

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Bruce E. Douglas, Ph.D.

October 7, 2015

Dear Colleague,

Enclosed, please find a conceptual design for the revitalization of the city of Hartford through the Sheff vs. O'Neill Settlement Agreement. The primary goal of this conceptual design is to offer a new way forward by leveraging Sheff for the desegregation of the city of Hartford, for the economic revitalization of Hartford neighborhoods, for the improvement of Hartford's community schools, and for the best interests of the Greater Hartford area.

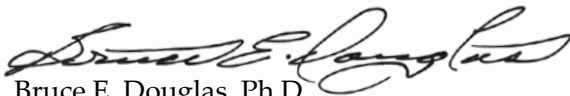
As you know, the economic future of the Greater Hartford area depends on our capital city having a desirable and functional school system. Currently, the system of magnet schools and the Open Choice Program offer nearly 50% of Hartford's students with access to high-quality, integrated schools. As we work to offer excellent opportunities to more of Hartford's children, it is clear that we cannot continue down the path of opening additional schools. Removing more students from Hartford Public Schools will only further degrade the ability of the Greater Hartford area to attract young people and to attract the middle class back to Hartford.

Moving forward, we need a new strategy; a strategy that will increase the attractiveness of community schools and help Hartford to reestablish itself as a vibrant city. This plan proposes to redirect Sheff dollars toward the revitalization of Hartford schools and communities. The plan is ambitious, but reasoned. Rather than being tactical and short-sighted, this plan takes a strategic approach to the future of Sheff, answering the question: What do we want Greater Hartford to look like in 5, 10, and 20 years?

This plan is not only logical, but it makes good fiscal sense as well. Reinvesting Sheff dollars into the revitalization of Hartford is not only an efficient use of resources, but it offers a model that can be replicated in other cities throughout the state of Connecticut.

I hope that you will review this proposal and contact me with any question you may have.

Respectfully,



Bruce E. Douglas, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Sheff v. O'Neill and Revitalization of Hartford Conceptual Design: 2015-2021

Time for a New Strategy

It has been nearly 20 years since the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in the Sheff v. O'Neill case that the state has an affirmative obligation to provide Hartford's school children with equal educational opportunities and a racially integrated public education. Since the original decision, there have been four "phases" of the settlement, resulting in approximately 9,500 of Hartford's resident children attending integrated schools. Of these 9,500 students, approximately 6,000 students attend schools outside of the neighborhood schools and magnet schools run by the Hartford Public Schools system. As a result of the creation of the multiple magnet schools and the growth of the Open Choice Program, there has been a decrease in the number of students enrolled in the Hartford Public Schools. This proposal calls for the revitalization of particular Hartford neighborhoods and schools within those neighborhoods, rather than the creation of more magnet schools outside of the city.

A Plan for Revitalization

In order that all Hartford students attend racially integrated schools but also live in vital and vibrant communities, the existing magnet schools in the capitol region must be sustained and the Hartford Public Schools system must remain viable. It is time to begin the careful task of revitalizing the city of Hartford so that it is a place that will attract families and students – of all races. By reallocating resources that would otherwise be used to build new schools of choice, we will invest both in Hartford's neighborhoods and in the students that reside therein. With the appropriate partners, we can transform both neighborhood schools and entire neighborhoods.

The first year of the plan will feature concurrent opportunities for Hartford students. In an effort to meet the current demand for integrated settings and to meet the enrollment goals of the Sheff Settlement, a significant effort will be made to encourage students to participate in the Open Choice Program. Meanwhile, within the city borders, neighborhood revitalization efforts will take place around (four) blended-model magnet/neighborhood schools, strategically located to offer the best opportunity to facilitate neighborhood revitalization.

Through the creation of blended-model magnet/neighborhood schools in close partnership with prestigious partners, and under the auspices of the Hartford Board of Education, unique and divergent magnet schools will become an attractive option for both students inside and outside of Hartford. For example, the partnerships could offer Hartford and suburban students guaranteed internships, preference in college placement, credit accrual at top-tier universities, and career opportunities. The magnet schools will serve as neighborhood schools for residents that live in the schools' catchment areas. This will ensure neighborhood residents have a guaranteed placement in the school. This guaranteed access to a high-quality school, in concert with robust and strategic neighborhood revitalization efforts, will attract suburban families to the city, creating a more racially diverse setting within Hartford and further integrating the local schools.

