2011 Program Report Card: Interdistrict Magnet School Program (Connecticut State Department of Education)

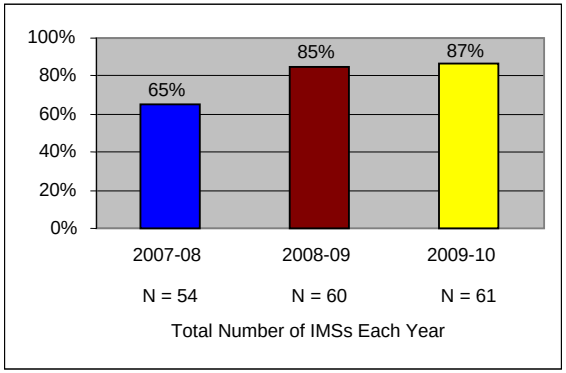
Quality of Life Result: All Connecticut students have a successful transition to adulthood, assume a contributing role in a world-class workforce, and become productive members of their community and society at large.

Contribution to Result: Interdistrict Magnet Schools (IMSs) are one of the public school choice options that are raising the educational attainment level of participating students throughout the state through high-quality, racially/economically integrated education. They provide educational choices that contribute to a more highly educated workforce and reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation. IMSs maximize the opportunity for each student to achieve his or her highest potential by offering challenging, relevant and rigorous curriculum and instruction. In addition, these programs provide a creative and flexible environment that values each student's unique abilities, talents, interests and learning styles. Greater student learning and engagement in school lead directly to a more prosperous adulthood with greater contributions to the economy and society.

Actual SFY 10 Total Program Expenditures:* $153,996,400*; State Funding:*$153,996,400; *Federal Funding*:* funds paid directly to districts*; Other Funding:* n/a
Estimated SFY 11 Total Program Expenditures:* $182,800,000*; State Funding:* $182,800,000*; Federal Funding*:* funds paid directly to districts*; Other Funding:* n/a

Partners: Institutions of higher education, business and industry, theme-specific associations/groups, educational researchers and parents.

Performance Measure 1: Number and percentage of IMSs meeting statutory racial isolation target of at least 20% white students.



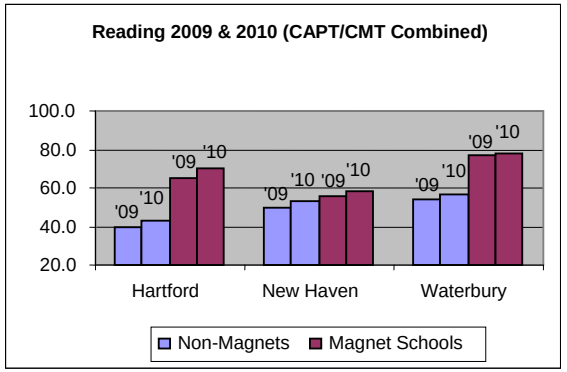
Story behind the baseline: The percentage of IMSs meeting the standard (at least 20% white) is continually growing, currently at 87%, up from 65% two years earlier. However, approximately 40% of the schools meeting the standard are only *marginally* above it, thus risking falling below the standard with only a slight shift in white student enrollment from year to year. Enhanced marketing, better recruitment strategies and the influence of specific requirements resulting from the *Sheff* decision (requiring Hartford-area IMSs to meet a specific student diversity standard) help explain the two-year improvement in this measure. The number of IMSs increased from 54 to 61 between 2007-08 and 2009-10, and has increased to 64 in 2010-11 although the enrollment and racial composition was not known as of the production of this report.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) will build upon existing enrollment management plans (EMPs) in assisting IMSs that are below or marginally above the threshold with expanding and improving their recruitment strategies. An EMP is a school-level mechanism designed to ensure sufficient enrollment, equitable access, and that student systems to support success and retention are in place. Recruitment strategies may include greater interaction between IMS administrators and potential feeder school children and families, action videos, and other methods beyond program literature.

Performance Measure 2: Percentage of Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury resident students at or above proficiency in reading in both IMSs and the city public schools (non-magnets).

Tested in Reading (2009 & 2010 CMT/ CAPT)

	Hartford	New Haven	Waterbury
Magnet '09	1955	2216	628
Non-magnet '09	7560	5443	7697
Magnet '10	1886	2349	622
Non-magnet '10	6943	4995	7421



Note: These data reflect students in *tested* grades only (Grades 3-8, 10). These three cities are chosen as they are the only urban areas with at least three IMSs serving significant numbers of city students from which to base valid comparisons.

