

2008

# The Sheff Movement Survey Study

Prepared for the Sheff Movement coalition



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## Introduction

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The Sheff Movement coalition, established in response to the Connecticut Supreme Court case of *Sheff v. O'Neill*, works to increase support for quality integrated education for all children, to educate the public on the importance of racial and economic integration in Connecticut's school system, and to present information on existing voluntary integration measures.<sup>1</sup>

In 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court handed down a decision ruling that Hartford schoolchildren were deprived of their Constitutional rights to an equal education and ordering the state to devise a remedy to eliminate racial isolation. The Court found that the boundaries of local school districts and the requirement that students attend school within their districts had resulted in racial, ethnic, and economic isolation for Hartford public school students. Consequently, plaintiff Milo Sheff and other Hartford students had been deprived of their Constitutional right to equal educational opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

Connecticut Governor John Rowland initially responded to the decision on July 25, 1996, by creating the Education Improvement Panel (EIP). This twenty-one member panel was charged to "explore, identify and report on a broad range of options for reducing racial isolation in our state's public schools, improving teaching and learning, enhancing a sense of community and encouraging parental involvement."<sup>3</sup> As part of this process, the legislature's Education Committee commissioned the University of Connecticut to conduct a statewide survey of Connecticut residents regarding attitudes toward the remedies offered to address the *Sheff* decision and the recommendations made by the Education Improvement Panel.

The UConn Survey Research Program conducting the survey found that a majority of Connecticut residents felt that racial isolation was a serious problem in Connecticut public schools. The survey also found that 70 percent of Connecticut residents claimed to have heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case. Further, Connecticut residents endorsed all but one of the Educational Improvement Panel recommendations with majority support and a vast majority of those supporting any one recommendation would continue to support it even if it meant an increase in state spending.<sup>4</sup>

The state responded to the *Sheff* ruling with the development of a two-way voluntary integration program set out in Public Act 97-290. To reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, the legislation called for the development of urban-based magnet schools that enroll both city and suburban students and the expansion of the interdistrict school transfer program, known as Open Choice or Project Choice, which provides suburban school options to Hartford students.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Erica Frankenberg. "Improving and Expanding Hartford's Project Choice Program," Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Washington, DC. September 2007.

<<http://www.prrac.org/pdf/ProjectChoiceCampaignFinalReport.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> Summarized in Memorandum of Decision, Judge Julia L. Aurigemma, Connecticut Superior Court, March 3, 1999, at <<http://www.jud.ct.gov/external/news/sheff.htm>>. For the text of the Connecticut Supreme Court's original decision, see *Sheff v. O'Neill*, 238 Conn. 1, 678 A.2d 1267 (1996).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Programs in Survey Research, University of Connecticut. "Finding from General Public Survey on Educational Improvement Panel Recommendations." Prepared for the Educational Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. April 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education. Public School Choice in Connecticut: A Guide for Students and their Families. 2007-2008. <<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/equity/choice/schoolchoice2007.pdf>>

Despite the development of these programs, little student movement toward integration had occurred by 2000-01 when the plaintiffs sought further direction from the Court. An initial four year settlement was reached in early 2003, setting a goal that 30 percent of Hartford minority schoolchildren would be enrolled in desegregated educational settings by 2007. The agreement would remain in effect until June 30, 2007.<sup>6</sup> However, more than six months past the deadline of the settlement, the 30 percent goal had not been achieved,<sup>7</sup> and the plaintiffs returned to court. Following a two week hearing and another round of negotiations between the parties, the plaintiffs and the state emerged in April 2008 with an ambitious and comprehensive settlement agreement that is expected to receive final judicial approval. Implementation over the next five years will involve a comprehensive education and enrollment plan for the magnet schools and Project Choice, and other interdistrict options, with a goal of meeting 80 percent of Hartford student demand for spaces in integrated schools by 2013.<sup>8</sup>

In February 2008, the Sheff Movement coalition asked the University of Connecticut Master of Survey Research Program to develop and conduct a statewide survey of Connecticut residents to help in its effort to increase support of quality education for all children and to advance its goal of educating the public about Connecticut's voluntary integration programs. The Sheff Movement specifically sought to measure present levels of support and awareness for the remedies for racial isolation resulting from the landmark school integration case *Sheff v. O'Neill*.

This study was led by Dr. Kenneth Dautrich as principal investigator and was conducted by the research team of Alexis B. Browne, Lauren H. Friedman, and Sean T. Harrington. Our research team developed the sampling design and questionnaire for this study and analyzed the data presented in this report.

The 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study was created around a set of specific objectives. The objectives for the current research are as follows:

- To measure how Connecticut residents rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut and in their own communities.
- To gain a better understanding of the receptiveness of residents to interdistrict public school choice programs in Connecticut.
- To measure awareness of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case.
- To measure how aware Connecticut residents are of the state's two-way school integration programs – specifically Open Choice and regional magnet schools – and how supportive residents are of these programs.
- To gain a greater understanding of where Connecticut residents receive their information about the two-way integration programs.
- To track how public opinion and awareness on several of these issues has changed since 1997.

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<sup>6</sup> OLR Research Report. *Sheff v. O'Neill* Settlement. January 27, 2003.  
<<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2003/olrdata/ed/rpt/2003-R-0112.htm>>

<sup>7</sup> Jack Dougherty, Jesse Wanzer, and Christina Ramsay. "Missing the Goal: A Visual Guide to *Sheff vs. O'Neill* School Desegregation," Trinity College. June 2007.  
<[http://www.education.uconn.edu/research/cepa/assets/Sheff\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.education.uconn.edu/research/cepa/assets/Sheff_FINAL.pdf)>

<sup>8</sup> Stipulation and Proposed Order, Connecticut Superior Court, April 4, 2008.  
<[http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/education/Sheff\\_Stipulation\\_4-4-2008.pdf](http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/education/Sheff_Stipulation_4-4-2008.pdf)>

- To test messages aimed at increasing support for integrating public schools.

The following report provides the results of the survey for each of these objectives. The questionnaire used for this study may be found in the Appendix of this report along with the annotated results.

A prior study on the topic of racial isolation in Connecticut public schools was conducted in 1997. The Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly commissioned the University of Connecticut Program in Survey Research to conduct a statewide survey of Connecticut residents. That study measured the public's attitudes concerning the proposals offered to address the *Sheff v. O'Neill* decision. Dr. Dautrich served as the director of that study as well. The 2008 survey, therefore, asked respondents a series of questions that were previously asked in the 1997 survey to update the findings and track how public opinion has changed over the past eleven years.

The sample for the 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study consisted of 1,010 Connecticut residents aged 18 years or older. The sample was representative of the state's adult population as recorded in the 2000 Census and was obtained using random digit dialing. The 2008 sample consisted of 230 urban residents and 780 non-urban residents. The design of the study allowed for analyzing responses of all adult residents while comparing responses from various demographic groups defined by geography, income and education, along with age, race, gender, and parent. A detailed discussion of the methodology is presented in the following section of this report.

## **Methodology**

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The 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study obtained a representative statewide sample of 1,010 Connecticut adults. The population studied is defined as all residents of Connecticut at least 18 years or older. The survey was conducted by Braun Research Inc. based in Princeton New Jersey and used Random Digit Dialing. The interviews took place from April 5 to April 7, 2008. The margin of error for the complete data set is  $\pm 3$  percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. The margin of error for individual sub-groups is larger. The sampling results were weighted to closely match the demographics of the 2000 census. The data was analyzed using the statistical package SPSS. This chapter will explain sampling design, questionnaire development, data collection, weighting, and analysis in greater detail.

### **SAMPLING DESIGN**

The sample was designed to represent all adult residents of the state of Connecticut. Braun Research, Inc. (BRI) purchased a Random Digit Dialing sample from Survey Sampling International (SSI) using a large database of working residential telephone exchanges and working blocks in state of Connecticut (area code + exchange + two-digit block number). With this method, BRI can draw a sample from any part of the U.S.A. – no matter how large or small. The telephone database is updated quarterly, and cross checked monthly against area code and assigned exchange lists furnished by the telephone companies. Exchanges and/or working blocks designated for business or government telephones, car/boat/plane mobile units, and other commercial or institutional services are screened out.

For the interviews, BRI employed random B methodology that provides the most efficient random digit sample available. Each exchange and working block had a probability of selection equal to its share of listed telephone households. BRI used a six call design in that all telephone numbers released received a minimum of one call and maximum of six calls to achieve final dispositioning.

Calls were made over certain times each day to maximize the chance of making contact with respondents. In each contacted household, interviewers initially asked to speak with the youngest male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest female at home. For studies of general populations, this systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. The technique has been found effective for achieving a more representative sample by gaining responses from demographic groups with traditionally low response rates.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT**

Several steps were taken in the development of the Sheff Movement Survey instrument or questionnaire.



First, a set of objectives was identified for the project. A questionnaire was then developed by our research team at the University of Connecticut and was designed to meet this set of project objectives.

In developing the survey instrument, we examined existing literature and research on the topics of public school choice and the integration of public schools to help us craft questions. We specifically studied the survey conducted in 1997 for the Committee on Education of the Connecticut General Assembly and chose questions to ask again in our study based on the objectives of the current project and to permit appropriate comparisons.

We further developed the questionnaire, using the results of two rounds of public discussion that were held on the research topics. One discussion group was comprised of individuals active with the Sheff Movement; the second group was comprised of parents and teachers from suburban towns near to the state's capital city of Hartford.

Strong support for integrating Connecticut public schools was evident during both discussions. When the groups discussed the importance of integrated schools there was recognition of the benefits of integration for minority and white, urban and suburban students. Major concerns that arose from these group discussions included concern that funding for current integration programs did not meet a fair portion of the cost to suburban schools and concern that misperceptions about school integration programs or remedies from the *Sheff* case were creating obstacles to support for the Open Choice program. Comments from these discussions were used by the research team when developing messages to test, notably the messages relating to policy and politics developed from these discussions. Also, the statements used to test levels of awareness for the *Sheff* case, Open Choice program, and regional magnet schools were developed following these discussions.

We determined to rotate some response options and ordered the questions in such a way to help minimize bias in our questionnaire. After completing a draft questionnaire, we pre-tested the survey questions for clarity using a diversified convenience sample. Some changes were made to the questionnaire as a result of these pre-tests.

The final version of the questionnaire, along with interviewer instructions, was then submitted for administration by Braun Research, Inc.

## **WEIGHTING AND ANALYSIS**

### *WEIGHTING*

Weighting is used in survey research to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that can potentially bias sample results. Also, demographic variables are weighted to ensure that certain demographics are not over or under-represented in analysis. The variables that are commonly weighted in statistical analysis are gender, race, education, income and age.

In our sample of 1,010 Connecticut resident adults, minorities, the lower educated, and respondents from households of lower incomes were underrepresented. Several combinations of

weights were calculated in an effort to best bring the sample percentages closer to the Connecticut 2000 Census figures. In the end, we found that the best combination was to weight for gender, education, and age. Our sample was weighted accordingly. The following table presents the census parameters and compares them to the unweighted sample and the weighted sample. The table shows that the weighted demographic variables are much closer to the census parameter.

<b>Weighting and Demographics</b>			
	Parameter %	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Men	48	48	49
Women	52	52	51
<i>Race</i>			
White	84	87	83
Minority	16	13	17
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	45	23	45
Some college	26	27	25
4-year college grad	17	24	18
Graduate or professional degree	12	27	12
<i>Income</i>			
Less than \$40,000	37	26	35
\$40,001 to \$100,000	43	46	44
More than \$100,000	20	28	21
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	28	21	30
35-49	33	27	30
50-64	16	29	19
65+	18	23	21

### *ANALYSIS*

The survey data was analyzed using the statistical package SPSS. In SPSS the data was coded into variables. Many variables were then recoded where necessary to combine certain answer options. We ran frequency distributions for each variable to sum up the entire dataset and created the annotated questionnaire located in the Appendix of this report.

The margin of error for the complete data set of 1,010 respondents is  $\pm 3$  percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. The margin of error for individual sub-groups is larger. The predominant method of analysis used in this project was crosstabs. The standard procedure was to run each of our main demographic variables (geography, race, gender, education, income, age, and parent status) against the dependent variables, which were typically responses to survey questions that measured public ratings, awareness, and support. To test for statistical significance, chi-square

was calculated for crosstabs at the .05 level of significance. The chi-square test is a statistical test often used to examine differences with categorical variables. The greater the deviation of what we observe and what we would expect by chance, the greater the probability that the difference is not due to chance. Another statistical technique used in this study was the z-test for two proportions, which allowed us to test if there was a real difference between two individual sub-groups.

Another method of analysis frequently used in this research is the basic comparison of data over time. Several survey questions asked in the 2008 Sheff Movement Study were asked in the 1997 survey conducted for Committee on Education of the Connecticut General Assembly. For most items, this report makes comparisons for the state population as a whole; however in some instances important sub-group comparisons for 1997 to 2008 are identified.

## Executive Summary

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The 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study was developed to gather information about public awareness and support for voluntary two-way integration programs in Connecticut, specifically the Open Choice or Project Choice program and the regional magnet school programs. In our initial proposal we stated: “It is evident that continued research into issues of integration and school choice will provide valuable information to stakeholders and decision-makers impacting the education environment of Connecticut’s children and youth.” The overall result of our research should provide encouragement, as the study demonstrates that strong and broad-based progress has been made in advancing public perception about the voluntary two-way integration programs.

By layering tests of awareness and support, this study has captured a high level of receptiveness on the part of parents for the option of sending their child to a school outside their district for a better education; this receptiveness is bolstered by strong support in the general public for voluntary two-way integration programs.

The study also identified significant misperceptions and a general lack of awareness of the two-way integration programs. Mostly it appears that the public remains either uninformed or misinformed about the remedies that followed the settlement of *Sheff v. O’Neill*.

The survey tested whether different messages made respondents more supportive of integrating public schools; the results of these tests may identify some opportunities for educating the public. Research based statements about the benefits of integration received positive responses in the survey.

A last, but important step was taken to ask respondents where they obtain most of their information about the Open Choice program and the regional magnet school programs.

We have gathered information that may make for effective communication with the public about Connecticut’s public school choice options and the state’s two-way integration remedies for eliminating racial isolation and improving quality of education for public school students throughout the state.

Major survey findings are presented in this summary. More detailed information is available in the full report.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

*OBJECTIVE: To measure how Connecticut residents rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut and in their own communities.*

Quality education is an issue of extreme importance throughout the United States and Connecticut. A cornerstone of American society, public education provides a means for individuals to access opportunities and gain advancement. *Sheff v. O’Neill* found that minority students in racially isolated urban schools do not have access to the same quality of education afforded most students in Connecticut public schools. The survey examined how Connecticut residents rate quality of education in public schools across the state as well as in their own community. These results were compared to the 1997 survey where the same questions were asked.

**Public schools statewide are rated highly by a majority of Connecticut residents.**

- Fifty-seven percent of residents rate Connecticut public schools as good to excellent. One in five (20 percent) rate Connecticut schools as fair and even fewer (9 percent) rate the quality as poor.
- More residents today rate quality of education in Connecticut public schools as excellent; 15 percent in 2008 as compared to 10 percent in 1997.

**For their local public schools, most respondents give even higher ratings.**

- Twenty-two percent rate the quality of education in their own community as excellent, a slight improvement since 1997 when 19 percent of residents rated their community public schools as excellent.
- Sixty-four percent of adults now rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent, as compared to 60 percent in 1997

**Local Ratings differ by geography and race.**

- Fewer urban residents rate their local schools as good to excellent than non-urban residents (53 percent to 67 percent).
- Minority residents are twice as likely to rate their local schools as poor. Only 7 percent of white residents rate their local schools as poor, whereas 15 percent of minorities rate their own community schools as poor.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE**

*OBJECTIVE: To gain a better understanding of the receptiveness of residents to interdistrict public school choice programs in Connecticut.*

In Connecticut, voluntary two-way integration programs are specifically designed for the purpose of reducing racial, ethnic, or economic isolation. Through these programs the state provides opportunities for urban students to attend schools in suburban districts and for suburban and urban students to attend regional magnet schools. Given the racial composition of these communities, public school choice represents a two-way integration system with programs that are voluntary for Connecticut families while being mandatory for the state. The survey sought to measure public support and receptiveness to interdistrict public school choice in Connecticut public schools.

**Connecticut residents strongly support interdistrict educational choice.**

- Three quarters (76 percent) of Connecticut residents support a parent's option to send their children to schools outside their district.

**Support for public school choice has grown since 1997**

- This 76 percent rate of support in 2008 is a substantial increase in overall support for interdistrict public school choice, as compared to 58 percent support in 1997.

**Support in the general public is broad based**

- Regardless of geography, race, education, income, gender, age, or parent status – more than 60 percent of each demographic sub-group supports giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district.

### **Parents are receptive to interdistrict public school choice options for their own children**

- Most Connecticut parents, adult residents with children under age eighteen in Connecticut public schools, were either very likely (48 percent) or somewhat likely (26 percent) to send their child to a school outside of their district.
- Receptiveness to interdistrict school options has increased substantially since 1997 when fewer parents indicated they were very likely (36 percent) or somewhat likely (21 percent) to send their child to a school outside of their district.

