available:

<http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/DER/datacentral/MultipleSearch.asp>

⁶ The Civil Rights Project, The Urban Institute, Advocates for Children of New York and Results for America, "Study: Only "50-50" Chance of High School Graduation For US Minority Students, Weak Accountability Rules Found," regarding full study: "Losing Our Future How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis."

⁷ Connecticut State Department of Education, *Strategic School Profiles 2005-2006*, available at <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/districts/index.htm>.

⁸ Connecticut State Department of Education, School District Data, available at <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/districts/index.htm>.

⁹ S. Geballe, *Why Reducing Poverty is Necessary to Keep Connecticut Economically Competitive* (Connecticut Voices for Children, December 2004).

¹⁰ J. Fishkin, P. Canny & D. Hall, *Immigration in Connecticut*.(Connecticut Voices for Children, January 2005).

¹¹ Connecticut Economy Resource Center, Inc., *Benchmarking Connecticut's Economy: A Comparative Analysis of Innovation and Technology*. (2005), p 76.

¹² *Benchmarking Connecticut's Economy: A Comparative Analysis of Innovation and Technology: Overview*. Connecticut Economy Resource Center, Inc. p 6.

¹³ Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, *Connecticut Public Higher Education 2006 System Trends* (2006), pp. 44-46.

¹⁴ Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, *Connecticut Public Higher Education 2005 System Trends* (2006), p. 47.