



MADISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

10 Campus Drive
P.O. Drawer 71
Madison, Connecticut 06443-2562
www.madison.k12.ct.us

January 13, 2023

Madison Board of Education:

The Board requested the proposal to expand the Choice Program and allow students from New Haven Public Schools to attend Madison Public Schools be placed on the agenda for the January 17 Budget Workshop meeting. This letter documents the rationale and potential financial impact of this expanded program. Also attached is the original letter and proposal that was sent to the Board on October 11, 2022.

Through Policy #5030.2 Interdistrict School Attendance Areas our students do attend New Haven Choice programs. Prior to the pandemic, an average of 12 high school students residing in Madison attended Educational Center for the Arts (ECA) and we have some student participation at The Sound School. Recent participation numbers have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, but we expect they will eventually return to the average of 12 students. Therefore, Madison students benefit from the Choice program in New Haven, but New Haven students cannot attend our schools due to the recent determination that only towns within the ACES area can participate in Choice. Prior to 2021, ACES did contact Madison Public Schools each year to inquire if we would offer seats for New Haven students. Current policy allows participation in Choice but references the LEARN regional programs, and therefore a policy change would be necessary.

Below please find important information regarding this proposal:

1. **Funding** - The District would likely receive \$3,000 per student as I do not anticipate we would hit any of the higher enrollment incentives. We know from districts who are successful with Choice that the funds should be directed towards experiences for Choice students. Examples of which include transportation costs, support for families to attend Madison events, support from staff in after school hours, etc.

The state pays a grant as follows:

- o \$3,000 per student enrolled to the receiving district if the number of Open Choice students is less than 2 percent of the total population of the receiving district;
- o \$4,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 2 percent but less than 3 percent of the total population of the receiving district;
- o \$6,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 3 percent but less than 4 percent of the total population of the receiving district;

- \$6,000 per student if enrollment is greater than 4,000 students and the number of students in the program increased by 50 percent; or
 - \$8,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 4 percent of the total student population of the receiving district.
2. Special Education Costs - Costs directly related to the student would be eligible to be billed back to New Haven Public Schools. For example, if a student is assigned a one-to-one special education paraprofessional, the cost of that paraprofessional would be billed to New Haven Schools. Another example of a billable cost would be if a student requires special transportation.
 3. Educational Support - Choice students would receive educational tiered support through Madison teachers and support staff. This is not something that is billed to New Haven. We do not anticipate that this would require more staffing for MPS.
 4. Benefit to Students in Madison - Over 50% of the students in K-12 education in Connecticut are students of color. Currently 10% of students in Madison identify as a student of color. Students will leave our school district and be exposed to greater diversity at college and in the workforce and many students seek that greater diversity. Successful programs like the ABC House have shown us how diversity has added to our educational experience and given us tools to make our participation in Choice as successful as possible.
 5. Benefit to Students in New Haven - We are very proud of our education system which consistently ranks within the top school districts in Connecticut. Offering a Madison Public Schools education is important for all the reasons we appreciate our local school district.
 6. Opportunity for Diversity - Although the number is small, students from Madison do attend schools outside of Madison. I have had local families share with me that one of the reasons they look elsewhere is because they seek a more diverse experience for their student(s).
 7. Districts in our DRG participating in Choice - Most districts in our DRG who are in an area eligible to participate in Choice do participate in Choice. See original letter.
 8. Recruitment of staff of color - The Board has a policy (Policy #4040 Plan for Minority Educator Recruitment) that encourages the recruitment of staff of color, recognizing the positive impact it has on Madison students. Staff of color often cite that they would prefer to work in districts with more diversity. Our participation in Choice would potentially provide that experience and improve our results in recruitment and retention of staff of color.