## **AWARENESS OF THE *SHEFF* CASE**

*OBJECTIVE: To measure awareness of the Sheff v. O’Neill case*

The Sheff Movement developed following the 1996 decision in a landmark public school integration case, *Sheff v. O’Neill*. The case centered on quality of education in Connecticut for racially and economically isolated students in Hartford. The state’s response formalized a voluntary two-way integration system characterized by the use of two programs: Open Choice and Magnet Schools. One of the objectives of this study was to measure current public awareness of the case and to capture changes in awareness and support over the past decade.

This study presents the public’s awareness of the *Sheff* case with a comparison to results from 1997. Public awareness of the case was first measured and then tested.

### **General awareness of *Sheff v. O’Neill* has declined substantially since 1997.**

- Most Connecticut residents (56 percent) say they have not heard of the *Sheff* case, as compared to 1997 when 70 percent of residents were aware of the case.
- Fewer than half (47 percent) of those who have heard of *Sheff v. O’Neill* know that the state’s response was the creation of a two-way integration program for urban and suburban students.

## **AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATION PROGRAMS**

*OBJECTIVE: To measure how aware Connecticut residents are of the state’s two-way school integration programs – specifically Open Choice and regional magnet schools – and how supportive residents are of these programs.*

This study was designed to capture current public opinion about the two-way integration remedies that developed in response to the landmark *Sheff v. O’Neill* court decision.

### ***OPEN CHOICE***

In its effort to ensure a higher quality of education for all Connecticut children, the state created a program that makes classroom seats in suburban schools available to urban children. Today, this program is referred to as Project Choice in the Hartford area or Open Choice throughout Connecticut. The state’s Open Choice program transports urban students to schools in nearby suburban towns where space has been made available. Currently, the program is available to students from Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven. This study examines the public’s

awareness and support of the Open Choice program. Additionally, the study looks at how supportive suburban residents are to opening up more seats in their schools to urban children.

**Connecticut residents are largely unaware of the Open Choice programs.**

- Only 23 percent of Connecticut residents have heard of the Open Choice program.
- Overall, only about 1 in 10 residents have heard more than a little about Open Choice, while 9 in 10 have heard little or nothing about Open Choice.
- Adults with some graduate level education or a professional degree are most aware, with 44 percent having heard about the Open Choice program.
- Of the few who have heard of the program, only 38 percent know that the program is available to all public school students in urban areas throughout Connecticut.

**Despite being generally unaware, a majority of adults are supportive of Open Choice.**

- Nearly 7 in 10 (68 percent) adult residents of Connecticut are supportive of the Open Choice program.
- For minorities, 81 percent are supportive of the Open Choice program, as compared to 66 percent of whites being supportive.

*REGIONAL MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS*

Interdistrict magnet schools are publicly funded schools made up of students from different school districts. Each magnet school has a unique and specific theme. For the public school system in Connecticut, magnet schools are typically located in urban areas but draw students from urban and suburban districts. Although a few magnet schools existed prior to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* decision, they have been a substantial piece of the state's response to the *Sheff case*. This study explains the public's awareness and support for regional magnet school programs in the state of Connecticut.

**Residents are more aware of the regional magnet schools than Open Choice.**

- Most adults in Connecticut (62 percent) have heard of magnet school programs.
- The groups that appear to be the most aware are women, college graduates, and adults with an annual income over \$40,000.
- Seventy-four percent of those who have heard of the programs know that they create specialized schools for both urban and suburban students.

**Support for the regional magnet school programs is strong and broad based.**

- An overwhelming 83 percent of Connecticut residents are supportive of the regional magnet school programs.
- There is widespread support for the programs throughout all demographic groups. Eighty-four percent of urban and 83 percent of non-urban respondents support the programs.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

*OBJECTIVE: To gain a greater understanding of where Connecticut residents receive their information about the two-way integration programs.*

An important objective of this study was to find out where the public receives most of its information about Connecticut's two-way integration program. Respondents who reported that

they have heard of Open Choice or the regional magnet school programs were asked where they get most of their information about the programs.

**Newspapers are primary source for information, followed by word of mouth**

- Forty-five percent of adults receive most of their information about the regional magnet school programs and the Open Choice program from newspapers.
- Thirty-six percent get most of their information about the regional magnet school programs from word of mouth and 26 percent get most of their information about Open Choice from word of mouth.



# Chapter 1 Public Perception on the Quality of Education

Quality education is an issue of extreme importance throughout the United States and Connecticut. A cornerstone of American society, public education provides a means for individuals to access opportunities and gain advancement. *Sheff v. O'Neill* found that minority students in racially isolated urban schools do not have access to the same quality of education afforded most students in Connecticut public schools. This chapter will examine how Connecticut residents rate the quality of education in public schools across the state as well as in their own community. These results will be compared to the 1997 survey where the same questions were asked.

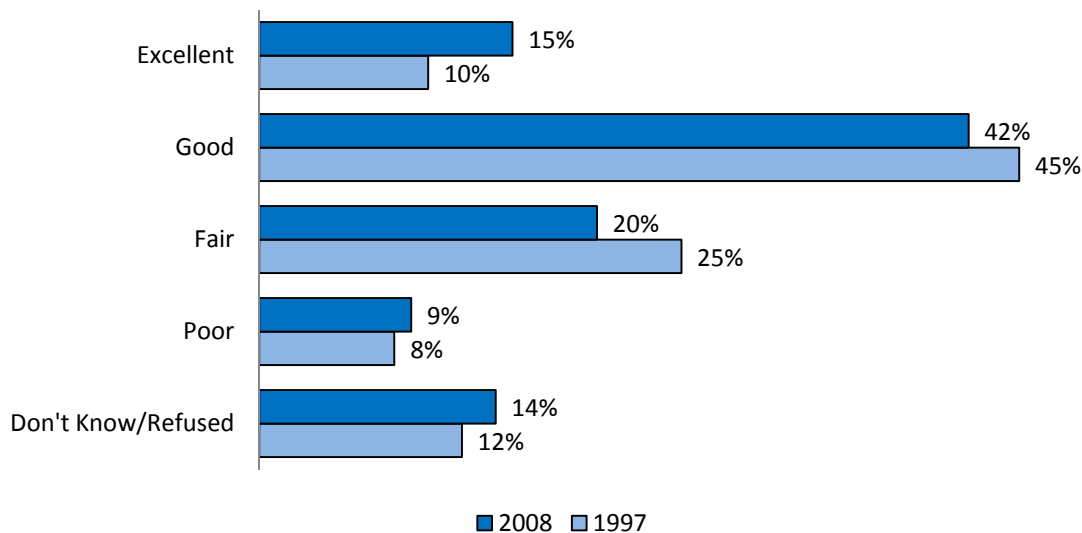
## QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT

### *RESIDENTS GIVE HIGH MARKS TO CONNECTICUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

Public schools in Connecticut as a whole are rated highly by a majority of the state's residents. Forty-two percent of adults rate quality of education in the state as good and an additional 15 percent rate the quality of education as excellent. In contrast to this majority (57 percent), only 20 percent rate the quality of education as fair and fewer still (9 percent) rate education in Connecticut as poor.

A greater number of residents today rate quality of education in Connecticut public schools as excellent, 15 percent in 2008 as compared to 10 percent in 1997. Those residents rating Connecticut schools as fair declined from 25 percent in 1997 to 20 percent in 2008. The following chart shows how public perception for quality of education in Connecticut has changed since 1997.

**2008 compared to 1997 – Overall, how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut...excellent, good, fair, or poor?**



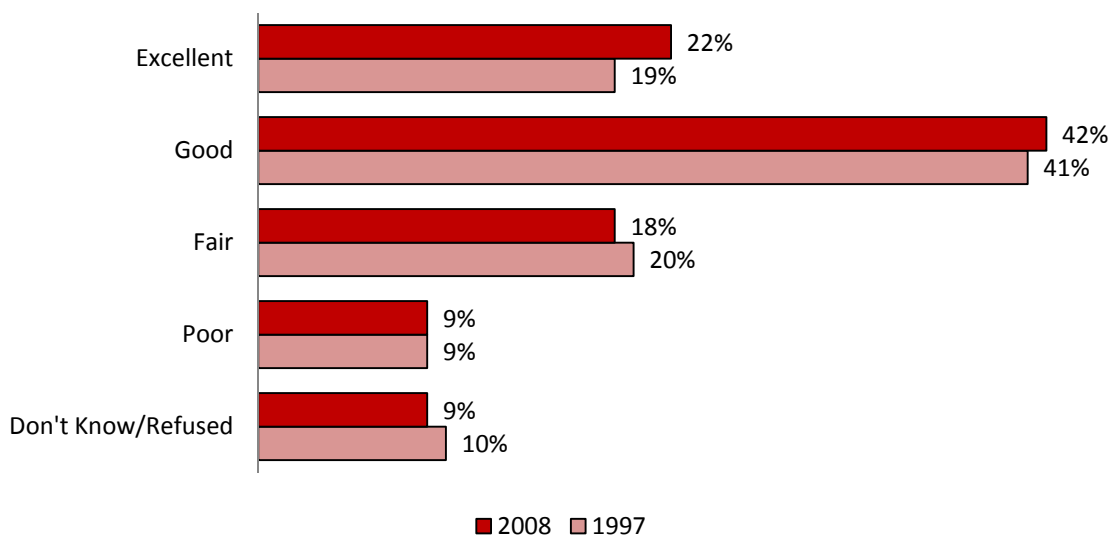
## QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN OWN COMMUNITY

### *PUBLIC RATES QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN OWN COMMUNITY EVEN HIGHER*

When rating quality of education for the public schools in their own community, most respondents give even better ratings. Nearly a quarter of adult residents (22 percent) rate the quality of education in their own community as excellent. Similar to the ratings for Connecticut public schools as a whole, a plurality of respondents (42 percent) rate the quality of education in their own community as good. Fewer than 20 percent rate education in their community as fair and only 9 percent of adults rate the quality of education in their own community as poor.

Ratings for the quality of education in their own community show slight improvement since 1997. Sixty-four percent of adults now rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent, as compared to 60 percent in 1997. Adults rating quality as excellent increased from 19 percent in 1997 to 22 percent in 2008. The following chart shows how the public's perception for quality of education in the public schools in their own community has changed since 1997.

**2008 compared to 1997 – Overall, how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in your own community...excellent, good, fair, or poor?**

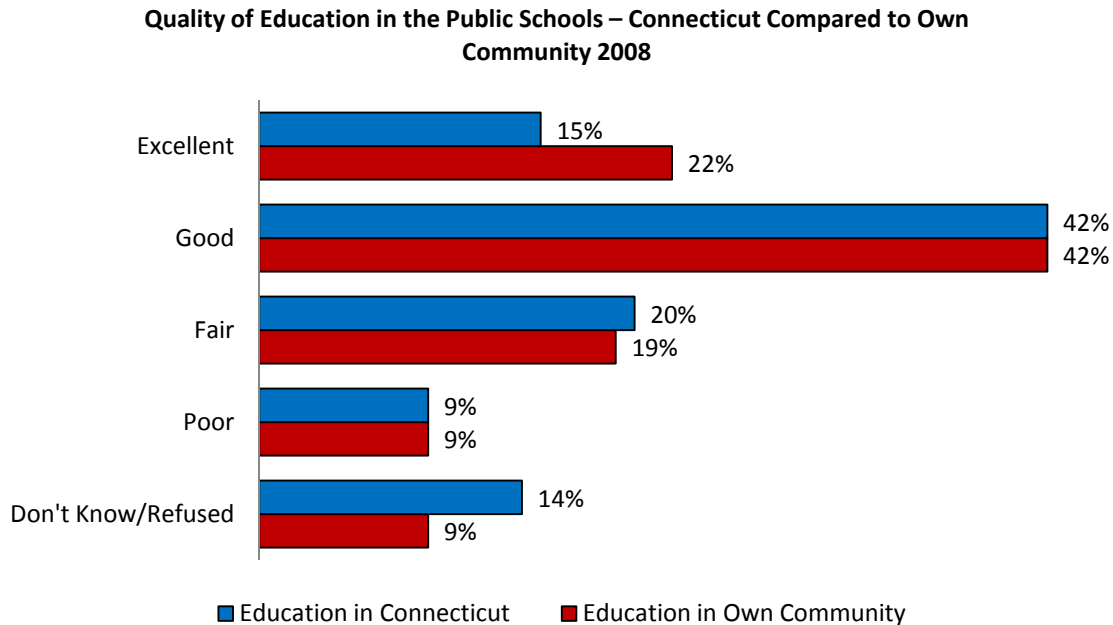


## RATING OF EDUCATION – CONNECTICUT VS. OWN COMMUNITY

### *PUBLIC RATES EDUCATION IN OWN COMMUNITY HIGHER THAN THE STATE*

While respondents give high marks to the quality of education in public schools for Connecticut overall, they give even higher ratings for the quality of education in the public schools of their own communities. More than six in ten (64 percent) adults rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent, as compared to the more than half (57 percent) that rate quality of education in Connecticut as good to excellent. More adults rate public schools in their own community as excellent than rate the quality of public schools throughout the state as excellent

(22 percent vs. 15 percent). One in ten (9 percent) rate the quality of education as poor in both the state and in their own community. The following chart illustrates how the public rates the quality of education in Connecticut compared to their own community.



## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN 2008

A majority of all demographic sub-groups rate the quality of education in the state and in their own community as good to excellent. Further, all demographic subgroups rate the quality of education in the public schools in their own community higher than in the state as a whole. The following sections discuss how some specific groups rate the quality of education in Connecticut and in their own community. A table at the end of this chapter provides a detailed summary of the data.

### *GEOGRAPHY*

More non-urban residents responding to the survey give higher ratings for quality of education in both Connecticut public schools and the schools in their own community than do urban respondents.<sup>9</sup> Whereas 59 percent of the non-urban respondents rate quality of education in Connecticut as good to excellent and 67 percent rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent; only half of urban respondents (53 percent) rate the quality of education in Connecticut and in their own community as good to excellent. Twenty-five percent of non-urban respondents rate quality of education in their own community as excellent, compared to 14 percent of urban respondents.

<sup>9</sup> The difference between urban and non-urban and how they rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut is not statistically significant. However, the difference in how they rate the quality in their own community is statistically significant at the .05 level.

### *RACE*

Minority<sup>10</sup> residents of Connecticut do not rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut or in their own community as highly as whites.<sup>11</sup> Minority respondents were twice as likely as white respondents to rate their schools as poor. Only 7 percent of white respondents rate their own community schools as poor, whereas 15 percent of minority respondents rate their own community schools as poor. Fewer minority respondents (53 percent) rate quality of education in the state as good to excellent and only 55 percent rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent. In contrast, 59 percent of white respondents rate quality of education in Connecticut as good to excellent and 67 percent rate quality of education in their own community as good to excellent.

### *EDUCATION*

The survey found that respondents with higher levels of education, specifically those who had earned at least a four-year college degree, give higher marks to the public schools in Connecticut and in their own community than less educated respondents.<sup>12</sup> Sixty-one percent of respondents with a four-year college degree rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut as good to excellent and 68 percent rate the quality in their own community as good to excellent. Those with education beyond the four-year degree rate the quality of education even higher. Nearly three-fourths of these respondents (71 percent) rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut as good to excellent and slightly more (77 percent) rate the quality in their own community as good to excellent. In fact, one-third of respondents with a graduate level education (33 percent) give the schools in their own community a rating of excellent. In contrast, those with less education are less likely to rate education highly – only six in ten respondents with no more than a high school education rate public schools in the state (58 percent) or their own community (62 percent) as good to excellent. While a similar number (59 percent) of respondents with only some college rate schools in their own community as good to excellent, fewer than half (49 percent) rate the quality of education in the state as good to excellent.

### *INCOME*

Results from the survey indicate that respondents with high incomes rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut and in their own community higher than those with lower incomes. Similarly to those with the highest level of education, those respondents reporting income of more than \$100,000 a year rate quality of education in Connecticut and in their own community higher than any other demographic sub-group. Sixty-eight percent rate the quality of education in Connecticut as good to excellent and 76 percent rate the quality of education in their

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<sup>10</sup> Minority is defined in this report as Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race or mixed. All non-white racial groups were combined under “minority” because individual sample sizes were not large enough to permit statistically significant comparisons among the minority racial groups.

<sup>11</sup> The difference between white and minority respondents and how they rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut is not statistically significant. However, the difference in how they rate the quality of education in their own community is statistically significant at the .05 level.

<sup>12</sup> The difference between the levels of education and how respondents rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut is not statistically significant. However, the difference in how they rate the quality of education in their own community is statistically significant.

own community as good to excellent. More than one-third of residents (36 percent) earning more than \$100,000 rate the public schools in their own community as excellent. In contrast, 19 percent of Connecticut residents earning less than \$100,000 rate the public schools in their community as excellent.

**PARENTS**

Parents are defined in this report as adults in households with children, specifically age 18 or younger who attend Connecticut public schools. More than a quarter of Connecticut’s parents (26 percent) rate the quality of education in their local schools as excellent. Households with children attending public school rate the quality of education in the state and in their own community higher than those without such children in their household. Two-thirds of parent households (68 percent) rate the quality of education in Connecticut and in their own community as good to excellent. In comparison, only half (53 percent) of adults in households without such children rate Connecticut public schools as good to excellent, but more than six in ten (61 percent) rate their community schools as high.

