CAPSS

LEADERSHIP
FOR THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

Dear Governor, Members of the Connecticut General Assembly, and Members of the School Finance Commission,

PLEASE ...

DO THE RIGHT THING

FOR CONNECTICUT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN 2027.

THE TIME to meet our state constitution's mandate for public education and to fulfill the last 50 years of promises IS NOW.

The economic and social prosperity of our state is in your hands.

Thank you for considering these recommendations,

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS)

November 2026

SINCE 2021

CAPSS has been annually publishing a Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools.

This year's update is the shortest in length, the most direct and the most critical. The new School Finance Commission has the unenviable job of preparing their report by January 2027, to be delivered to the recently-elected Governor and members of the General Assembly.

CAPSS is offering the enclosed set of five recommendations to assist the Commission's work, by highlighting the most significant changes needed to our present funding system.

The single greatest flaw in the implementation of school finance reform in Connecticut over the last 50 years has been the failure of the State to consistently fund the equalization formula: to allocate a growing ECS grant that covers inflation and equalizes towns' education expenditures.

It is simply wrong to have 169 towns pleading, every year, for the State to pay its share of K-12 education costs.

Without a doubt , progress has been made since 1979. But that initial progress — plus the educator salary enhancement of 1986, plus the compromise of 2017 — have now been stalled for too many years.

School funding of 169 towns, by a combination of State (40%) and Local (55%) contributions, was never intended to be one where the State was the lesser contributor.

This goal of more equalized resources for every town and every student, and this partnership requires the State to be the major contributor.

Neither party should ever have the right to say "I am sorry, I do not have my share of the funds needed this year."

Each partner must fulfill its obligation to the other, and to the students...

ANNUALLY, AND WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

Connecticut's Priority: Our Public Schools

No investment yields greater rewards than public education.

CAPSS firmly believes that no other public expenditure drives social and economic progress as powerfully as sustained investment in high-quality public schools.

Public education delivers the highest return on every dollar.

Every dollar spent on preschool, elementary, and secondary education generates exponential benefits – nurturing young minds early, empowering individuals for life, and dramatically reducing future social and economic costs.

Public education is America's greatest success story.

For nearly 200 years, our public schools have been a cornerstone of opportunity and growth. Compulsory, publicly funded education has propelled millions into better lives, strengthened communities, and fueled the nation's prosperity. No other institution in history has achieved such transformative impact.

The State's duty is clear and nonnegotiable.

Our Constitution guarantees free public education for every child. Temporary revenue shortfalls or competing budget priorities cannot erase this legal and moral obligation. The State must continue to lead and partner with all 169 towns to uphold this essential commitment.

The State must invest in the future consistently and courageously.

CAPSS urges policymakers to make continuous, sustainable investment in public education their top priority. The benefits are clear, the responsibility undeniable, and the future of our children – and our State – depends on it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ECS

1. Adopt a new ECS formula, with a significantly increased Foundation level, that by statute must be increased annually, by an inflation factor. This annual increase must be unassailable.

2. Expect the cost of fully funding the new formula to be in the neighborhood of $1 billion more than presently appropriated to ECS and it's two supplements (approximately $2.7 billion in 2026-27).

And plan to phase-in this formula over the next ten years at roughly $100 million of increased appropriation per year.

NOTE: The total cost of any new ECS grant could vary from $1-3 billion based on formula changes, the foundation level, new data, inflation, and attempts to provide local property tax relief as well as education expenditure equalization.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

3. Fully fund the existing Excess Cost Grant with incentives to keep students in the least restrictive environment (in their local district) and provide reimbursement on the basis of town wealth, with a partial grant payment earlier in the school year. Cost estimates to accomplish this would require an additional $60M for 2027-28 on top of the 2026-27 appropriation of $220M.

4. Make permanent the new Special Education Incentive (SEED) grants and increase the annual appropriation substantially over several years. And significantly increase the State monitoring of student identification, and Special Education expenditures, outplacements, and private providers by applying reasonable parameters that reflect both needs of students with disabilities and the total needs and resources of the entire public school enterprise.

ACCOUNTABILITY

5. Merge the existing several State grants for School Improvement (totaling approximately $50M dedicated to the lowest-achieving districts) to strive for greater accountability in progress on all measures of school and student success.

Failure to demonstrate reasonable annual progress must result in increasingly greater documented and carefully monitored changes to program, curriculum, and instruction by local and state authorities.

CONCLUSION

There are many other areas of educational need in our State (such as raising teachers' salaries and providing universal preschool); however, adopting and implementing these five recommendations will be doing the right thing now in 2027.

The 2025 decrease in federal dollars for education and the ill-conceived federal scholarship program have added greater financial stress; and the most recent Connecticut work on Career Pathways will certainly need both new state legislation and funding.

Unwillingness to raise the ECS Foundation level, and to raise it every year thereafter in a way that is never to be broken, would be a continuing failure to meet Connecticut's Constitutional requirements, and a failure to invest in our children and the future of Connecticut.

Thank you for considering these thoughts,

CAPSS

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS)