# Connecticut Blue-Ribbon Commission

## K–12 EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

November 2026

# TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- Provide Commission updates and discuss feedback on discussions to date

# AGENDA

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Welcome |
| 2 | Commission Overview and Emerging Policy Ideas |
| 5 | Q&A |

# Recap | The Commission's Focus

From the outset, we've organized the Commission's work around two central questions:

**How much?**

How much funding flows to school districts and how that total is determined.

**How well?**

How well that funding is used to enable student learning.

# Commission | Overarching Framework

From the outset, we've organized the Commission's work around two central questions:

## How much?

How much funding flows to school districts and how that total is determined.

## How well?

How well that funding is used to enable student learning.

### Operational Efficiency

The cost-effectiveness of how districts and the state organize and deliver services.

### Service Efficacy

How effectively resources translate into strong outcomes for every student.

# Recap | Blue Ribbon Commission

✓Summer Introductory Calls

- Met with 20 Commission members and gathered common topics, potential resources and stakeholders, informational requests, and logistical concerns

✓Session #1: Thurs. 6/4, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

- Confirmed the Commission's charge and scope
- Gained a preliminary understanding of CT's current funding system, including an overview of Education Cost Sharing (ECS)
- Raised potential issue areas, learning methods, and guiding principles
- Shared hopes for the future of the Commission's work together

✓Session #2: Thurs. 6/25, 10:00 am-12:00 pm

- Knowledge-building session on special education in CT, including funding mechanisms and cost drivers
- Discussed pertinent issues and key takeaways about special education for further exploration in working sessions
- Brainstormed ways to encourage public participation and provided ideas for continued stakeholder engagement

✓Session #3: Thurs. 7/16, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

- Knowledge-building session on state of student learning in CT and CT's accountability system
- Discussed key issues and takeaways about accountability

✓Session #4: Thurs. 7/30, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

- Discussed preliminary themes from public engagement
- Knowledge-building session on choice system in Connecticut
- Affirmed guiding principles

✓ Session #5: Thurs. 8/20, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

- Built an understanding of national approaches to state funding and accountability
- Discussed takeaways, emerging challenges, and potential solutions

✓ Session #6: Thurs. 9/17, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

- Explored the impact of different scenarios of ECS changes and the extent to which sample scenarios align with the guiding principles; Identified scenarios for potential consideration
- Discussed takeaways, emerging challenges, and potential solutions

# Recap | Blue Ribbon Commission

✓ Session #7: Thurs. 10/29 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

- Reviewed and discuss policy ideas; planned for additional stakeholder engagement
- Recapped decision making process

# Commission | High-Level Scope

Preliminary overview of Commission process and scope organized across five key phases.

**Landscape Review**

Deepen understanding of K-12 funding and accountability in Connecticut and in other relevant systems across the country; Review statewide data

**Priority Setting**

Drawing from learning in previous stage, define the key analytical questions the Commission must answer

**Recommendation Development**

Deliberate on key decision points

**Refinement and Presentation**

Finalize and submit recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly

**Stakeholder and Expert Engagement**

Integrate expert and stakeholder perspectives throughout the process

# Commission | Guiding Principles in Practice

The Commission commits to delivering a set of **actionable** recommendations that contribute to a K-12 funding and accountability system characterized by the following principles.

1. **Adequate:** Provides the level of resources necessary to serve all students

2. **Coherent:** Ensures activities and resources are aligned to state strategy

3. **Equitable:** Directs resources and support in a way that is responsive to differences in student need and local wealth disparities

4. **Flexible & Effective:** Sufficiently adaptable to evolving student needs and effective in deploying resources to support student outcomes

5. **Predictable & Sustainable:** Supports stable, reliable operations and multi-year strategic planning

6. **Transparent & Participatory:** Clear, easily understood, and trusted by communities served

# Policy Ideas | Four Core Buckets

The following policy ideas are currently under consideration by the Commission.

1

**Update and fully implement the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula**

to increase predictability and better target state funding to where it is needed most given rising costs and evolving student needs.

2

**Restructure special education funding**

to respond to rising costs, increase predictability, and to better meet the needs of students and districts.