The following table gives a breakdown of how these demographic groups rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut and in their own communities.

Rating the Quality of Education – Connecticut vs. Own Community										
	Excellent %		Good %		Fair %		Poor %		DK/REF %	
	State	Own	State	Own	State	Own	State	Own	State	Own
Urban	14	14	39	39	25	26	10	13	13	7
Non-Urban	15	25	44	42	19	16	8	7	14	10
Men	13	22	43	40	20	20	9	9	14	10
Women	17	22	42	44	20	17	8	9	13	8
<i>Race</i>										
White	16	24	43	43	19	18	8	7	14	8
Minority	13	18	40	37	25	20	10	15	12	11
<i>Education</i>										
HS grad or less	16	19	42	43	19	19	10	10	13	10
Some college	9	19	40	40	25	22	9	10	16	9
4-year college grad	16	27	45	41	19	17	6	7	14	9
Graduate or professional degree	23	34	48	43	12	10	5	6	12	8
<i>Income</i>										
Less than \$40,000	14	19	42	40	24	23	8	8	12	10
\$40,001 to \$100,000	12	18	46	44	19	17	10	11	13	9
More than \$100,000	22	36	46	40	19	16	5	4	7	3
<i>Age</i>										
18-34	14	21	43	42	22	16	8	10	13	11
35-49	18	22	40	38	17	21	9	11	16	8
50-64	15	25	48	44	21	22	8	5	8	5
65+	14	23	39	45	22	16	10	7	14	9
<i>Parent</i>										
Yes	18	26	50	42	19	19	7	11	6	2
No	14	20	39	41	21	18	10	8	18	12

## Chapter 2 Public School Choice

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Public school choice is a term that broadly describes programs that allow parents to send their children to schools outside their local school district. It gives parents more options for the type of education their children will receive. In Connecticut, voluntary two-way integration programs are specifically designed for the purpose of reducing racial, ethnic, or economic isolation. Through these programs the state provides opportunities for urban students to attend schools in suburban districts and for suburban and urban students to attend urban based magnet schools. Given the racial composition of these communities, public school choice represents a two-way integration system with programs that are voluntary for Connecticut families while being mandatory for the state. This chapter explains the Connecticut public's support and receptiveness to interdistrict public school choice in general.

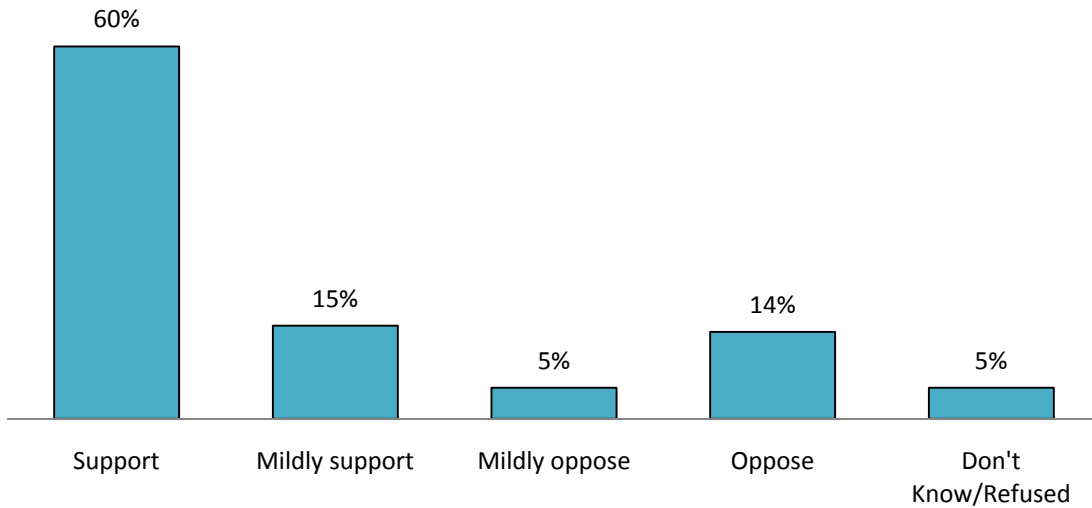
### **SUPPORT FOR INTERDISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE**

#### *PUBLIC OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTIVE*

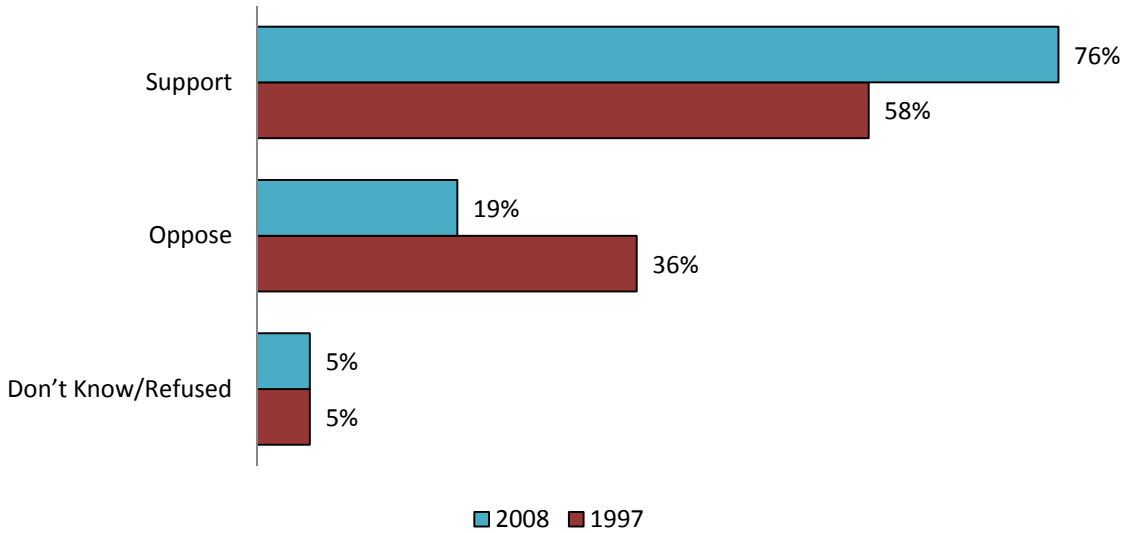
To measure support for interdistrict public school choice, respondents were first asked if they favor giving parents the option of sending children outside of their own district. Three quarters (76 percent) of Connecticut residents support a parent's option to send their children to schools outside their district. This is a substantial increase in overall support for interdistrict public school choice options in 2008 as compared to 58 percent support in 1997.

Overall support for interdistrict options increased for respondents with children 18 years or younger attending Connecticut public schools – rising from 63 percent in 1997 to 83 percent in 2008. Support in the general public is broad based; regardless of geography, race, education, income, gender, or age – more than 60 percent of each subgroup supports giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district. The following two charts show support levels for giving parents the option to send their children outside their district and how much support has increased since this question was asked in 1997.

**Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district?**



**2008 compared to 1997 – Support for giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district**



The following table is a detailed demographic breakdown of overall support for giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district.

<b>Support for Giving Parents Interdistrict Public School Choice Options</b>			
	Support %	Oppose %	DK/REF %
Urban	76	18	6
Non-Urban	75	20	5
Men	73	22	5
Women	78	17	5
<i>Race</i>			
White	76	20	4
Minority	74	20	6
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	69	25	6
Some college	76	20	4
4-year college grad	88	9	4
Graduate or professional degree	82	14	4
<i>Income</i>			
Less than \$40,000	67	24	9
\$40,001 to \$100,000	83	15	3
More than \$100,000	83	16	1
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	79	19	2
35-49	81	16	3
50-64	80	17	3
65+	63	25	12
<i>Parent</i>			
Yes	84	15	2
No	71	22	6

## **RECEPTIVENESS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS**

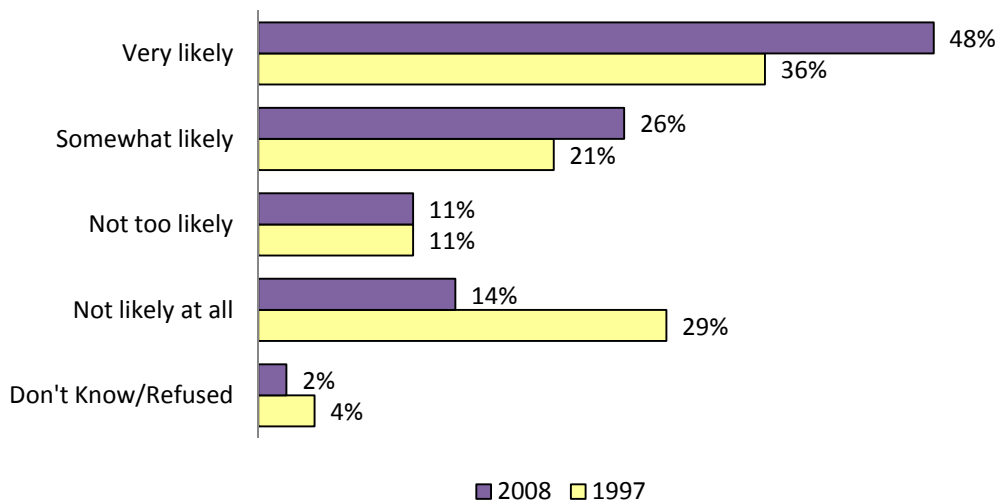
### *PARENTS WILLING TO SEND CHILDREN OUTSIDE DISTRICT*

The survey found that a solid majority of the Connecticut public are likely to send their children to other school districts if it means a better education. To measure receptiveness to interdistrict public school choice, respondents were asked how likely they would be to send their child to a school outside of their own district for a better education. Most residents (71 percent) indicated they would be very likely or somewhat likely to send their child out of district. This majority included parents with children in Connecticut public schools and non-parents who would have answered the question hypothetically.



Further, nearly three quarters (74 percent) of Connecticut residents with children under age eighteen in Connecticut public schools were either very likely (48 percent) or somewhat likely (26 percent) to send their child to a school outside of their district. Responses in 2008 show a substantial increase in receptiveness to public school choice as compared to 1997, when 57 percent of parents indicated they were very likely (36 percent) or somewhat likely (21 percent) to send their child to a school outside of their district.

**2008 compared to 1997 – How likely are you to send your child to a school outside your district if you thought that he or she could get a better education?  
Are you...very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all?**



## DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF PARENTS FROM 1997 TO 2008

The following is a demographic breakdown of how likely parents – urban and non-urban, men and women – are to send their children outside of their district. These demographic sub-groups are further compared to the results from 1997.

### *GEOGRAPHY*

Most Connecticut residents with children in public school – both urban (76 percent) and non-urban (72 percent) – indicated they were somewhat to very likely to send their child to a school outside their district for a better education; however nearly 6 in 10 urban residents (57 percent) were very likely to do this while only 4 in 10 non-urban residents (44 percent) were very likely to send their child outside their district for a better education. In 1997, the difference between the groups was greater with 69 percent of urban parents somewhat to very likely, but only 54 percent of non-urban parents as somewhat to very likely to send their child to a school outside their district for a better education.

### *GENDER*

Although men remain less likely than women to send their child to a school outside their district for a better education, receptiveness from 1997 to 2008 has increased substantially for both

groups. In 1997, fully 3 in 10 men (32 percent) and nearly 3 in 10 women (26 percent) were not at all likely to send their child out of district for a better education. In 2008, fewer than 1 in 10 women (9 percent) and only 2 in 10 men (20 percent) are not at all likely to send their child outside their district for a better education. For women, those very likely to send their child out of district grew from 42 percent in 1997 to 53 percent in 2008. For men the contrast is much greater, those very likely to send their child to a school outside their district for a better education increased from 26 percent in 1997 to 40 percent in 2008.

## Chapter 3 *Sheff v. O'Neill*

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The Sheff Movement coalition developed following the 1996 decision in a landmark public school integration case, *Sheff v. O'Neill*. The case centered on quality of education in Connecticut for racially and economically isolated student in Hartford. The state's response to the *Sheff* decision formalized a voluntary two-way integration system characterized by the use of two programs: Open Choice and Magnet Schools.

One of the objectives of the 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study was to measure current public awareness of the case and to capture changes in awareness and support over the past decade. During the ten months preceding the survey, the *Sheff v. O'Neill* settlement had been an on-going source of public debate. Details of the case and settlement were in the news with coverage on television, radio, and in the print and electronic media. This chapter will present the public's awareness and level of awareness of the *Sheff* case with a comparison to results from the 1997 survey. Current public awareness for the case was first measured and then tested.

### **AWARENESS OF THE *SHEFF V. O'NEILL* CASE**

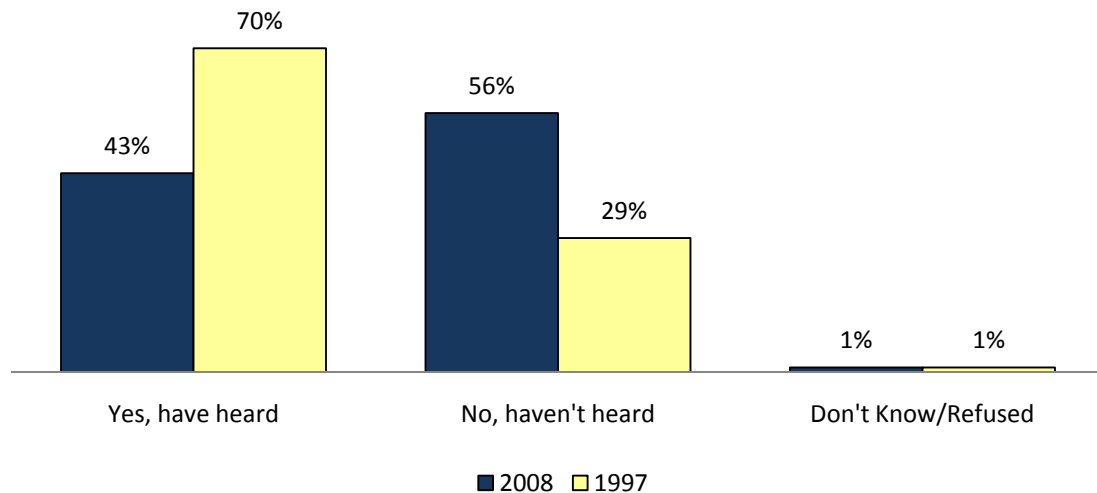
#### *PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE CASE HAS DROPPED NOTICEABLY*

The survey found that although the case still has a tremendous impact on the education system in the state of Connecticut, awareness of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case has declined substantially since 1997.

To measure awareness of the *Sheff* case, respondents were asked whether they have heard or read about the case. If respondents reported having heard of the case, they were asked if they have heard a lot, some, or just a little about the case. Overall, the survey found that a majority (56 percent) of respondents have not heard of the *Sheff* case and fewer than half (43 percent) have heard of the case. General awareness has declined substantially since 1997 when 70 percent of Connecticut residents were aware of the case.

Despite a general lack of awareness for the case, later chapters will demonstrate greater public awareness for some of the remedies.

**2008 compared to 1997 – Have you heard or read about the *Sheff v. O’Neill* case which concerns the quality of education and racial isolation in Connecticut public schools, or haven’t you heard anything about this?**



The 43 percent of respondents who have heard of the *Sheff* case are drawn from all respondents as follows: 15 percent heard a lot, 13 percent heard some, and 15 percent heard just a little. For the 70 percent of respondents who had heard of the case in 1997, the group was comprised as follows: 21 percent heard a lot, 28 heard some, and 21 percent heard just a little.

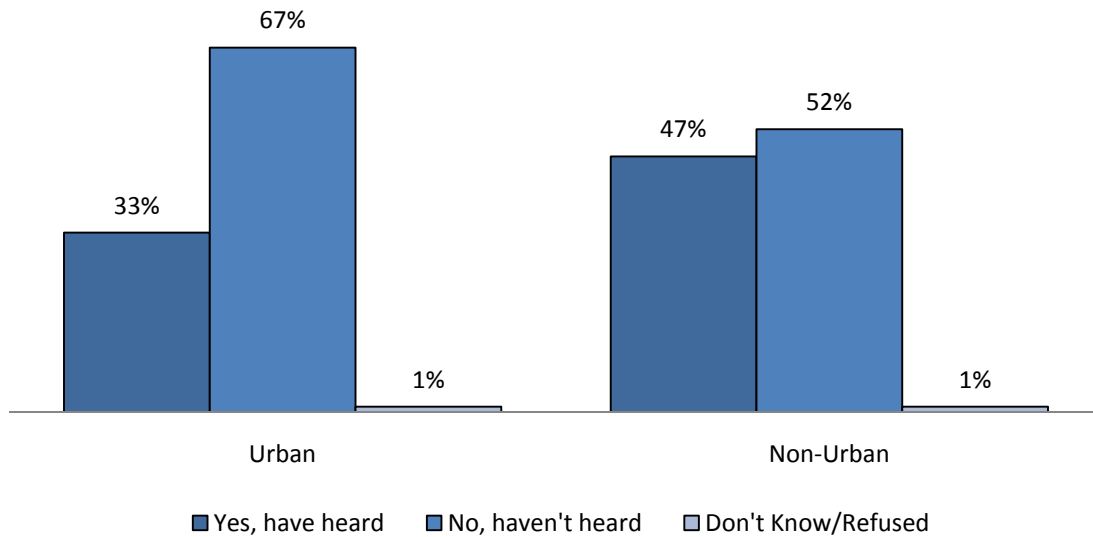
**DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN**

For most demographic sub-groups, the majority of respondents are unaware of the *Sheff v. O’Neill* case. The sub-groups that appear to be the most aware of the case are the more educated and those from the highest income households. The following is a demographic breakdown of how aware some selected groups are of the *Sheff v. O’Neill* case in 2008.