The next step in the process would be for the Superintendent to approach the legislature to receive approval for Madison to accept students from New Haven. This process would occur

during the 2023 session. If approved, the earliest the district would enroll students through the Choice program would be for the 2024/2025 school year.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent of Schools



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TO: Madison Board of Education
FROM: Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D., Superintendent
SUBJECT: Open Choice Program

Proposal:

Request that the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to pursue Madison Public Schools being a participant in the ACES area School of Choice Program. The first step in the process is to request the legislature to approve Madison to participate in a different RESC area for the purposes of the School Choice Program than we are assigned. Madison is in the LEARN RESC area and would remain in the LEARN area for all other services. LEARN does not have the Choice Program and is in agreement with Madison's proposal to participate in the ACES program. Guilford Public Schools' request was granted in 2022.

Background:

Open Choice is an interdistrict public school program intended to improve academic achievement; reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation; and provide a choice of educational programs for public school students.

Madison Public Schools has previously considered participating in the Connecticut Public Schools' Open Choice Program. The Board of Education adopted a policy in 1999 and then updated the policy with a technical revision in 2006 (attached). Madison's policy states that the district would participate in School Choice with the New London Public Schools. Currently in CT, participation is open on an equal basis to all students, including students with disabilities, attending public schools in Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven and their surrounding districts. New London does not participate in School Choice to send students to area districts.

The state pays a grant as follows:

- \$3,000 per student enrolled to the receiving district if the number of Open Choice students is less than 2 percent of the total population of the receiving district;
- \$4,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 2 percent but less than 3 percent of the total population of the receiving district;
- \$6,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 3 percent but less than 4 percent of the total population of the receiving district;
- \$6,000 per student if enrollment is greater than 4,000 students and the number of students in the program increased by 50 percent; or
- \$8,000 per student enrolled if the number of Open Choice students is greater than or equal to 4 percent of the total student population of the receiving district.

It is unlikely that Madison would be higher than 2% of our student population, which would be 50 students, for the foreseeable future. Funding received for the Open Choice would be utilized to support students' attendance in Madison Public Schools and participation in afterschool activities. For example, a potential use of funding may be to transport students home from after school activities.

Transportation costs to and from school for the regular school day are paid by the state. Arrangements for transportation are made by the regional educational service center serving the area. This also applies to students with disabilities unless transportation is considered a related service and is required by the student's individualized education program (IEP).

The following towns participate in the New Haven area:

Ansonia	New Haven
Bethany	North Branford
Branford	North Haven
Cheshire	Orange
East Haven	Reg. Dist. #5
Milford	Wallingford
Woodbridge	

Many of our district reference group (DRG) B school districts participate in the Choice Program. Including:

Avon	Simsbury
Farmington	South Windsor
Glastonbury	West Hartford
Granby	

If approved, each year Madison would notify ACES of the seats we are offering to students through the Choice Program. This notification would be made after careful consideration of enrollment numbers. The attachment illustrates the number of seats offered for the current school year by member districts. My intention would be to offer approximately 10 seats per year; however, that may fluctuate based on current enrollment. After participating in the program, students have the option to continue each year through graduation.

Conclusion:

I would ask that the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to pursue Madison participating in the Choice Program. The following steps would be enacted:

1. Draft proposed legislation to approve Madison's participation.
2. Seek support from local state level legislators and advocate at the State level.
3. Begin communication with staff.
4. Report back to the Board of Education on the status in January 2023.

#5030.2

Interdistrict School Attendance Areas

The Board of Education recognizes that students may benefit from having a choice of schools to attend within the Connecticut public school system that is not limited by school and/or Madison's district boundaries. Public school choice will (1) provide parents and students with greater opportunities to choose the school and / or program that best meets the academic needs of the student; (2) influence positively the level of parent involvement and student motivation; (3) improve academic achievement; (4) reduce racial, ethnic and economic imbalance; and (5) provide a choice of educational programs for students.

The Madison Public Schools will cooperate with the appropriate regional educational service center in the planning and implementation of the state-wide interdistrict public school attendance program in accordance with the timelines and provisions contained within C.G.S. 10-4a as amended by PA 97-290, "An Act Enhancing Educational Choices and Opportunities," and C.G.S. 10-266aa as amended by P.A. 99-289, "An Act Concerning School Choice and Interdistrict Programs."