The goal of this plan is to bring Hartford students back into the Hartford Public Schools as well as to draw a more diverse population into specific neighborhoods. As a result, students will have the opportunity to participate in forward-thinking and integrated learning environments within their own neighborhood. As Hartford's population diversifies, over the long term, enrollment in the Open Choice Program will begin to decrease. If the plan is successful, by the year 2021, approximately 70% of Hartford students will be in a desegregated learning environment, and a trajectory will be set for sustainable, high-quality, integrated learning environments for all students.

The following actions are proposed as a conceptual design:

1. Rehabilitate four existing schools as new, using a blended magnet/neighborhood school model in which neighborhood resident students within an identified catchment area have preference in attending the school, making the area attractive to families.
2. Recruit prestigious academic and business partners such as Google, MIT, Hartford Hospital, Apple, Kaman Aerospace, University of Hartford, Yale University, Harvard University, UCONN, and the Insurance companies of Hartford, and incentivize suburban and local student enrollment through divergent and inventive programming as well as benefits from the partner institutions.
3. Reallocate the dollars that would traditionally be spent on building new schools of choice to urban planning and revitalization projects through the Sheff settlements.
4. Utilize best practices in affordable housing, mixed use development, workforce development, small business investment, and other neighborhood stabilization tactics to attract families to live and work in Hartford who would traditionally gravitate toward or reside in suburban school districts.
5. Partner with local and state government, private philanthropic organizations, community foundations, community organizations, and neighborhood residents to create stable and sustainable economic growth and community revitalization.

A Better Way Forward

This conceptual design offers a strategic vision for the future of Sheff and the Hartford Public Schools. This conceptual design is a better way forward for the following reasons:

- It maximizes the return on our investment
- It desegregates Hartford from the outside-in and revitalizes the city in the process
- It reduces and redirects costs
- It transitions Sheff from active to monitoring
- It maintains the validity of the Hartford Public Schools
- It transfers the responsibility for desegregation from the state to the city
- It addresses the realities of the national racial discord
- It is a model for other Connecticut cities that are prospects for another Sheff lawsuit
- It reestablishes Hartford's economic viability and brings back the middle class
- It aligns stakeholders behind one strategy and changes them from adversaries to partners

A Smarter Investment

This conceptual design redirects the dollars that would traditionally fund enrollment in and the construction of choice schools outside of Hartford back into the city. This is a smarter and more sustainable investment. The following chart compares the annualized operational cost to add 4,978 *additional students* into integrated settings under two scenarios:

- 1) **Revitalization Strategy:** Using the proposed revitalization strategy, 40% of the additional students would enroll in Open Choice and 60% of the additional students would enroll in blended-model magnet/neighborhood schools.¹
- 2) **Current Strategy:** Using the current Sheff implementation strategy, 20% of the additional students would enroll in Open Choice; 40% of the additional students would enroll in Host Magnet Schools; and 40% of the additional students would enroll in RESC Magnet Schools.²

These annualized costs are *in addition to* the current operating cost.³ Both strategies increase the total percentage of Hartford children enrolled in desegregated educational settings to **70 percent**.

Annualized Cost to the State and Towns*		
	Revitalization Strategy	Current Strategy
State Funding for Magnet Operating Grants**	\$12,500,000	\$65,900,000
Sending Town Tuition for Magnet Schools	\$0	\$17,500,000
Open Choice Student Grants and Bonus Grants	\$21,500,000	\$10,700,000
Transportation	\$9,800,000	\$22,700,000
Sum of Cost to State and Towns	\$43,800,000	\$116,800,000

*These figures do not include school construction costs. All figures are approximate.

**Includes host magnet and RESC magnet per pupil operating grants

Impact on Settlement Numbers and Enrollment		
	Revitalization Strategy	Current Strategy
Additional Hartford Students in Desegregated Settings	4,978	4,978
Hartford residents enrolled in Hartford Public Schools	14,049	13,031

¹ “Revitalization Strategy”: The total number of additional Hartford residents in desegregated settings is 4,978, comprised of 2,018 additional students in Open Choice and 2,960 additional Hartford-resident students in blended-model magnet/neighborhood schools.

² “Current Strategy”: The total number of additional Hartford residents in desegregated settings is 4,978, comprised of 1,095 additional students in Open Choice; 1,942 additional Hartford-resident students in Hartford Host Magnet Schools; and 1,941 additional Hartford-resident students in RESC Magnet Schools.

³ Current annual operating cost is approximately \$275,000,000.