**GEOGRAPHY**

For both urban and non-urban respondents, fewer than 50 percent have heard about the *Sheff* case. Non-urban respondents are more likely to say they have heard about the case than urban respondents. Only one-third of urban respondents (33 percent) reported they have heard of the *Sheff* case, compared to nearly half of non-urban respondents (47 percent) that reported hearing about the *Sheff* case. Fifty-two percent of non-urban respondents reported they have not heard of the *Sheff* case compared to 67 percent of urban respondents who have not heard.

### Awareness of *Sheff* case by geography



### *GENDER*

Fewer than half of women or men are aware of the *Sheff* case. Specifically, only 45 percent of men and only 42 percent of females have heard of the case.<sup>13</sup>

### *RACE*

Awareness for both white and minority respondents is low. In each group, fewer than 50 percent have heard about the *Sheff* case. Only 38 percent of minority adults have heard and 44 percent of white adults have heard. Alternatively, survey results indicate that 55 percent of white respondents and 62 percent of minority respondents have not heard.<sup>14</sup>

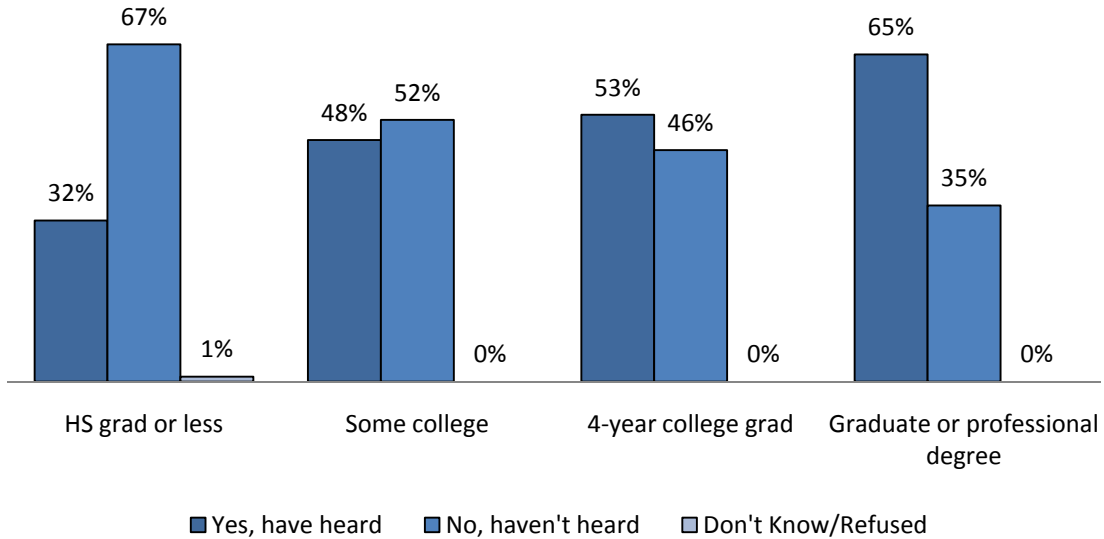
### *EDUCATION*

Awareness of the case appears to increase as level of education increases. Only one-third (32 percent) of those with no more than a high school education have heard about the *Sheff* case. In contrast, for those reporting some college courses, 48 percent have heard; for adults with a 4-year college degree, 53 percent were aware of the case. The group with the highest level of awareness was adults reporting education beyond the bachelor's degree with nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the most educated respondents aware of the case.

<sup>13</sup> The difference between men and women and how aware they are of the *Sheff* case is not statistically significant.

<sup>14</sup> The difference between white and minority respondents and how aware they are of the *Sheff* case is not statistically significant.

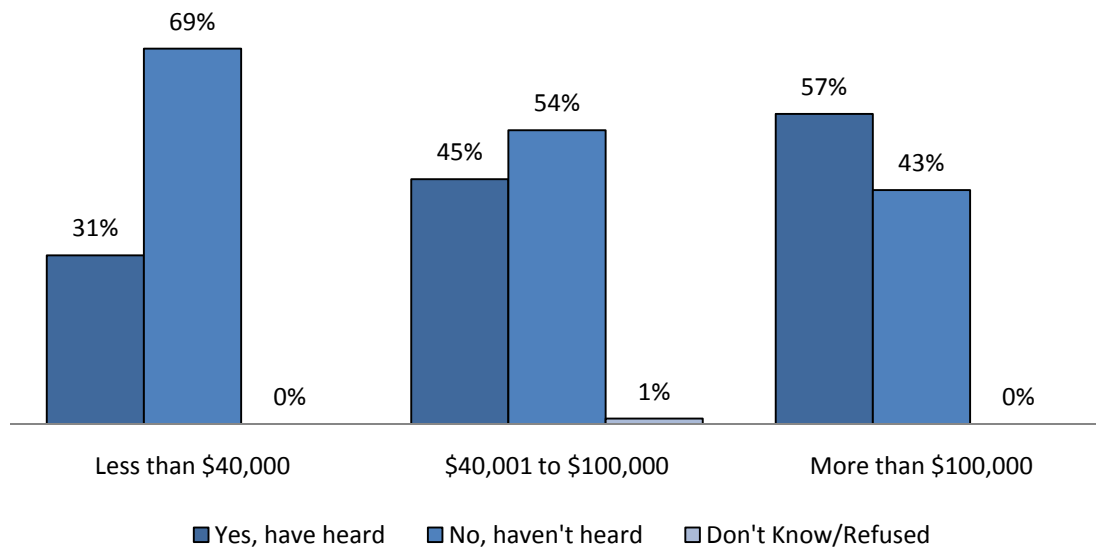
**Awareness of *Sheff* case by education**



**INCOME**

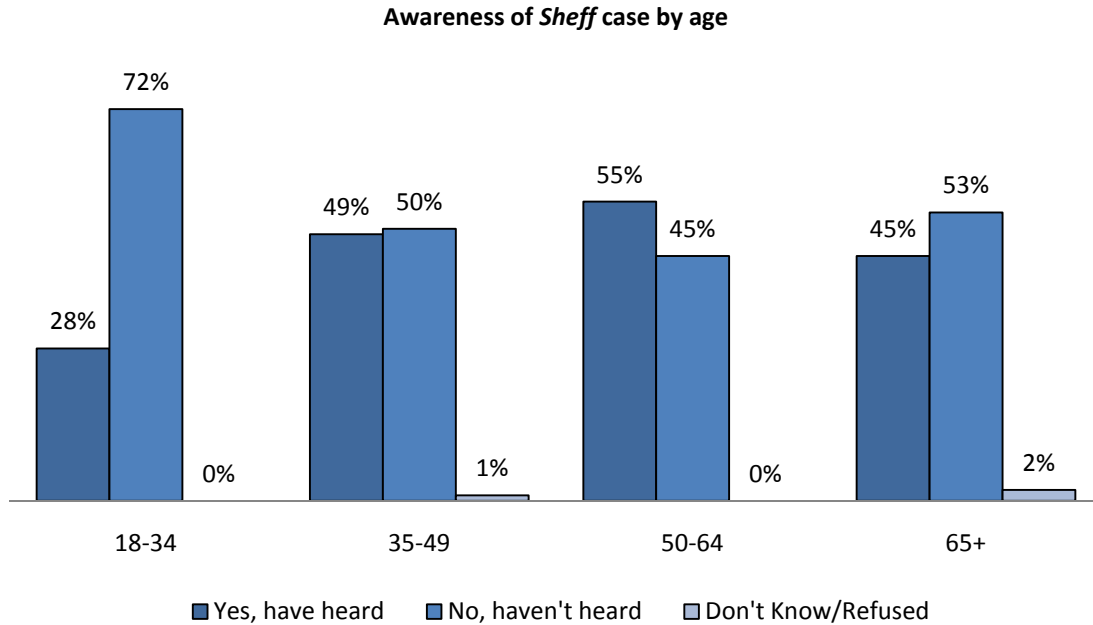
Income has an effect on whether a respondent has heard of the *Sheff* case. For adults with incomes over \$100,000, a majority (57 percent) have heard about the case while fewer than half (45 percent) of respondents with mid level incomes (\$40,001 to \$100,000) have heard, and fewer than a third (31 percent) of those earning \$40,000 or less have heard of the case.

**Awareness of *Sheff* case by income**



## AGE

The group most aware of the case are adults between the ages of 50 to 64 years with 55 percent of these respondents reporting they have heard of the *Sheff* case. Fewer than half of all other age groups have heard of the case. For respondents aged 35 to 49 years, 49 percent reported they have heard. Of those over 65 years, 45 percent have heard while only 28 percent of those aged 18-34 years have heard of the case.



## PARENTS

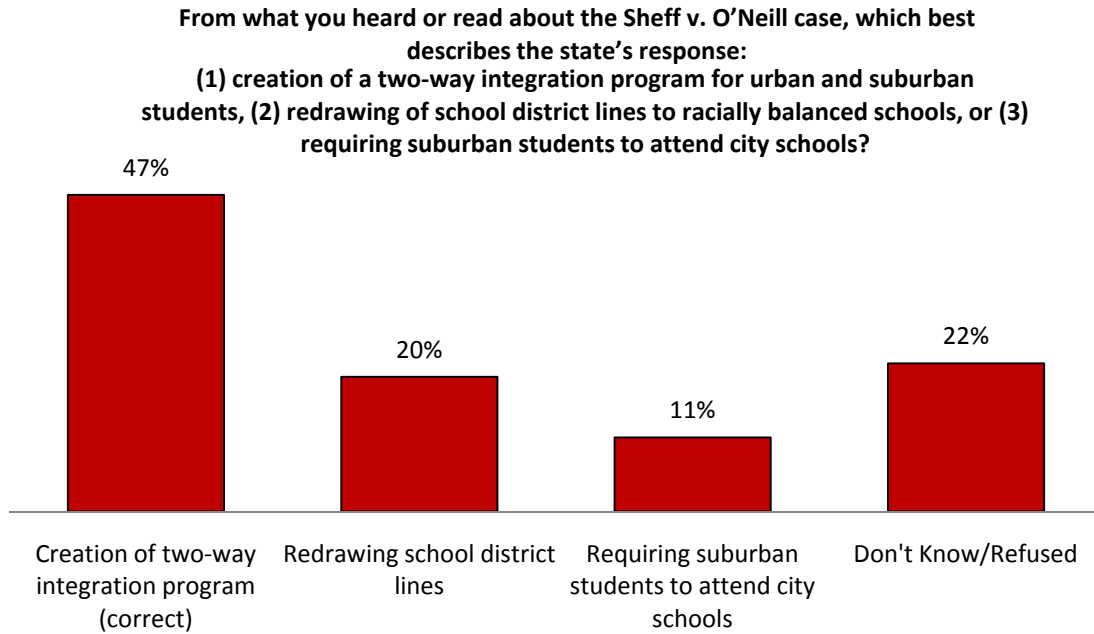
Parents, specifically respondents who live in households with a child 18 years or younger attending Connecticut public schools, are surprisingly unaware of the case with only 40 percent having heard. Alternatively, most parents (59 percent) have not heard of the *Sheff* case while more respondents without children in Connecticut public schools reported that they have heard – 45 percent having heard of the case and 55 percent have not heard of the case.<sup>15</sup>

## TEST OF AWARENESS

Forty-three percent of residents reported that they have heard of the *Sheff* case. These respondents were further tested for level of awareness. Specifically, those respondents who reported having heard were asked to correctly identify the remedies of the *Sheff* case. The test of awareness presented three statements about the settlement – one was a correct statement regarding the remedies; two other statements were misconceptions. Level of awareness was measured as high for respondents selecting the correct response and low for respondents selecting either of the misconceptions.

<sup>15</sup> The difference between these two groups and how aware they are of the *Sheff* case is not statistically significant.

The results were that only 47 percent of those who had heard of the *Sheff* case know that the state’s response to the decision was the creation of a two-way integration program for urban and suburban students. This result signifies that hearing of the *Sheff* case does not necessarily mean individuals will know what the result has been. Of those tested, respondents answering incorrectly are grouped as follows, 20 percent answered that the state’s response to the *Sheff* case was the redrawing of school district lines, 11 percent answered that the response was requiring suburban students to attend city schools and 22 percent refused to pick an answer option.



In examining results from the test of awareness, education level appears to have an impact on whether a respondent answered the test question correctly. Fifty-eight percent of those with education beyond a four year college degree gave the correct answer, in contrast to correct responses from 52 percent of four-year college graduates, 49 percent of those with just some college, and only 39 percent of those with no more than a high school education. Additionally, the more someone has heard about the case, the greater the likelihood for answering the question correctly. Fifty-six percent of respondents who have heard a lot answered the question correctly, while 51 percent who heard some and just 36 percent of those who heard a little answered the question correctly.

<b>How Much Respondents Heard About the <i>Sheff</i> Case</b>			
<b>Awareness Test</b>	A Lot	Some	Just a Little
Correct Answer	56%	51%	36%
Incorrect Answer	44%	49%	64%



## Chapter 4 Regional Magnet School Programs

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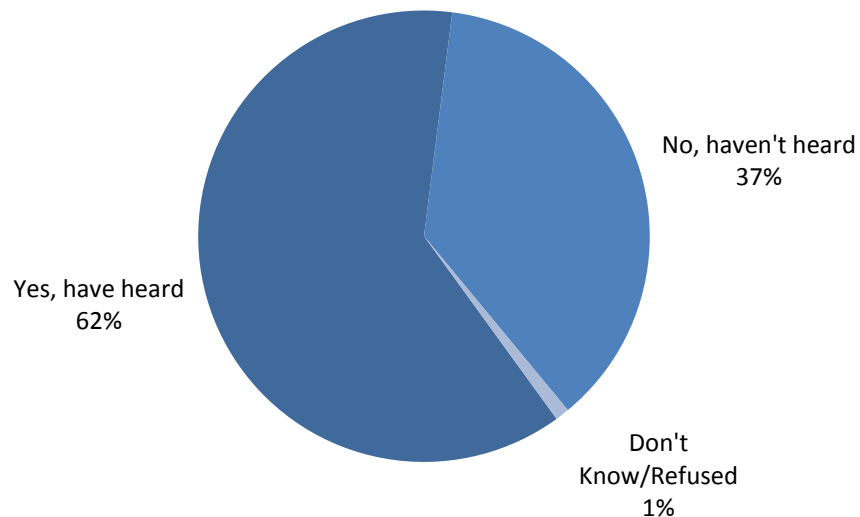
Magnet schools are publicly funded schools made up of students from different school districts. Each magnet school has a unique and specific theme. For the public school system in Connecticut, magnet schools aim to enhance education quality while reducing racial, ethnic, and economic isolation in public schools throughout the state. Although a few magnet schools existed prior to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* decision, they have been a substantial piece of the state's response to *Sheff* case. This chapter explains the public's awareness and support for regional magnet school programs in the state. Additionally, the public's sources for information on magnet schools are discussed.

### AWARENESS OF THE REGIONAL MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS

#### *THE PUBLIC IS AWARE OF MAGNET SCHOOLS*

To measure awareness of regional magnet school programs, respondents were asked whether they have heard or read about the programs. If respondents had heard of the programs, they were asked if they had heard a lot, some, or just a little. The survey found that overall, 62 percent of adults have heard of the regional magnet school programs, compared to 37 percent who have not heard.

Have you heard or read about the regional magnet school programs, or haven't you heard anything about this?