Nonresident students from the New London district who apply pursuant to the regulations approved by the Board, may enroll in particular programs or schools in districts in the surrounding areas on a space available basis, without payment of tuition except that the Madison Public Schools shall receive an amount, within available appropriations, from the Department of Education, for each out-of-district student attending a school within the Madison Public Schools. It is recognized that the Regional Service Centers shall determine which school districts in its area are located close enough to a priority school district to make transportation feasible.

In providing for admission of nonresident students, the Madison Public Schools shall consider:

#5030.2 (cont.)

1. Issues pertaining to the availability of space within a requested school to accommodate the enrollment request. The Madison Public Schools will notify its RESC by March 31 of each year of the space it will have available for students from the surrounding area for the new school year.
2. Programs available and the possible establishment of new programs.
3. Eligibility criteria for participating in a particular program, including age requirements, course prerequisites and required levels of performance.
4. Dates of enrollment of nonresident students in a school or program.
5. The requirement that participants attending school in the Madison Public Schools may do so until they graduate from high school.

It is the policy of the Madison Public Schools to receive nonresident students as part of the state-wide interdistrict public school attendance program in accordance with plan developed with the Regional Educational Service Center. Such planning, the Board believes, should consider, but not be limited to, the issues of definition and determination of space availability, choice of students, transportation to and from school and for after-school activities. Further, planning should consider issues related to special education, prior disciplinary behavior, and acceptance of prior academic work. The Madison Public Schools will not recruit students under this program for athletic or extracurricular purposes. Records of students involved in the interdistrict program will be promptly forwarded to the receiving district.

The Board directs the Superintendent and staff not to make any distinction based on race, sex, ethnic group, religion or disability of any student who is in attendance or who seeks admission to any school within the Madison Public Schools in the determination or recommendation of action under this policy.

#5030.2 (cont.)

(cf. 5020.1 - Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 5030 – Assignment of Students to School)
(cf. 5030.1 – Intra-District / School Attendance Areas)
(cf 5060.1.2 - Nonresident Attendance)
(cf 5100.9.1 Student Recruitment)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-4a Education interests of state defined, as amended by PA 97-290 -An Act Enhancing Education Choices and Opportunities
10-226a Pupils or racial minorities
10-226b Existence or racial intolerance
10-226c Plan to correct imbalance
10-226d Approval of Plan by State Board
10-266aa Statewide interdistrict public school attendance program, as amended by P.A. 99-289, An Act Concerning School Choice and Interdistrict Programs.

Date of Adoption: December 7, 1999

Technical Revision: August 22, 2006

These seats are only for New Haven residents, which is considered the urban district.

22-23 NEW Open Choice Seats - Out of New Haven				
District / School	22-23 New Seats Grade Levels	22-23 # New Seats	Total New Seat by District	Total Suburban Seats
Bethany				
Bethany Community	K	1		
			1	
Branford				
Branford High	9	5		
Francis Walsh Inter.	5	4		
	6	1		
John B. Sliney	K	2		
	1	2		
Mary R. Tisko	K	2		
	1	2		
Mary T. Murphy	2	3		
			21	
Cheshire				
Cheshire High	9	5		
Chapman	K	1		
	1	1		
	3	2		
Doolittle	K	1		
Norton	1	1		
			11	
East Haven				
Deer Run	K	2		
			2	
Milford				
John F. Kennedy	K	3		
	1	3		
Orange Avenue	K	3		
			9	
North Branford				
North Branford High	9	3		
North Branford Inter.	6	2		
Totoket Valley	3	1		
Jerome Harrison	1	1		
			7	
North Haven				
Clintonville	K	5		
Green Acres	K	5		
Montowese	K	5		
Ridge Road	K	5		

			20	
Reg. Dist. #5 (Amity)				
Amity High	9	7		
Amity Middle (Bethany)	7	1		
	8	2		
Amity Middle (Orange)	7	4		
	8	2		
			16	
Woodbridge				
Beecher Road	K	4		
			4	
				91