

Q: What are regional school districts and how many students do they enroll?

A: Regional school districts in Connecticut are public school districts created by two or more municipalities to educate their student populations jointly.¹ For the 2019-20 school year, there were 17 regional school districts in Connecticut with a combined enrollment of 24,012 students (five percent of Connecticut's total public school enrollment).²

A small percentage, 14 percent, of the students enrolled in regional school districts during the 2019-20 school year were identified as BIPOC,^B while 86 percent were identified as White.³ Additionally, 16 percent of students attending regional school districts required special education services, while one percent were identified as English Learners, and 17 percent were classified as low-income.⁴

Q: How are regional school districts created?

A: There is a multi-step process for establishing a regional school district in Connecticut. The first step is to form a joint temporary regional school study committee.⁵ The joint temporary regional school study committee can be formed in one of two ways.

- The legislative bodies (i.e. city council or board of selectmen) of two or more interested towns vote to create a joint temporary regional school study committee;⁶ or
- The boards of education in two or more interested towns conduct a preliminary study, which is then sent to the chief executive officer (i.e. mayor or first selectman) of each respective town. The legislative body in each town then has 30 days to vote on whether or not to create a joint regional school study committee.⁷

In either case, the joint temporary regional school study committee has to report back to the respective towns within two years, unless extended for another two years by a vote of the towns involved.⁸ The temporary committee has the ability to receive and spend money, hire consultants to help them determine the feasibility of creating a regional school district, and must make semi-annual progress reports to participating towns and the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBOE).^{9,10,11}

Once the joint temporary regional school study committee completes its work, the committee must submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the SBOE and the town clerk of each participating town.¹² Among other things, the report must include:

- The towns to be included;
- How many grades levels will be included;
- A 5-year budget plan, including enrollment projections and staff needs;

^A Originally published on January 2, 2020, this frequently asked questions document has been updated with new enrollment and student demographic data.

^B BIPOC is an acronym that stands for "Black, Indigenous, People of Color." In this document, BIPOC is used to represent students who, according to Connecticut State Department of Education data, identify as: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino of any race; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; or two or more races.

- Recommended facilities;
- Recommendation concerning the size of the board of education and how each participating town will be represented on said board; and
- Any other matters the committee deems pertinent.¹³

The SBOE must then first determine if the report meets all of the statutory requirements, and has 30 days to accept or reject the findings.¹⁴ If the SBOE accepts, then the final steps in the formation of a regional school district are for all participating towns to hold a public meeting to present the report, and then each town holds a referendum, which must be held simultaneously in each town.¹⁵ A regional school district is established only if the majority of votes in each of the participating towns is affirmative (in other words, it only takes one town to not reach a majority of yes votes in order for the regional school district referendum to fail).^{16,17}

Q: How are regional school districts administered?

A: Regional school district are administered by a regional board of education, consisting of no fewer than five members, with each member town electing at least one member.¹⁸ As noted previously, the joint temporary regional school study committee report determines the number of members of such regional board and the representation of each town.¹⁹ Regional boards of education have all of the same powers and duties as local boards of education as provided by Connecticut's General Statutes, including purchasing, leasing, or renting property.²⁰

Q: What types of regional school districts are there?

A: In the instance where a regional board of education takes over all of the educational programs and schools previously overseen by its member towns, the local boards of education are dissolved.²¹ However, some regional school districts only oversee a regional high school, leaving local elementary and middle schools under the supervision of local boards of education.^c

Q: How can a regional school district make adjustments to its plan?

A: If a regional board of education wants to amend its plan, or if the legislative body of a town served by the regional board of education requests an amendment to the plan, the regional board of education has to prepare a report on the proposed amendment, including the question to be presented, and file a copy with the commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education and the clerk of each member town.²² The plan must then be presented at a public meeting and, after such presentation, the board sets a date for a

^c For instance, in Regional School District 1, Housatonic Valley Regional High School serves the towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon. However, each of the six towns has its own K-8 elementary school governed by an autonomous board of education, and only Housatonic Valley Regional High School is governed by the Region 1 Board of Education. The superintendent, assistant superintendent, business manager, and director of pupil services provide educational leadership for seven school districts, governed by seven boards of education in the six towns.

Regional School District 1. (n.d.). The School System. Retrieved from <http://www.region1schools.org/main/the-school-system>.

referendum on the amendment.²³ If the majority vote in each town of the district is in favor of the proposed amendment to the plan, the amendment takes effect immediately.²⁴

Q: How are regional school districts funded?