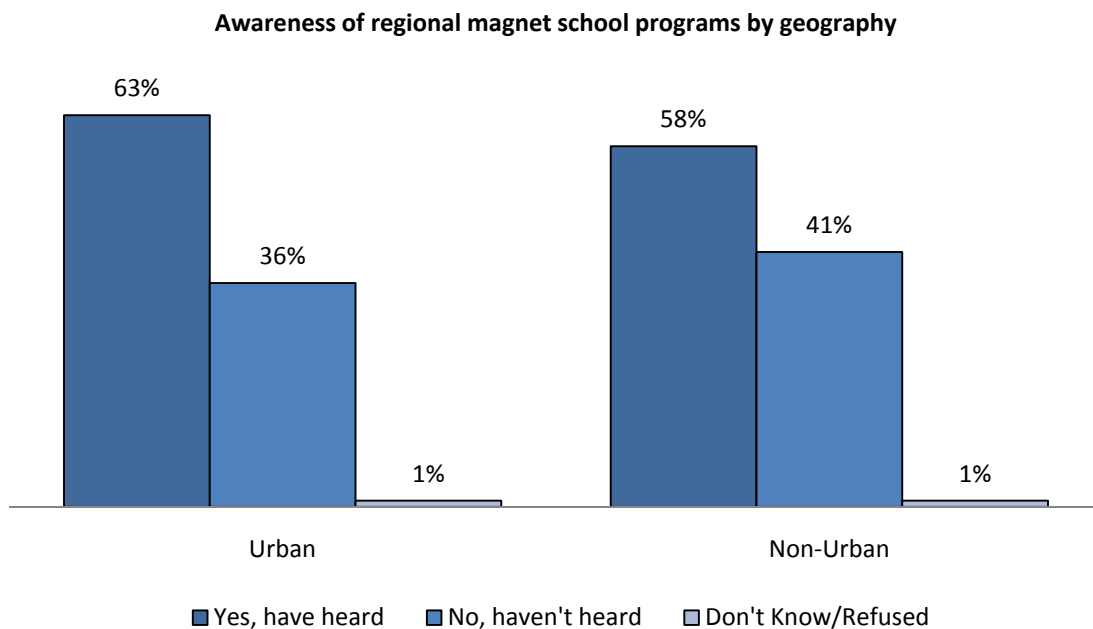
For adults who have heard or read about the regional magnet school programs, 31 percent heard a lot, 32 percent heard some, and 36 percent heard just a little.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The sub-groups that appear to be most aware of the regional magnet school programs are women, college graduates, parents, and adults with an annual income over \$40,000. The following is a demographic breakdown of how aware selected groups are of the regional magnet school programs.

### *GEOGRAPHY*

A majority of both urban (63 percent) and non-urban (58 percent) adults say they have heard about the magnet school programs.<sup>16</sup> For those who have heard, there is little difference in how much urban and non-urban adults have heard about the programs. Almost one third of urban and non-urban adults have heard either a lot, some, and just a little about the program.



### *GENDER*

A majority of both men and women have heard of Connecticut's regional magnet school programs. However, more women than men report having heard about the regional magnet school programs – 68 percent of women have heard of the programs compared to 56 percent of men.

### *RACE*

White residents (64 percent) are significantly more aware of the regional magnet school programs than minority residents (53 percent). Of those who have heard of the programs, there is not a statistically significant difference between how much they have heard. For both white and minority residents, those who have heard of the programs are divided equally as to whether they have heard a lot, some, or just a little.

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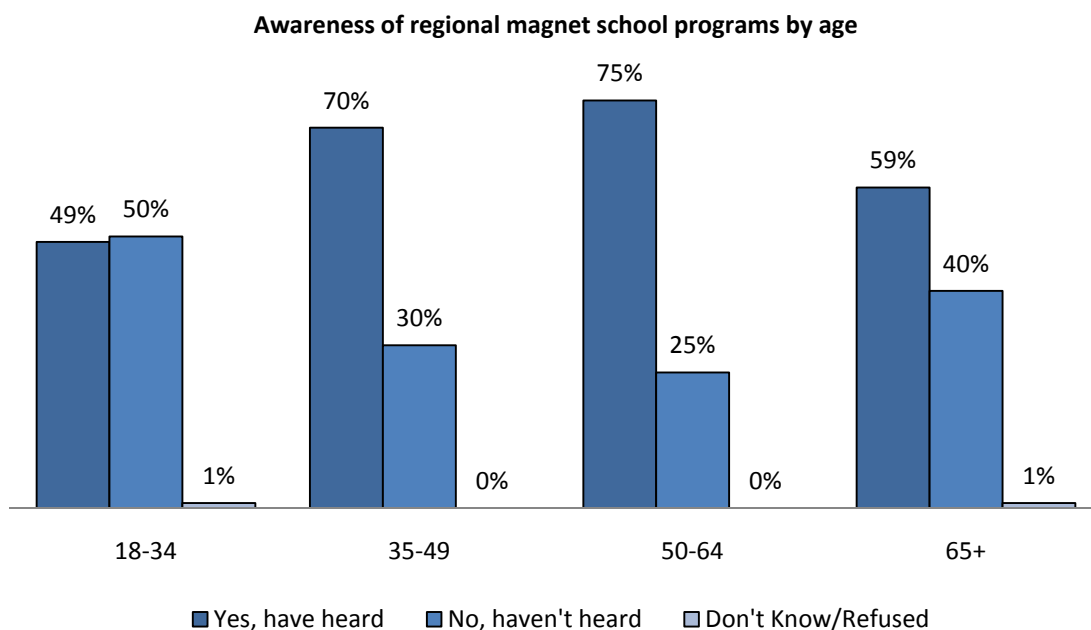
<sup>16</sup> The difference between urban and non-urban and how aware they are of the regional magnet school programs is not statistically significant.

### *PARENTS*

Adults in households with children 18 years or younger who attend Connecticut public schools are more likely to be aware of the regional magnet school programs than other adults. However, majorities of both groups have heard of the programs. Sixty-eight percent of parents have heard of the programs compared to 59 percent of other adults.

### *AGE*

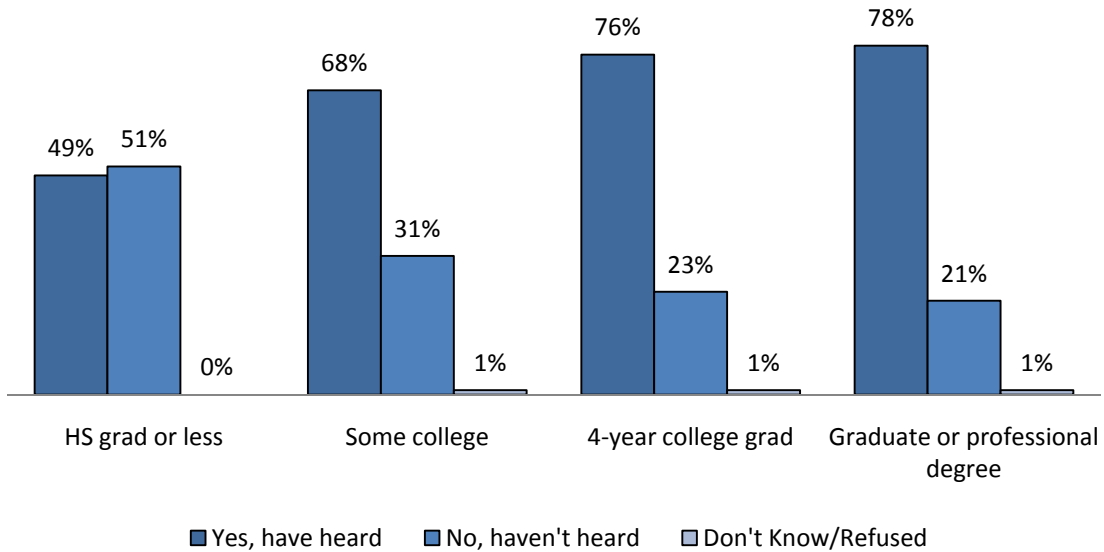
A majority of adults over 35 years old have heard of the regional magnet school programs. Seventy percent of those who are 35-49 years old and 75 percent of those who are 50-64 years old have heard of the programs. A smaller majority of those 65 years or older (59 percent) have heard of the programs. Only 49 percent of adults younger than 35 have heard of the regional magnet school programs.



### *EDUCATION*

There appears to be a relationship between a person's level of education and whether that person has heard of the regional magnet school programs. As level of education increases, so do the percentages of adults that have heard of magnet schools. Fewer than half of those with no more than a high school education (49 percent) have heard of the programs compared to nearly 8 in 10 of those with a graduate or professional degree (78 percent).

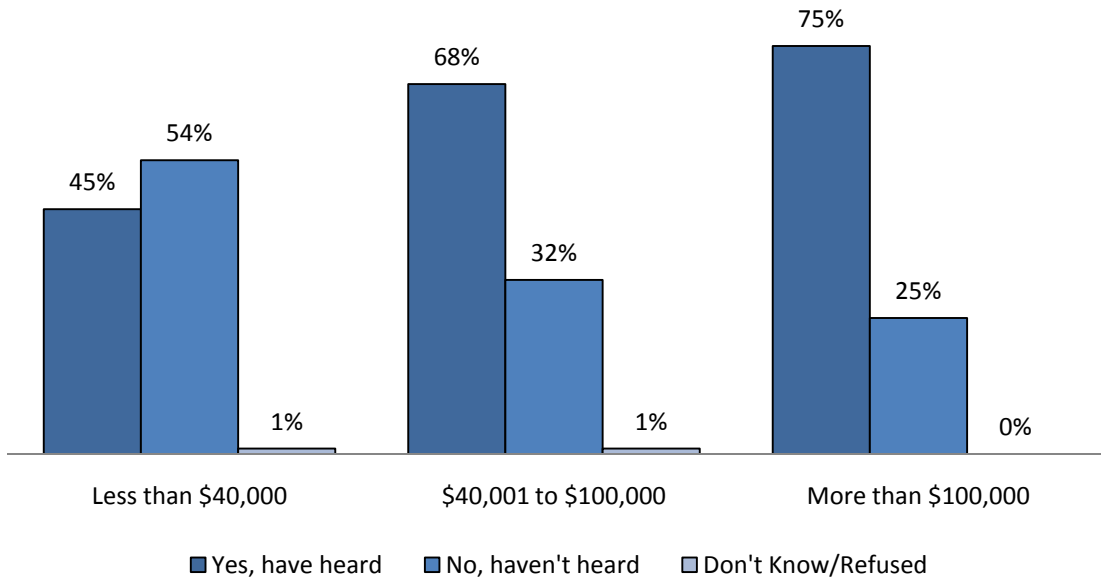
**Awareness of regional magnet school programs by education**



***INCOME***

A similar relationship exists for household income ranges. The percentage of adults who have heard of regional magnet school programs increases as income increases. Only 45 percent of those from households making \$40,000 or less have heard of the programs compared to 75 percent of adults from households making more than \$100,000.

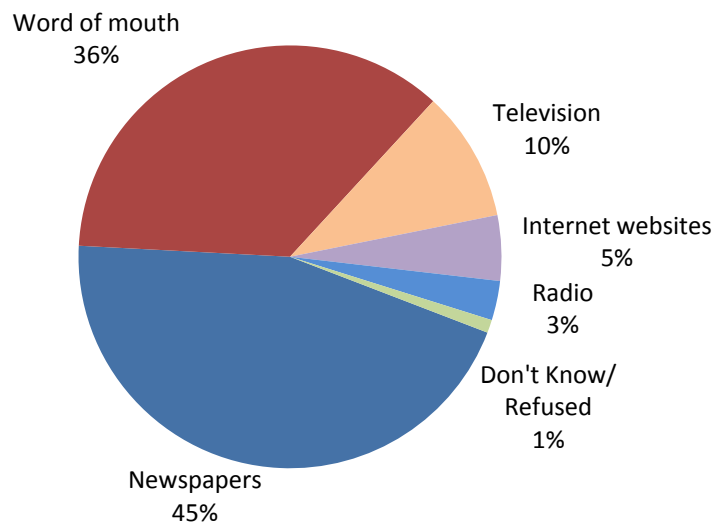
**Awareness of regional magnet school programs by income**



## SOURCE OF INFORMATION

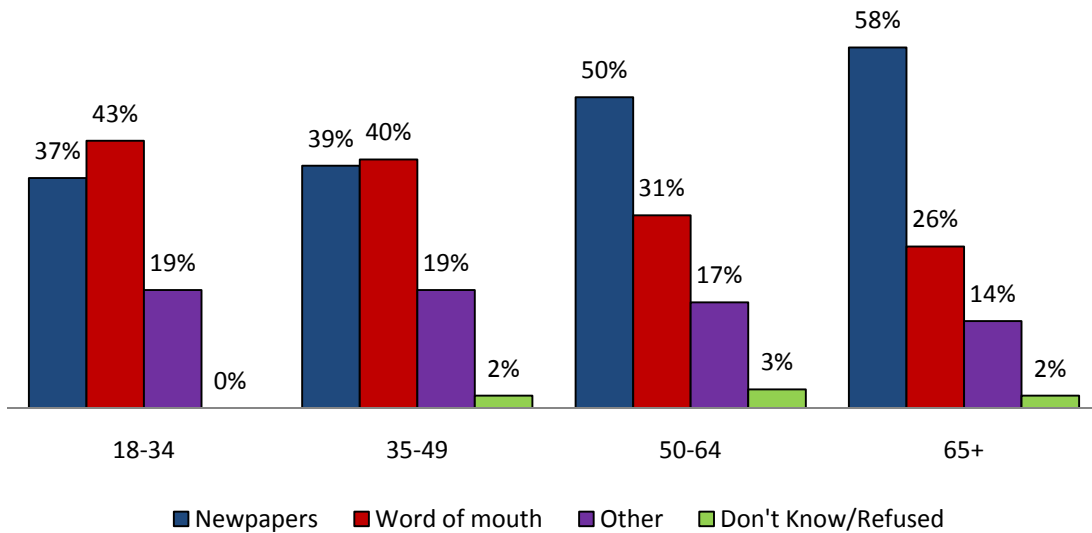
An important objective of this study was to find out where the public receives most of its information about Connecticut's two-way integration programs. Respondents who reported that they have heard of the regional magnet school programs were asked where they get most of their information about magnet schools. The survey found that a plurality of adults – 45 percent – receive most of their information from the traditional source of newspapers, followed by 36 percent who get their information from word of mouth, and the 10 percent that receive their information from television. The remaining 8 percent receive most of their information from other sources such as radio or the internet.

**Where would you say you get most of you information about the regional Magnet School programs....from newspapers, radio, television, internet websites, or word of mouth?**



Throughout the demographic groups, the general pattern remains the same. A majority of adults receive most of their information about the magnet school programs from newspapers or word of mouth. The survey found a significant difference between age range and where respondents receive their information – as respondents get older, the more they receive their information from newspapers. Younger respondents tend to receive more of their information from word of mouth. The following chart illustrates this finding.

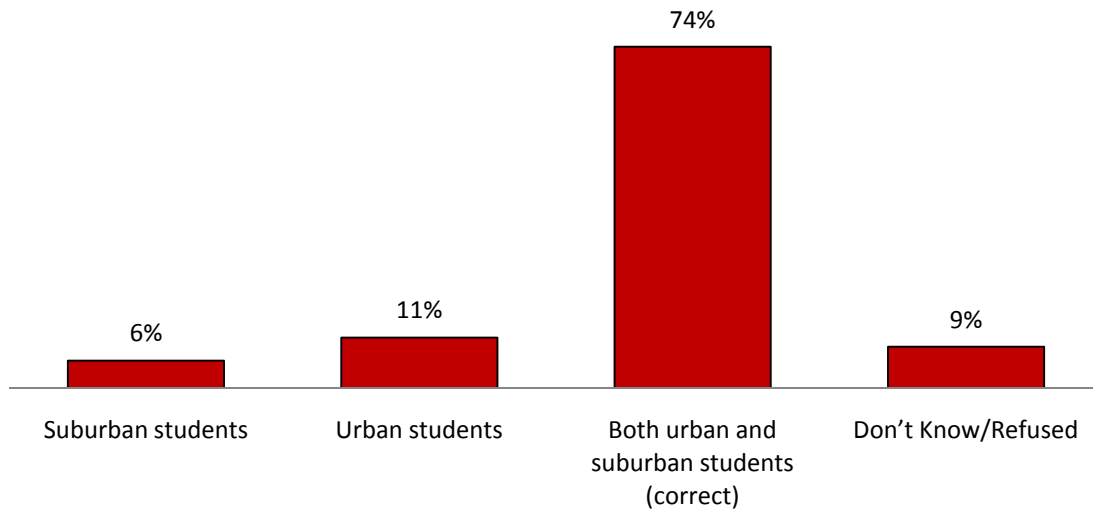
Source of information by age



## TEST OF AWARENESS

In order to test awareness, respondents reporting they have heard of the regional magnet school programs were asked a follow up question to test whether they know who magnet schools are for. Three-fourths (74 percent) of all respondents passed this awareness test selecting the correct answer that the programs create specialized schools for both urban and suburban students. Solid majorities across all demographic groups answer the question correctly. Respondents providing incorrect answers represented 11 percent answering that magnet schools are for urban students only and 6 percent who say they are for suburban students only. Younger adults aged 18-34 were the most likely to get the answer wrong (34 percent).

**From what you have heard or read, do the regional magnet school programs create specialized schools for suburban students, urban students, or both urban and suburban students?**



Not surprisingly, the more respondents have heard of the regional magnet school programs, the higher the percentage answering the question correctly.<sup>17</sup> Seventy-nine percent of respondents who have heard a lot about the programs answered the question correctly, compared to 75 percent who heard some, and 69 percent of those who heard a little and answered the question correctly. It appears that the information the public receives is generally correct.

