

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Equal Educational Opportunity

Adopted May 7, 2003

The Board's definition of equal educational opportunity is student access to a level and quality of programs and experiences that provide each child with the means to achieve the standard of an educated citizen defined by Connecticut's Common Core of Learning. Evidence of equal educational opportunity is the participation and achievement of each student in challenging educational programs, regardless of factors such as family income, race, gender, or town of residence.

Every Connecticut public school student is entitled to participate in a high-quality educational program. Such a program is characterized by effective teachers and administrators who have high expectations for student achievement. It also has sound facilities, safe environments, appropriate resources that equitably meet the educational needs of the student population, a rigorous curriculum, and opportunities for students to learn with and from students and teachers whose backgrounds differ from their own. All Connecticut citizens, and the state and local governments that serve them, are responsible for ensuring that all students are provided with an education that supports their achievement and, ultimately, their success in and contributions to society. The State Board of Education, having statutory responsibility for providing general supervision, leadership and control of the educational interests of the state, will continue to lead this effort by developing supportive policies, programs and proposals, and providing direction and assistance to local school districts.

There are five state statutory goals for the State Board of Education:

- to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity;
- to increase student achievement;
- to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation;
- to improve effective instruction; and
- to encourage parental and community involvement in all public schools of the state.

These goals are consistent with the Board's long-standing commitment to equal opportunity and high standards for all Connecticut students. They are also consistent with Section 10-4a of the Connecticut General Statutes, which defines the "educational interests of the state" to include that each child shall have an equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences; that each school district shall finance at a reasonable level at least equal to the minimum expenditure requirement an educational program to achieve that end; that, in order to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, each school district shall provide educational opportunities for its students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds and may provide such opportunities with students from other communities; and that the mandates in the general statutes pertaining to education within the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education be implemented.

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The Board's vision of public education for the beginning of the new century, articulated in *Greater Expectations: Connecticut's Comprehensive Plan for Education, 2001-2005*, revised January 2003, provides context and direction for meeting these responsibilities. Connecticut's commitment over the last two decades to high expectations, high standards and hard work has yielded positive, incremental growth in student achievement from 1990 to the present and a small closing of the gap between the performance of urban and suburban students over the last several years. But much remains to be done. The Board will continue to work toward ensuring a high-quality teaching and administrative force; providing universal access to high-quality preschool; involving more parents and families in the education of their children; increasing the state share of revenues, particularly to those towns with students most in need; and funding urban interdistrict magnet schools that promote the participation of suburban students.

Every local school district and school should be measuring its success in providing equal educational opportunity by improved student achievements, the reduction of achievement gaps and its ability to connect with every student.

The result of greater equality of educational opportunity in Connecticut will be that all public school graduates *"can read, write, compute, think creatively, solve problems, and use technology. All students should enjoy and perform in the arts and athletics, and understand history, science and other cultures and languages. Each student must be responsible for his or her learning and behavior, work well with and be helpful to others, and contribute to the community. Every student must graduate from high school and be prepared to move on to productive work and further study and to function in the global economy. Ultimately, students must become active citizens and lifelong learners who lead healthy lives."* (State Board of Education Position Statement on Measuring Success/Defining a Successful Student, adopted September 2000).