Story behind the baseline: Resident students of urban centers who attend IMSs outperform students in the city public schools in reading. The distinction between magnet and non-magnet schools is nearly identical for mathematics. To control for differences in the baseline of students when they enter IMSs, an analysis of student academic *growth* between 2008 and 2010 yielded nearly identical results – IMS students grew at a greater rate than non-IMS students, and New Haven's IMS student growth lagged behind that of Hartford and Waterbury.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: The CSDE will target site visitations to IMSs that lag behind others in student achievement in mathematics and/or reading, and enlist identified schools in the state's school accountability and support program. From a leadership standpoint, specific school leadership competencies in monitoring staff performance through student outcomes, support for staff and accountability, and distributive leadership will be part of a new CSDE site visitation instrument for IMS programs. As 2009 is a baseline year, CSDE will analyze multi-year trends in the performance of IMSs with respect to their counterparts in city schools, and among IMSs across cities. CSDE will continue to commission or conduct formal qualitative and quantitative program evaluations to cover a wider geographical area and elementary school analyses to better evaluate the effectiveness of IMSs statewide. Additionally further research is necessary to understand *why* resident Hartford IMS students achieve at statistically significant higher rates than their Hartford public school counterparts.

Performance Measure 3: Percentage of high school students attending and staying in school in IMSs and the city public high schools.

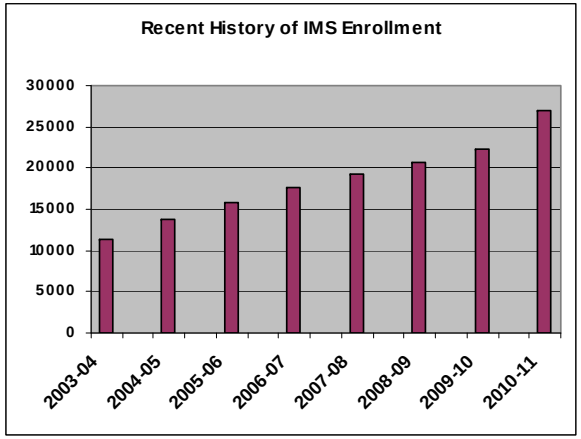
Attendance Rate of City Resident Students

	Non-Magnet High Schools			Magnet High Schools		
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**
Hartford	83.1	79.7	81.5	95.6	95.1	94.5
New Haven	84.9	84.8	85.5	90.2	90.9	91.2
Waterbury	91.8	92.2	92.4	93.9	93.8	94.6
# Schools	13	13	13	21	23	23

Story behind the baseline: IMSs typically expect that a combination of theme-based curricula and smaller class sizes will ensure that students will stay engaged in their education. Attendance rates reflect the average percentage of days students attend school. When comparing "like-students", IMS city resident students attend school at a statistically significant higher rate than students in the city public high schools. The difference between IMS students and their city public school peers in the *Sheff* region is particularly stark. Student engagement in IMSs is reinforced by the fact that their 2008-09 annual dropout rate of 0.7% was nearly one-third of the 2.1% statewide and nearly one-fifth of the dropout rate across the three cities' public high schools.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: The CSDE will identify IMSs that excel in student retention and identify specific successful strategies used to keep students in school, such as building positive relationships within the school community, including families. CSDE will then work closely with IMSs that have higher dropout or lower attendance rates in employing identified successful strategies. CSDE will engage staff or school leaders from successful IMSs in the trainings. Site visits will be targeted in high schools with higher dropout rates and other evidence of school culture and climate challenges. CSDE will continue to commission or conduct formal program evaluations to cover a wider geographical area and expand to elementary school analyses. Steps will be taken to ensure that pure numerical differences in the data are deemed meaningful enough through appropriate research methodology.

Performance Measure 4: Number of students enrolled in IMSs.



Story behind the baseline: IMS enrollment has grown nearly 140% in the past seven years, growing from 11,324 in 2003-04 to an estimated 27,000 in 2010-11. This has afforded more students the experience of learning in a more racially/economically integrated setting. Since its inception as a funded program in 1995-96 with 8 schools and 1522 students, the rate of enrollment growth has been consistent resulting in 64 IMSs by 2010-11. The superior academic achievement of IMSs revealed in Performance Measure 2 continues to positively impact the achievement of more students, and results in increasing demand for IMSs. In order to stay in compliance with the provisions of the *Sheff* court settlement, the number of students participating in Hartford-area IMSs must continue to grow.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: While most IMSs are enrolled to maximum capacity and are known to have sizeable wait lists, the CSDE currently does not know the *actual* demand for magnet schools statewide. Wait list data is not collected beyond the Hartford region, and interest in IMSs beyond those who apply or enroll is not currently measured. Future analysis of such information will assist CSDE in ensuring maximum outreach for this high-interest program.

Pursuant to Public Act 09-6, a moratorium has been placed on the operating grant of new IMSs, with the exception of *Sheff* schools, until a comprehensive statewide IMS plan is developed by January 1, 2011. The plan will address the geographic distribution of IMSs, ensuring program quality, school operations, capital expenditures, and other facets of long-term planning. Similarly, new authorizations for state-funded construction on existing IMS facilities are unlikely in the near future due to the current fiscal climate. Consequently, CSDE needs to examine existing space utilization and pursue opportunities to increase enrollment in existing IMSs to avail the demonstrated higher academic achievement setting to more students.

Without additional space, IMSs may need to consider modest changes in space configurations and class sizes without risking diminishing returns of larger classes. Monitoring space and enrollment for IMS growth is essential for ensuring compliance with mandates of the *Sheff* decision. CSDE will be more active in assisting IMSs with strategies for increasing student/parent interest from feeder schools.