<b>How Much Respondents Heard About the Magnet School Programs</b>			
<b>Awareness Test</b>	A Lot	Some	Just a Little
Correct Answer	79%	75%	69%
Incorrect Answer	21%	25%	31%

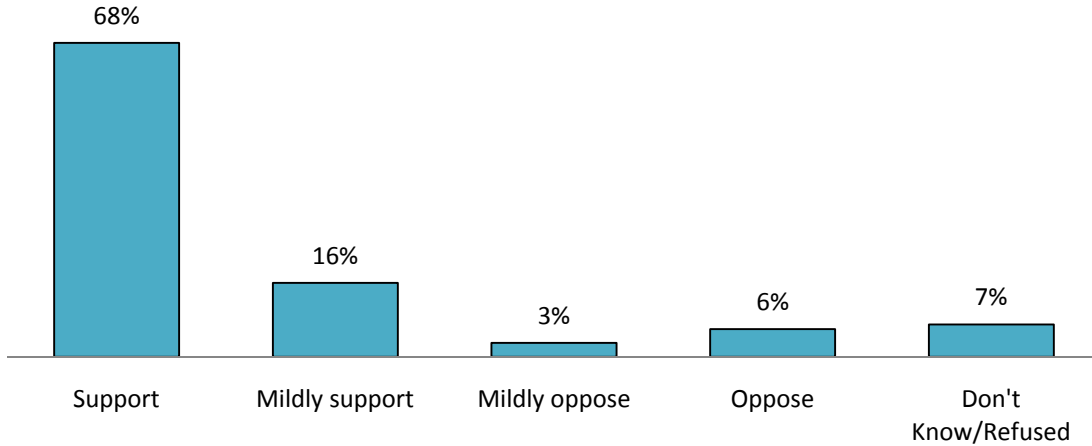
## **SUPPORT FOR THE REGIONAL MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

### *PUBLIC IS VERY SUPPORTIVE OF MAGNET SCHOOLS*

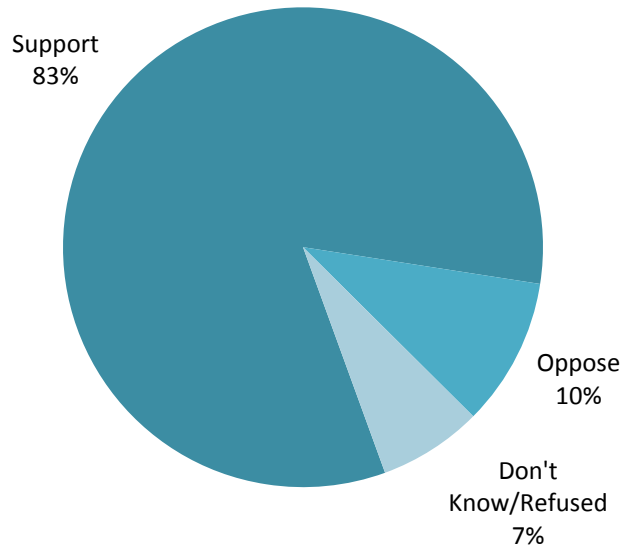
A major finding from the 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study is that Connecticut adults are overwhelmingly supportive of the state's regional magnet school programs. All respondents were asked if they support or oppose the regional magnet school programs after being read that the programs are Connecticut voluntary integration programs that create specialized schools open to both city and suburban students. Overall, 83 percent of adults support the regional magnet school programs, compared to just 10 percent opposed.

<sup>17</sup> The chi-square statistic for this difference is .054.

The regional magnet school programs are Connecticut voluntary integration programs that create specialized schools that are open to both city and suburban students. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose the magnet school programs?



**Overall support for the regional magnet school programs**



**DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN**

There is enormous support for the regional magnet school programs throughout all demographic groups. Eighty-four percent of urban adults and 83 percent of non-urban respondents support the programs. As income and education increase, support for magnet school programs increases. Ninety-one percent of adults from households making more than \$100,000 a year and 91 percent of adults with a graduate or professional degree support regional magnet school programs. The least supportive subgroup is that of adults 65 years or older who are 75 percent supportive. The



following table is a complete demographic breakdown of support for the regional magnet school programs.

<b>Support for Regional Magnet School Programs</b>			
	Support %	Oppose %	DK/REF %
Urban	84	9	8
Non-Urban	83	10	7
Men	82	11	7
Women	84	8	7
<i>Race</i>			
White	84	10	6
Minority	83	9	8
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	80	11	10
Some college	86	10	4
4-year college grad	86	8	6
Graduate or professional degree	91	6	4
<i>Income</i>			
\$40,000 or less	80	11	8
\$40,001 to \$100,000	87	9	4
More than \$100,000	91	8	1
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	86	10	4
35-49	88	7	5
50-64	88	6	5
65+	75	14	11
<i>Parent</i>			
Yes	87	8	5
No	81	11	8

## Chapter 5 Open Choice

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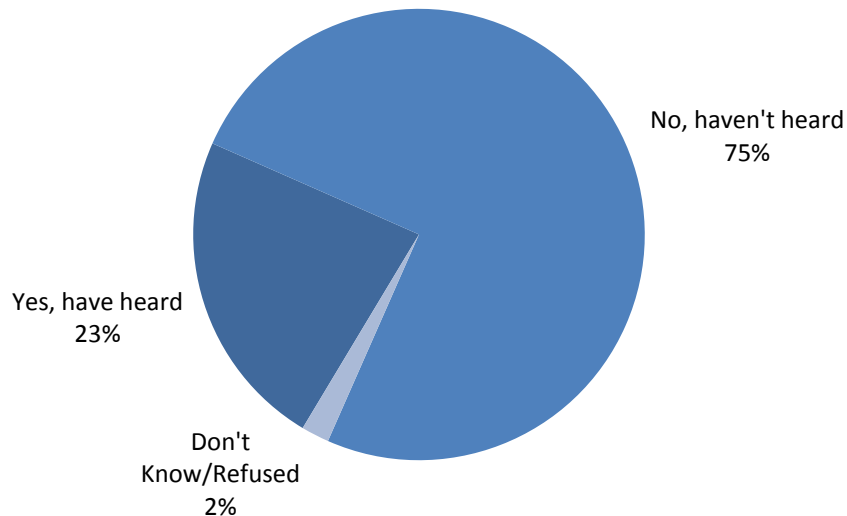
In its effort to ensure a higher quality of education for all Connecticut children, the state created a program that makes classroom seats in suburban schools available to urban children. Today, this program is referred to as Project Choice in the Hartford area or Open Choice throughout Connecticut. The state's Open Choice program transports urban students to schools in nearby suburban towns where space has been made available. Currently, the program is available to students from Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven. This chapter will examine the public's awareness and support of the Open Choice program. Further, this chapter will look at how supportive suburban residents are to opening up more seats in their schools to urban children.

### **AWARENESS OF OPEN CHOICE**

#### *PUBLIC MOSTLY UNAWARE OF OPEN CHOICE*

Connecticut residents are largely unaware of the Open Choice program. To measure awareness, respondents were asked whether they have heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice. If respondents have heard of the program, they were asked if they had heard a lot, some, or just a little. The survey found that overall, three-fourths (75 percent) of adults haven't heard of the program and less than a quarter (23 percent) of adults have heard of the program

**Have you heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice, or haven't you heard anything about this?**



Furthermore, most adults who have heard about Open Choice have only heard a little. Of adults who have heard or read about the program, 17 percent heard a lot, 26 percent heard some, and a majority of 54 percent heard just a little. Overall, only about 1 in 10 have

heard more than a little about Open Choice while 9 in 10 have heard little or nothing about the Open Choice program.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN**

A majority of all demographic sub-groups are unaware of the Open Choice program. The most aware of the program are college educated, those from households making more than \$100,000 annually, and those 50-64 years old. The following is a demographic breakdown of how aware selected groups are of the Open Choice program.

### *GEOGRAPHY*

There is little difference between urban and non-urban residents when it comes to awareness of Open Choice. Three-fourths of urban (74 percent) and non-urban respondents (75 percent) are unaware of the Open Choice program. Just 25 percent of urban adults and 23 percent of non-urban adults have heard of the Open Choice program.

### *GENDER*

Women are slightly more likely than men to have heard about Open Choice. Twenty-six percent of women have heard about the program, compared to 20 percent of men. More than seven in ten men (78 percent) and women (72 percent) have not heard of Open Choice.

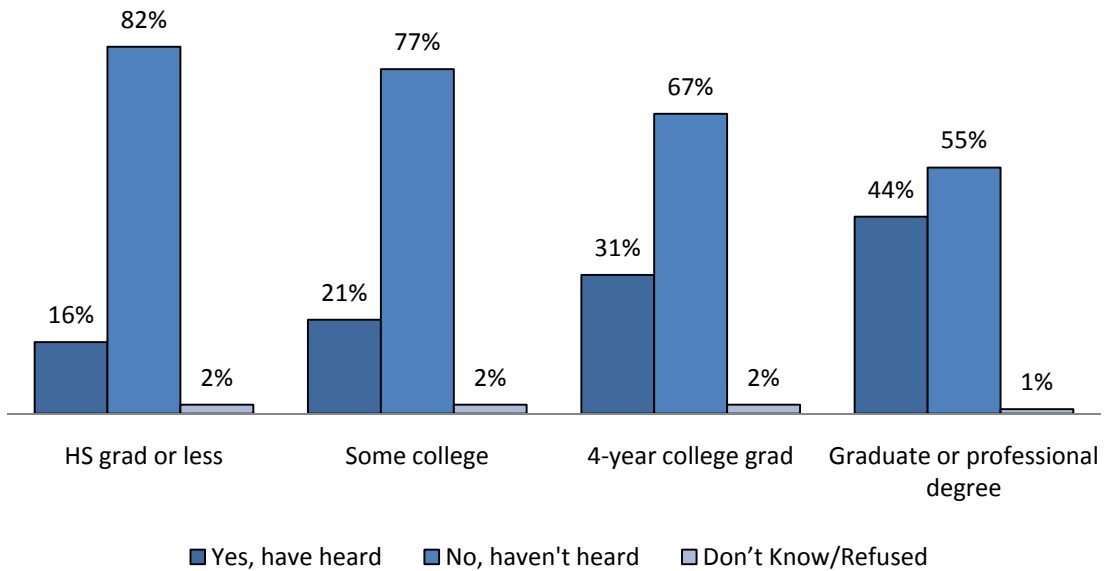
### *RACE*

When it comes to race there is not a statistical difference between white and minority respondents in how aware they are about Open Choice. Only 22 percent of white respondents and 28 percent of minority respondents have heard of Open Choice.

### *EDUCATION*

There appears to be an association between level of education and awareness of Open Choice. As level of education increases, so does the percent of adults that have heard of the program. Only 16 percent of adults with a high school degree or less and only 21 percent of those with some college have heard of Open Choice. For respondents with a four year degree, 31 percent have heard of Open Choice. Of all demographic sub-groups across the board, adults with a graduate level education or professional degree are most aware with 44 percent having heard about the Open Choice program.

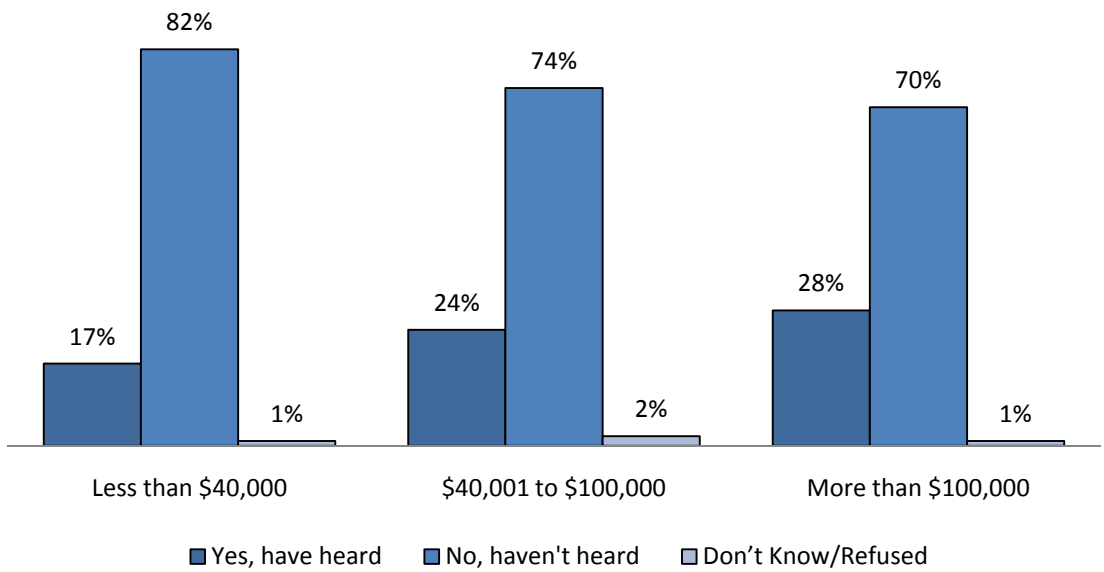
**Awareness of Open Choice program by education**



***INCOME***

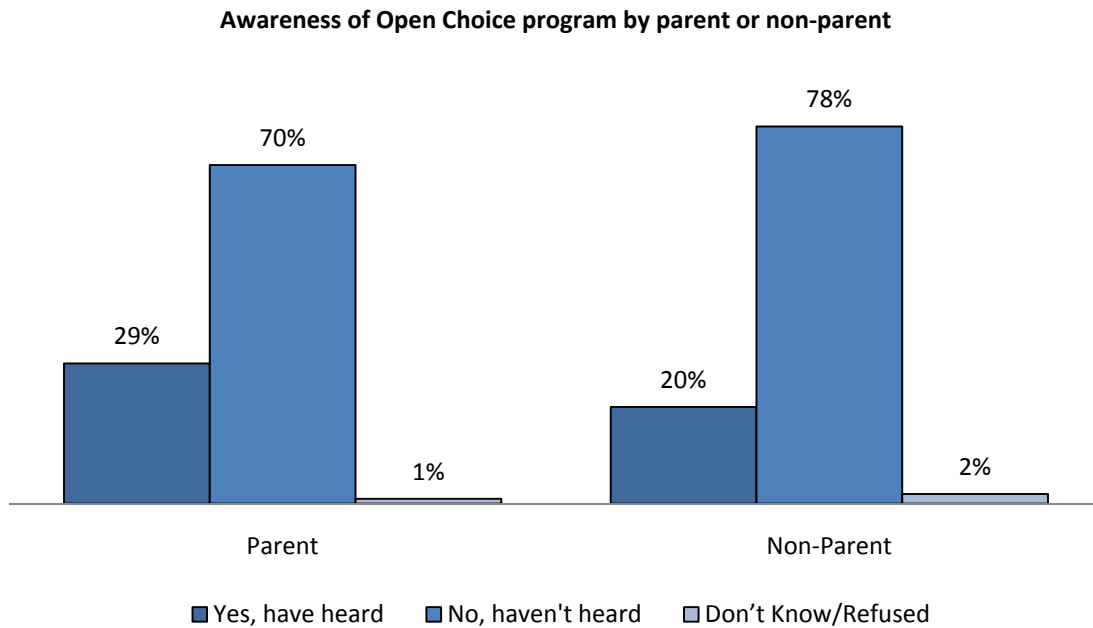
As annual household income increases so does the percent of respondents aware of Open Choice. Only 17 percent of adults from households making \$40,000 or less are aware of Open Choice, as compared to 24 percent of those from households making \$40,001 to \$100,000 and 28 percent of those from households making more than \$100,000.

**Awareness of Open Choice program by income**



## PARENTS

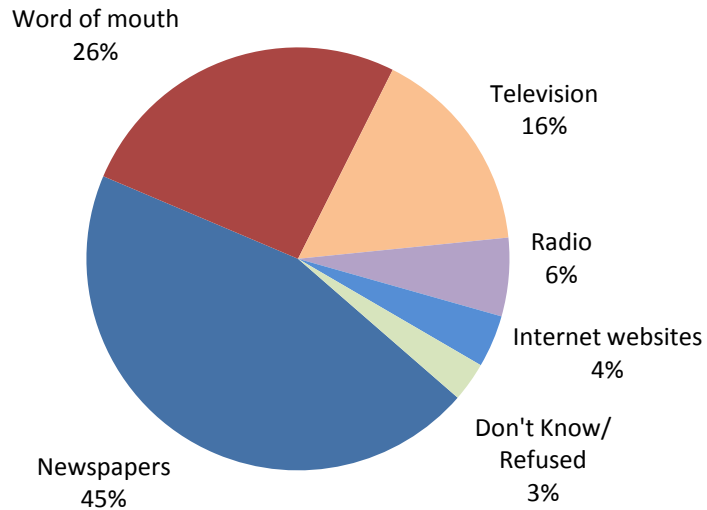
Adults in households with children 18 years or younger attending Connecticut public schools are slightly more likely to have heard of the Open Choice program than other adults. Yet only 29 percent of public school parents are aware of Open Choice, compared to 20 percent of other adults. Large majorities of both are unaware of the program. Seventy percent of parent households have not heard of Open Choice, as compared to 78 percent of other adults who have not heard.



## SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Respondents who reported that they have heard of the Open Choice program were asked where they get most of their information about the program. The survey found that a plurality – 45 percent – of adults overall receive most of their information about the Open Choice program from the traditional source of newspapers, followed by 26 percent who get their information from word of mouth, and 16 percent who receive their information from television. Another 10 percent receive most of their information from various other sources such as radio or the internet.