3

**Leverage, support, and invest in Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs)**

to promote regional and inter-district collaboration, deliver services efficiently (including special education services) and advance key state priorities.

4

**Build on and evolve the state's accountability mechanisms**

to scale improvement for all subgroups.

# Policy Ideas | 1 Update and Fully Implement the ECS Formula

**OVERARCHING POLICY IDEA**

**Update and fully implement the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula to increase predictability and better target state funding to where it is needed most given rising costs and evolving student needs.**

**FOUR WAYS TO UPDATE THE ECS FORMULA**

A

### Increase Foundation Amount

Increase the ECS foundation amount and index to inflation to maintain purchasing power over time.

B

### Phase Out Hold Harmless

Phase out hold harmless as planned and reinvest dollars to return the formula to its intended principles.

C

### Enrollment Protection

Introduce an enrollment protection mechanism that reduces district funding instability.

D

### Update Formula Weights

Update and/or add weights in the ECS formula to better target dollars directly to student needs.

# Policy Ideas | 2 Restructure Special Education Funding

**OVERARCHING POLICY IDEA**

Restructure special education funding to respond to rising costs, increase predictability, and to better meet the needs of students and districts.

**THREE WAYS TO EVOLVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

**A** **Re-calibrate high cost threshold to stabilize funding and reallocate funding to high incidence low cost services.**

**B** **Expand eligible uses of categorical special education grants.**

**C** **Set and differentiate reimbursement rates for public versus non-public out-of-district placements to incentivize use of regional structures.**

# Policy Ideas | 3 Strengthened State Supports, Clear Accountability for RESCs

**OVERARCHING POLICY IDEA**

**Leverage, support, invest in, and hold accountable Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to promote regional and inter-district collaboration, deliver services efficiently (including special education services), and advance key state priorities.**

**FIVE WAYS TO STRENGTHEN RESCs**

**A** **Create a state reimbursement structure** for state-approved high priority services alongside the existing funding structure, with public reporting on outcomes.

**B** **Reduce restrictions on categorical special education grants** to allow districts to partner with RESCs to build in-district capacity for shared services.

**C** **Staff RESCs with regional fiscal advisors** that can act as a resource to districts on finance-related matters.

**D** **Increase state-RESC collaboration** by designating formal liaisons and requiring joint strategic planning.

**E** **Incentivize districts to participate in RESC councils** on regional collaboration, fiscal efficiency, and inter-district resource-sharing.

**ALT** **Establish two-year planning period** with dedicated grant funding to allow districts, RESCs, and the state to:

- Identify opportunities for reimbursable, RESC-supported shared services
- Develop the infrastructure necessary to effectuate such a structure, including funding streams

# Policy Ideas | 4 Evolve Accountability Mechanisms to Ensure Service Efficacy

**OVERARCHING POLICY IDEA**

**Further develop the state's formal and informal accountability mechanisms to support statewide systematic improvement for all subgroups.**

**THREE WAYS TO EVOLVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

### A Statewide signals of shared strategy and service delivery expectations

Bolster the state education agency's capacity to scale evidence-based improvement strategies and practices aligned with state goals

### B Direct support to districts flagged for improvement via Opportunity Network

Create a single opportunity network for all districts flagged for improvement

### C Support delivered through regional and statewide entities

Leverage, support, and invest in Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to promote regional and inter-district collaboration, deliver services efficiently (including special education services) and advance key state priorities

# Commission | Feedback Questions

1. What **questions** do you have about these policy ideas?
2. What are your **initial reactions**, positive or negative?
3. Which ideas would you want the Commission to **prioritize**? Why?
4. What would make these ideas **work well** in practice? What could **get in the way**?
5. What would you change to make any of these **stronger**?
6. What's **not on this list** that you think should be?

# Commission | **Stay Engaged**

## 5 Minute Survey

Know someone who should weigh in?

Public Survey launches later this month.

## Commission Meetings

Please visit the CT Commission website for upcoming dates and registration information:

https://tinyurl.com/CTschoolfundingcommission

**Upcoming Full Commission Dates** (open to the public)

**November 12**

**December 3**

**December 17**