A: Regional school districts are funded primarily by member towns, though regional school districts can receive some direct state and federal support.²⁵ In determining each participating municipality's contribution, a ratio of net expenses to student count (as measured by average daily membership) is used.²⁵ Member towns receive Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grants for students who reside in their town (and therefore are counted in the town's resident student count) but attend a regional school district. Therefore, member towns receive town aid from the State to fund regional school districts, though that funding does not go directly from the State to the regional school district. Regional school district boards of education are also permitted to issue bonds to support the capital needs of their schools.²⁶

Q: How are regional school districts dissolved?

A: Any legislative body of a town that is a member of a regional school district may vote to apply to the regional board of education to withdraw from the district or, in the case of a district composed of only two towns, dissolve the district.²⁷ However, applications for withdrawal or dissolution within three years after the formation of the district are not allowed.²⁸ Within 30 days of receiving an application, the regional board of education must call for the appointment of a committee to study the proposed withdrawal or dissolution.²⁹ The committee has one year to produce a report, which must include, among other things:

- Its recommendation concerning withdrawal or dissolution;
- A plan for settlement of any obligations and the transfer of property from the regional school district to the member town school districts;
- A timetable for the orderly withdrawal or dissolution of the regional district and establishment of local boards of education if none exist; and
- Any other matters the committee deems necessary.³⁰

Similar to the joint temporary regional school study committee that is required to create a regional school district, the SBOE must approve the report, and then all member towns must simultaneously pass a referendum approving the withdrawal or dissolution for the application to take effect.³¹

²⁵ For instance, Regional School District 6 receives state vocational agriculture grants to support their in-district vo-ag program, as well as federal IDEA grants to help support students with disabilities. Connecticut State Department of Education. (2019). Grant Payment Report. Available from <https://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/dgm/grantreports1/paydetMain.aspx>.

Appendix

Regional School District Student Enrollment Trend, Student Counts by District and Year³²

| District | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Regional School District 1 | 432 | 406 | 446 | 426 | 390 | 391 | 362 |
| Regional School District 4 | 983 | 974 | 928 | 952 | 924 | 897 | 858 |
| Regional School District 5 | 2,372 | 2,328 | 2,270 | 2,248 | 2,216 | 2,186 | 2,185 |
| Regional School District 6 | 996 | 971 | 986 | 975 | 919 | 912 | 917 |
| Regional School District 7 | 1,139 | 1,076 | 1,100 | 1,104 | 1,082 | 1,075 | 1,036 |
| Regional School District 8 | 1,743 | 1,661 | 1,601 | 1,558 | 1,508 | 1,456 | 1,412 |
| Regional School District 9 | 1,082 | 1,065 | 1,028 | 970 | 909 | 889 | 867 |
| Regional School District 10 | 2,577 | 2,484 | 2,416 | 2,366 | 2,348 | 2,273 | 2,242 |
| Regional School District 11 | 295 | 278 | 253 | 251 | 235 | 232 | 207 |
| Regional School District 12 | 800 | 752 | 732 | 710 | 692 | 685 | 706 |
| Regional School District 13 | 1,875 | 1,832 | 1,751 | 1,745 | 1,675 | 1,617 | 1,517 |
| Regional School District 14 | 1,905 | 1,803 | 1,768 | 1,768 | 1,716 | 1,656 | 1,592 |
| Regional School District 15 | 4,002 | 3,868 | 3,793 | 3,729 | 3,631 | 3,628 | 3,677 |
| Regional School District 16 | 2,352 | 2,329 | 2,270 | 2,211 | 2,197 | 2,134 | 2,084 |
| Regional School District 17 | 2,281 | 2,186 | 2,133 | 2,117 | 2,066 | 2,026 | 1,958 |
| Regional School District 18 | 1,411 | 1,354 | 1,339 | 1,308 | 1,278 | 1,263 | 1,290 |
| Regional School District 19 | 1,205 | 1,204 | 1,213 | 1,204 | 1,208 | 1,150 | 1,102 |
| TOTAL | 27,450 | 26,571 | 26,027 | 25,642 | 24,994 | 24,470 | 24,012 |

Endnotes

¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-39(a).

² Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). EdSight: Public School Enrollment. Available from <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>.

³ Demographic data provided to the School and State Finance Project by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-39(b).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-39(c).

⁸ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-39(b).

⁹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-42.

¹⁰ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-39(b).

¹¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-43(a).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-43(b)(2).

¹⁵ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-43(b)(2)(B).

¹⁶ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-45(b).

¹⁷ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-45(c).

¹⁸ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-46(a).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-47c.

²¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-46a.

²² Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-47c.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-51(b).

²⁶ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-56(a).

²⁷ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-63a(a).

²⁸ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-63g(a).

²⁹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-63b.

³⁰ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 164, § 10-63c.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). EdSight: Public School Enrollment. Available from <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>.