**Where would you say you get most of your information about the Open Choice program....from newspapers, radio, television, internet websites, or word of mouth?**

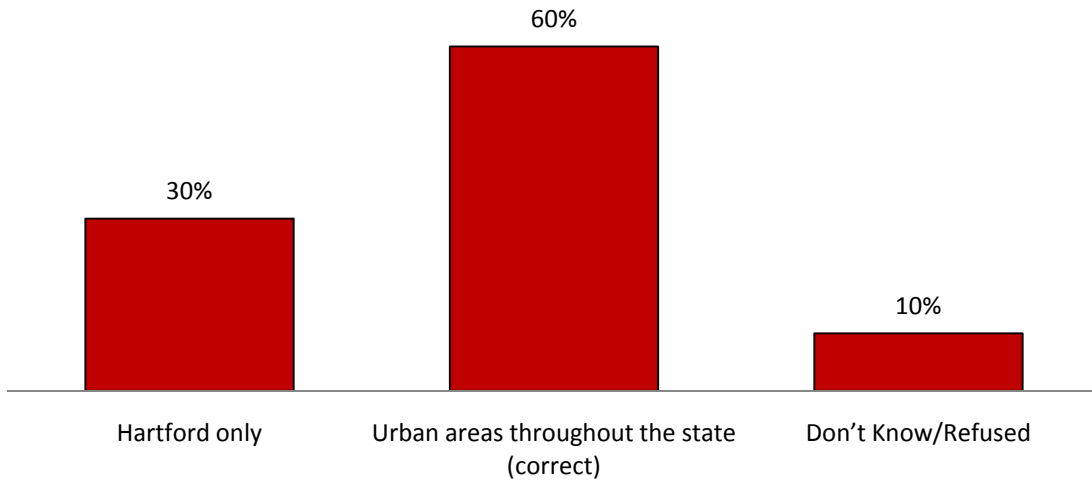


A majority of respondents throughout all demographic groups receive their information about the Open Choice program from newspapers or word of mouth. Because so few respondents have heard of the Open Choice program, there are not enough cases to provide a meaningful demographic breakdown of where individual sub-groups receive most of their information.

**TEST OF AWARENESS**

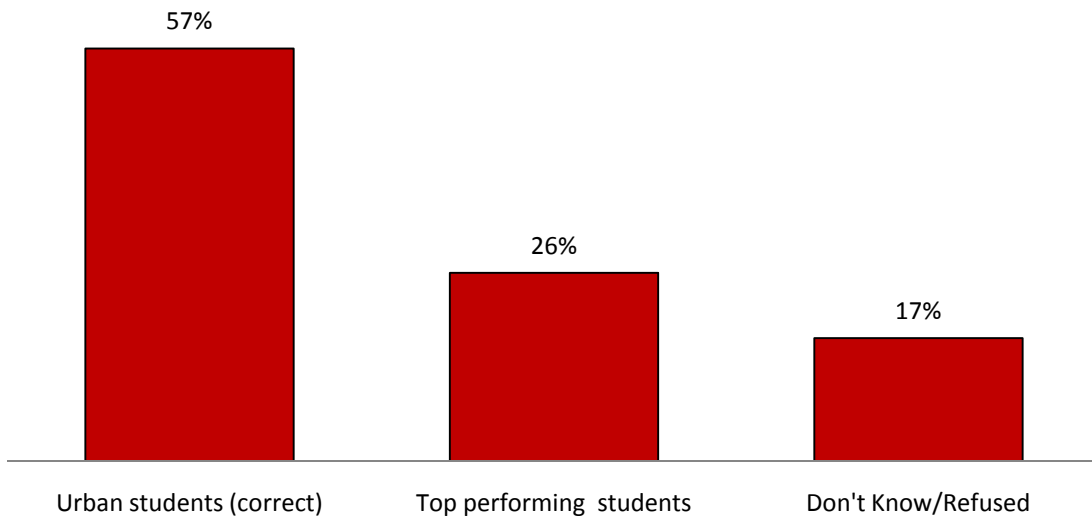
Respondents who reported that they have heard of the Open Choice program were asked two test questions. In each, they were asked which statement best describes the Open Choice program.

1. A) Open Choice is an integration program available to Hartford city students only OR B) Open Choice is an integration program available in urban areas throughout the state?



Sixty percent of respondents chose the correct answer to the first test question that Open Choice is available in urban areas throughout the state. Thirty percent answered incorrectly that Open Choice is for Hartford students only and 10 percent refused to pick either of the two choices.

2. A) The Open Choice program allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns OR B) The Open Choice program allows only the top performing urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns?



Fifty-seven percent of respondents chose the correct answer to the second test question that the Open Choice program allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns. Twenty-six percent answered incorrectly that Open Choice allows only the top

performing students to attend suburban schools and 17 percent refused to pick either of the two choices.

While a majority of respondents answered each of the two questions correctly, that is not the entire story. When the test questions were looked at together, the survey found that only 38 percent of respondents answered both questions correctly. Forty-one percent answered one of the two correctly, and 21 percent answered both questions incorrectly.

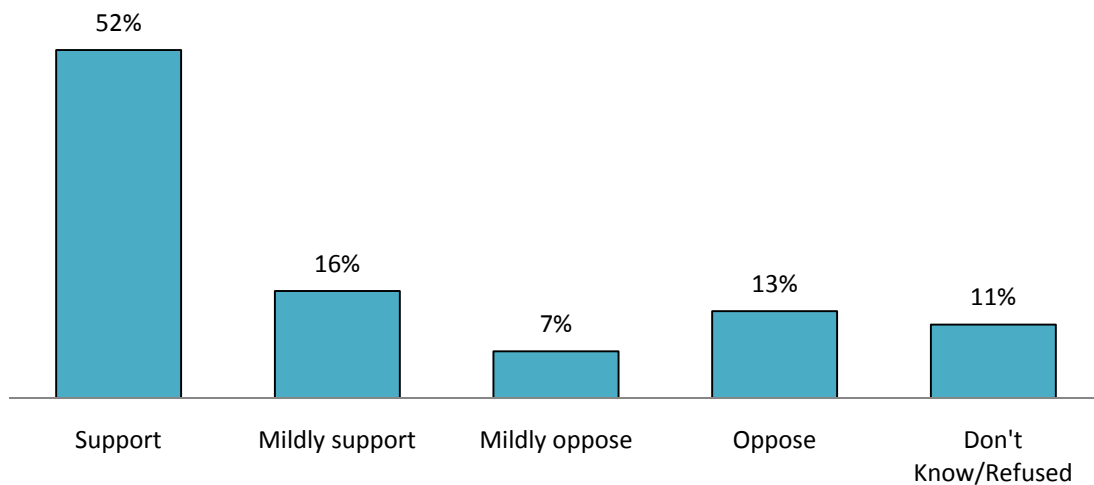
These results indicate that the small number of Connecticut residents who have heard of Open Choice are only mildly aware of where the programs are located and who the programs are intended for. Further, there was not a statistical difference between how much respondents had heard of the Open Choice program and the percent answering the questions correctly.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM**

### *PUBLIC SUPPORTS OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM*

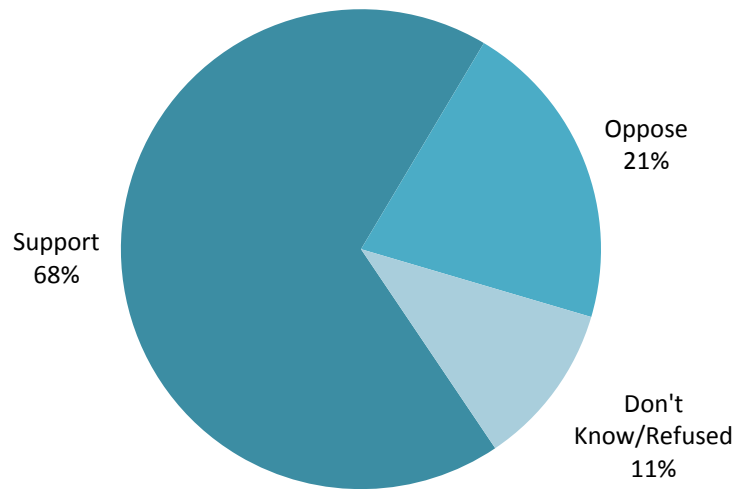
The survey found that despite being generally unaware of the Open Choice program, a majority of Connecticut adults are supportive of the program. All respondents were asked if they support or oppose the Open Choice program after being read that the Open Choice program allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns where space is available. Sixty-eight percent of adults support the Open Choice program, compared to just 21 percent who oppose the program.

**The Open Choice programs allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns where space is available. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose the Open Choice program?**





### Overall support of Open Choice program



### DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

A majority of all demographic sub-groups are supportive of the Open Choice program. The most notable differences between sub-groups are those of race, education, and whether the respondent has children 18 years or younger attending Connecticut public schools.

#### *RACE*

Minority residents of Connecticut are more likely than white residents to be supportive of the Open Choice program. The survey found that 81 percent of minority residents are supportive of the Open Choice program, compared to 66 percent of white residents.

#### *EDUCATION*

The more educated adults are, the more likely they are to be supportive of Open Choice. Support for Open Choice by education ranges from 63 percent of those with a high school degree or less to 79 percent of those with a graduate or professional degree.

#### *PARENTS*

The survey also found that parents of children 18 years or younger attending Connecticut public schools are more likely to be supportive than other adults. Three-fourths (75 percent) of parents support Open Choice, compared to 65 percent of those without children in Connecticut public schools.

The following table is a complete demographic breakdown of support for the Open Choice program.

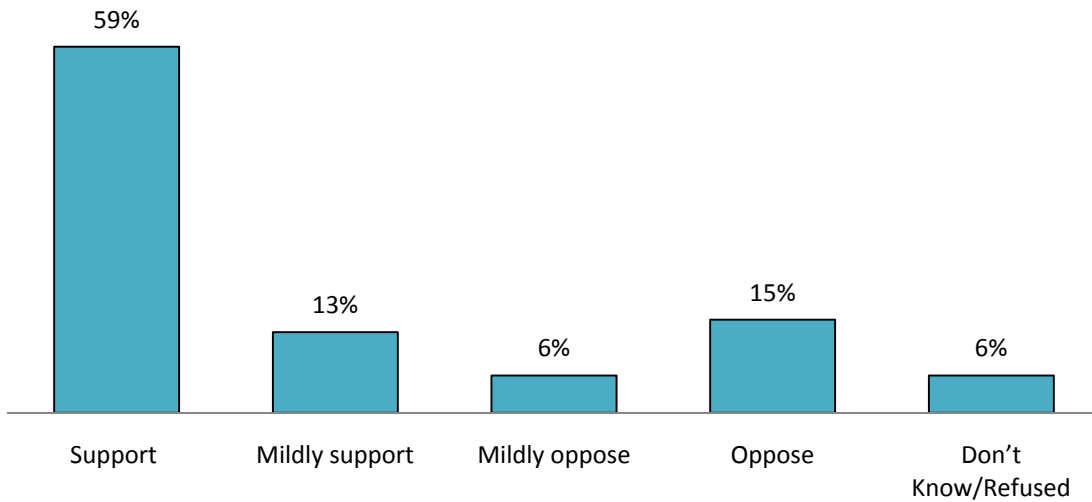
<b>Support for Open Choice Program</b>			
	Support %	Oppose %	DK/REF %
Urban	74	16	10
Non-Urban	66	22	12
Men	66	22	12
Women	70	19	11
<i>Race</i>			
White	66	23	11
Minority	81	10	10
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	63	22	14
Some college	68	22	10
4-year college grad	74	17	8
Graduate or professional degree	79	16	6
<i>Income</i>			
\$40,000 or less	72	19	9
\$40,001 to \$100,000	73	20	7
More than \$100,000	69	21	10
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	69	19	11
35-49	73	18	9
50-64	73	17	10
65+	61	27	12
<i>Parent</i>			
Yes	75	17	8
No	65	22	13

## **OPENING UP SEATS**

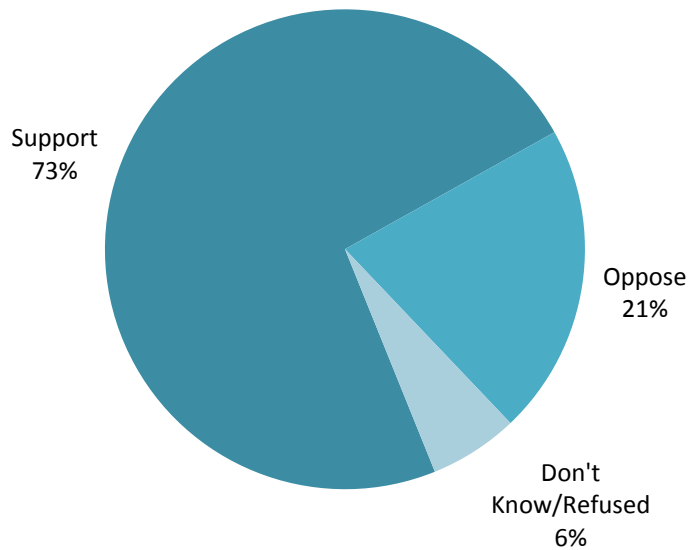
### *SUBURBAN RESPONDENTS SUPPORT OPENING SEATS IN THEIR DISTRICT*

One limiting factor for expansion of the Open Choice program has been a reluctance of suburban school districts to open up enough seats to urban students. In the 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study, all suburban respondents were asked if they would support or oppose opening up more seats in their local school district to urban students. The results show that nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of suburban respondents would support opening up more seats in their local school district if there were room.

**If there were room, would you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose opening up more seats in your local district to urban students?**



**Overall support for opening up more seats**



A critical finding of this study concerns the suburban respondents who support Open Choice. Of the 67 percent of suburban respondents that support Open Choice, 90 percent also support opening more seats in their local school district to urban students. Only 8 percent of suburban respondents who support Open Choice were inconsistent and do not support opening up more seats in their local school district to urban students.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

A majority of all demographic sub-groups support opening up more seats in their local school district to urban students. The most notable differences were between men and women and between suburban parents and suburban non-parents. Seventy-eight percent of suburban women support opening up more seats, compared to 68 percent of men. Further, 81 percent of suburban parents with children 18 years or younger in Connecticut public schools support opening up more seats, compared to 69 percent of other suburban adults. The following table is a complete demographic breakdown of how suburban residents support opening up more seats in their local school district to urban students.

<b>Support for Opening up More Seats</b>			
	Support %	Oppose %	DK/REF %
Men	68	25	7
Women	78	17	5
<i>Race</i>			
White	72	22	7
Minority	83	14	3
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	71	20	8
Some college	70	26	4
4-year college grad	77	19	4
Graduate or professional degree	77	17	5
<i>Income</i>			
\$40,000 or less	78	17	4
\$40,001 to \$100,000	79	18	4
More than \$100,000	71	24	5
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	74	23	4
35-49	77	15	8
50-64	79	15	5
65+	65	28	6
<i>Parent</i>			
Yes	81	16	4
No	69	24	7

## Chapter 6 Messages

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Through its on-going and active involvement in public discussion about educational quality, racial isolation, and public school choice in Connecticut, the Sheff Movement has sensed a decline in public awareness and a consequent rise in misperceptions about the remedies resulting from the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case. A major objective of the study was to test messages that most effectively impact public perceptions about the two-way integration options that developed following the *Sheff* decision.

After meeting with active members of the Sheff Movement coalition, observing two rounds of public discussion, and reviewing social science research on the benefits of school integration, ten messages were developed for testing. These ten messages and the interviewer instructions can be found on the following page with a reference name associated with each message. This reference name follows each message mentioned in this chapter.

### OVERVIEW OF MESSAGES

#### *EIGHT IN TEN MESSAGES MAKE MOST RESIDENTS MORE SUPPORTIVE*

To test the effectiveness of each message, respondents were asked to state if the messages made them more supportive, less supportive, or didn't change their level of support for integrating public schools. Overall, most of the messages had a positive effect on respondents. For eight of the ten messages, a majority of respondents answered that the messages made them more supportive of integrating public schools. The most effective messages were 1 (social tolerance), 5 (critical thinking skills), and 10 (graduation rate). In each of these, 70 percent of respondents said the messages made them more supportive of integrating public schools. The most effective messages concerned the benefits children receive from integrated schools. They are stated below:

“Students in racially integrated schools tend to have more cross-racial friendships, which helps to promote social tolerance and reduces racial prejudice.”

“Classrooms where students from different backgrounds and races have different experiences help students think in more complex ways and improve critical thinking skills.”

“Expanding voluntary integration programs has been shown to improve high school graduation and college attendance rates of urban students.”

The three least effective messages were 6 (space availability), 3 (voluntary for families), and 8 (no achievement drop). These messages focused more on the policy or politics of school integration. Although less effective than the other tested messages, these messages did generate increased support from many of the respondents as follows: message 6 – 53 percent, message 3 – 47 percent, and message 8 – 44 percent. Furthermore, these messages did not make respondents significantly less supportive – most other respondents volunteered that these messages had no impact on their level of support. The three least effective messages were as follows:

**Messages Tested in the  
2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study**

Message #	Message	Reference Name
Message 1	"Students in racially integrated schools tend to have more cross-racial friendships, which helps promote social tolerance and reduces racial prejudice."*	<i>Social Tolerance</i>
Message 2	"There are currently hundreds of urban children on waiting lists hoping to obtain a space in suburban schools."	<i>Long Waitlists</i>
Message 3	"The two-way integration programs developed under Sheff v. O'Neill are mandatory for the state of Connecticut but voluntary for participating families."	<i>Voluntary for Families</i>
Message 4	"Children in integrated schools may be more prepared for the diverse settings of college and the workplace than children who attend segregated schools."	<i>Prepared for College and Work</i>
Message 5	"Classrooms where students from different backgrounds and races have different experiences help students think in more complex ways and improve critical thinking skills."*	<i>Critical Thinking Skills</i>
Message 6	"Many suburban schools opening up seats to city students are under capacity. Adding additional students from the Open Choice program will not significantly affect class size."	<i>Space Availability</i>
Message 7	"There is concern that suburban schools are not fairly reimbursed to reflect the cost of adding new students from other districts. What if the state would give the suburban schools a fair amount of funding to cover these new costs?"	<i>Adequate Funding</i>
Message 8	"Studies show school integration does not have a negative impact on the test scores of white students."*	<i>No Achievement Drop</i>
Message 9	"School integration programs address the harmful impact of poverty concentration in city schools by giving city students the opportunity to attend economically mixed schools."	<i>Poverty Concentration</i>
Message 10	"Expanding voluntary integration programs has been shown to improve high school graduation and college attendance rates of urban students."*	<i>Graduation Rates</i>
*Bhargave, Anurima, Erica Frankenberg, and Chinh Q. Le, <i>Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration – A Manual for Parents, Educators, &amp; Advocates</i> (New York: The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., 2008).		

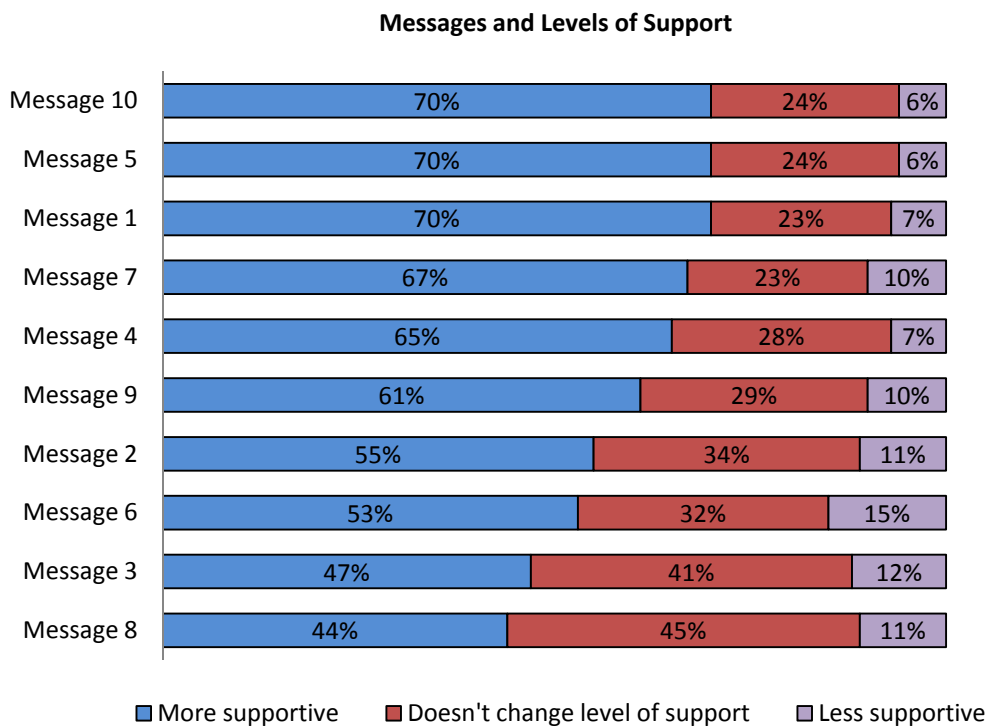
The telephone interviewer introduced the messages to respondents with the following statement: "Now I am going to read you some statements about integration. For each, please tell me whether the statement makes you more supportive of integrating public schools, less supportive, or whether it doesn't change your level of support." The interviewer then read each of the ten messages; after each message statement the respondent was asked: "Does this make you more supportive or less supportive?"

“Many suburban schools opening up seats to city students are under capacity. Adding additional students from the Open Choice program will not significantly affect class size.”

“The two-way integration programs developed under *Sheff v. O'Neill* are mandatory for the state of Connecticut but voluntary for participating families.”

“Studies show school integration does not have a negative impact on the test scores of white students.”

The survey found that when disseminating messages across the state as a whole, the most effective messages are those that focus specifically on benefiting students.



## SUPPORTERS OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

### *MOST MESSAGES MAKE SUPPORTERS MORE SUPPORTIVE*

In general, the messages make most supporters of public school choice programs more supportive. In the survey, all respondents were asked whether they support or oppose the Open Choice program, the regional magnet school programs, or giving parents the option of sending their children outside of their own school district. Supporters in this section were defined as those responding with *support* or *mildly support* to any one of the three support questions. Responses to the messages were analyzed for each group.

The survey found that all but one of the messages (message 8) made most supporters more supportive of integrating public schools. For each group of supporters, message 4 (no achievement drop) was least likely to generate increased support. Although several of the messages mentioned race, integration, or academic performance, this was the only message that identified student race. Further, this was the most ineffective message across the state as a whole:

“Studies show school integration does not have a negative impact on the test scores of white students.”

The following table shows the percent of supporters of Open Choice, the regional magnet school programs, and giving parents public school choice options that were made more supportive by each of the messages tested in the survey.

Supporter of	Messages									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Open Choice	78%	64%	55%	74%	80%	62%	73%	48%	69%	80%
Magnet Schools	75%	60%	51%	70%	75%	57%	71%	48%	64%	75%
Public School Choice	74%	58%	51%	70%	74%	58%	70%	47%	65%	75%

## OPPOSITION TO INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

### *GAINS MADE FROM THOSE OPPOSED*

There was less convergence toward increased support for integrating public schools among the minority of respondents who opposed or mildly opposed the Open Choice program, the regional magnet school programs, or giving parents the option of sending their child to a school outside their district.

#### *OPEN CHOICE*

For those opposed to the Open Choice program, the messages that generated greater support from 45 percent or more of respondents were messages 1 (social tolerance), 5 (critical thinking skills), 7 (adequate funding), and 10 (graduation rates). Of the ten messages, message 1 showed the greatest increase in support for integrating public schools from those opposed to Open Choice.

#### *REGIONAL MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS*

Only a few messages made a significant number of those opposed to the regional magnet school programs more supportive of integrating public schools. The message generating the strongest shift towards support was message 10 (graduation rates) with 43 percent of those opposed to the regional magnet school programs made more supportive of integrating public schools.



*INTERDISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE*

Of those who oppose giving parents the option to send their children outside their district for a better education, more than 50 percent are made more supportive of integrating public schools after being read messages 1 (social tolerance), 4 (prepared for college), 5 (critical thinking skills), 7 (adequate funding), and 10 (graduation rates). Similarly to those opposed to Open Choice, the group opposed to giving parents public school choice options was most influenced by message 1. Sixty percent said that this message makes them more supportive. A close second is message five, where 58 percent said that the message makes them more supportive of integrating public schools.

The following table shows the percent of those opposed to Open Choice, regional magnet school programs, and giving parents public school choice options that were made more supportive of integrating public schools by each of the messages tested in the survey.

<b>Opposed to</b>	<b>Messages</b>									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Open Choice	48%	27%	27%	43%	46%	27%	46%	29%	32%	45%
Magnet Schools	37%	26%	20%	34%	38%	26%	37%	24%	37%	43%
Public School Choice	60%	43%	31%	52%	58%	37%	56%	38%	47%	53%

**DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN**

Throughout most of the demographic sub-groups the messages that made respondents most supportive were 1 (social tolerance), 5 (critical thinking skills), and 10 (graduation rates). The least effective messages tended to be 3 (voluntary for parents) and 8 (no achievement drop). There is a table at the end of this section with a complete demographic breakdown of the percent made more supportive of integrating public schools by each of the ten messages.

*GEOGRAPHY*

The survey found that more urban than non-urban respondents became more supportive of integrating public schools after hearing each of the messages. There was a statistically significant difference between urban and non-urban respondents for five of the ten messages (4, 5, 6, 9, and 10). The following table shows the percent of urban and non-urban respondents made more supportive of integrating public schools by the most effective messages.

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Most Effective Messages</b>		
	1	5	10
Urban	71%	79%	79%
Non-Urban	69%	67%	67%

- The most effective messages for urban respondents were messages 5 (critical thinking skills) and 10 (graduation rates) where 79 percent said they would be more supportive of integrating public schools.
- The most effective message for non-urban respondents was message 1 (social tolerance) where 69 percent said the message made them more supportive of integrating public schools. Further, 67 percent said that messages 5 (critical thinking), 7 (adequate funding), and 10 (graduation rates) made them more supportive.

*GENDER*

The results of the survey show that for each message, more women than men were made more supportive of integrating public schools. However, there was only a statistically significant difference between men and women for messages 5 (critical thinking skills), 8 (no achievement drop), and 10 (graduation rates). The two most effective messages to use regardless of gender are messages 1 (social tolerance) and 10. The third most effective message for women is message 5 and for men the third most effective message is message 7, which concerns adequate school funding:

“There is concern that suburban schools are not fairly reimbursed to reflect the cost of adding new students from other districts. What if the state would give the suburban schools a fair amount of funding to cover these new costs?”

*AGE*

Throughout all age groups, message 1 (social tolerance) is one of the top three most effective messages. Those 65 and older tended to be the least likely to be made more supportive of integrating public schools after hearing the messages. The top three most effective messages making respondents more supportive by age group are as follows:

- 18 to 34 – messages 1 (72 percent), 5 (72 percent), and 10 (78 percent)
- 35 to 49 – messages 10 (68 percent), 1 (71 percent), and 5 (72 percent)
- 50 to 64 – messages 1 (74 percent), 7 (75 percent), and 10 (76 percent)
- 65 and older – messages 7 (63 percent), 5 (66 percent), and 1 (67 percent)

*PARENTS*

Across the board for all messages, parents have reported strong levels of support for integrating public schools. This group was highly responsive to the messages, indicating increased support by more than 60 percent of respondents for more than half of the messages. Non-parents responded similarly to most messages at slightly lower levels. The three most effective messages for both groups are messages 1 (social tolerance), 5 (critical thinking skills), and 10 (graduation rates). The following table shows the percent of parents and non-parents made more supportive by these messages.

<b>Most Effective Messages</b>			
<b>Parent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
Yes	75%	72%	75%
No	68%	69%	68%

### *RACE*

More minority respondents than white respondents said that the messages make them more supportive of integrating public schools.<sup>18</sup> The most effective messages are the same for both white and minority respondents – messages 1 (social tolerance), 5 (critical thinking skills), and 10 (graduation rates). The least effective messages for both groups are messages 3 (voluntary for families), 6 (space availability), and 8 (no achievement drop). Both white and minority respondents answer similarly to the messages with a greater percentage of minority respondents made more supportive by the messages.

<b>Most Effective Messages</b>			
<b>Race</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
White	69%	69%	69%
Minority	76%	79%	81%

### *INCOME*

Messages 1 (social tolerance) and 5 (critical thinking skills) are in the top three most effective messages for each income group. The most effective message for those from households earning more than \$100,000 annually was message 4, which deals with being prepared for college and the workplace:

“Children in integrated schools may be more prepared for the diverse settings of college and the workplace than children who attend segregated schools.”

The top three most effective messages making respondents more supportive by income are as follows:

- \$40,000 or less – messages 1 (71 percent), 5 (71 percent), and 10 (73 percent)
- \$40,001 to \$100,000 – messages 1 (75 percent), 5 (75 percent), and 10 (75 percent)
- More than \$100,000 – messages 5 (66 percent), 1 (68 percent), and 4 (69 percent)

### *EDUCATION*

Throughout all education groups, messages 1 (critical thinking skills) and 10 (graduation rates) are in the top three most effective messages. The top two most effective messages making respondents more supportive by education are as follows:

- High school graduate or less – messages 10 (69 percent) and 5 (71 percent)
- Some college, but no degree – messages 10 (70 percent) and 1 (71 percent)
- 4-year college graduate – messages 10 (73 percent), and 1 (75 percent)
- Graduate or professional degree – messages 10 (74 percent) and 5 (76 percent)

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<sup>18</sup> The messages where the differences between whites and minorities are statistically significant are for messages 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 10.

The following table is a complete demographic breakdown of the percent made more supportive of integrating public school after hearing each of the ten messages. Further, the table displays a support score for each message. The support score was computed by adding the support percentages of each demographic sub-group for each message.

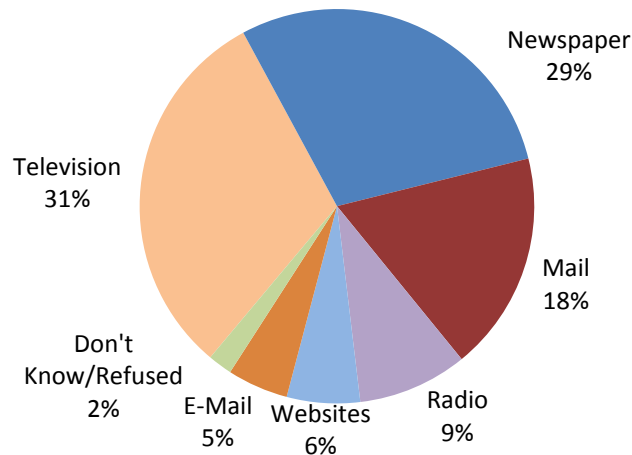
Support Score Table											
	Percent Made More Supportive by Message										Total
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	9 %	10 %	
Urban	71	58	50	74	79	60	66	45	67	79	649
Non-Urban	69	54	46	62	67	51	67	44	59	67	586
Men	67	52	45	63	64	50	65	39	58	67	570
Women	72	57	48	67	75	56	69	49	63	73	629
<i>Race</i>											
White	69	54	44	65	69	51	66	45	58	69	590
Minority	76	64	59	70	79	68	70	43	78	81	688
<i>Education</i>											
HS grad or less	68	61	51	66	71	53	66	46	63	69	614
Some College	71	47	44	62	66	52	68	41	57	70	578
4-year college grad	75	53	42	69	69	55	69	45	61	73	611
Graduate or professional degree	69	51	44	65	76	55	66	45	62	74	607
<i>Income</i>											
Less than \$40,000	71	60	53	62	71	54	70	45	68	73	627
\$40,001 to \$100,000	75	58	52	72	75	58	69	47	63	75	644
More than \$100,000	68	44	32	69	66	48	65	44	53	64	553
<i>Age</i>											
18-34	72	60	46	67	72	55	66	41	66	78	623
35-49	71	46	43	67	72	51	65	44	55	68	582
50-64	74	56	52	68	72	64	75	49	68	76	654
65+	67	61	48	61	66	46	63	46	60	62	580
<i>Parent</i>											
Yes	75	53	50	70	72	58	67	45	61	75	626
No	68	56	45	63	69	51	66	44	61	68	591
<i>Total</i>	<i>1348</i>	<i>1045</i>	<i>894</i>	<i>1262</i>	<i>1350</i>	<i>1036</i>	<i>1278</i>	<i>847</i>	<i>1181</i>	<i>1361</i>	<i>11602</i>

## BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS

One important objective of the 2008 Sheff Movement Survey Study was to find out the best way to reach Connecticut residents with information about quality of education, racial isolation, and the voluntary two way integration remedies generated by the *Sheff* case. Respondents were asked where they receive most of their information about the regional magnet school programs and the Open Choice program. The survey found that respondents receive most of their information about these programs from newspapers or word of mouth. However, when respondents were asked for the best way to reach them,

31 percent said television; 29 percent recommended newspapers, another 18 percent indicated by mail, and the remaining percentages said some other source such as radio or the internet.

**If the State of Connecticut were contemplating a new program initiative concerning quality of education, what would be the best way for the State to communicate its ideas with you...by mail, radio, newspaper, television, websites, or e-mail?**



A majority of all demographic groups said television or newspapers would be the best way to reach them. However, there are a few notable differences between certain sub-groups.

***RACE***

Forty-seven percent of minority respondents reported that television would be the best way to reach them, in contrast only 28 percent of white respondents indicated this preference. A plurality of white respondents (31 percent) would prefer to receive their information from the newspaper, compared to smaller number of minority respondents (17 percent).

***EDUCATION***

A plurality of those with no more than a high school education (37 percent) are best reached by television, compared to just more than a quarter of those with at least some college (26 percent). As level of education increases, so does the percentage of those best reached by newspaper. Only 25 percent of those with no more than a high school education said they are best reached by newspaper, compared to 34 percent of respondents with an education beyond a four-year degree.



## **Appendix A**





## Appendix A Annotated Questionnaire

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1. How long have you lived at your current address... less than one year, one to five years, five to ten years, or more than ten years?

9%	Less than one year
24	One to five years
15	Five to ten years
52	More than ten years
0	DK/REF

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut... excellent, good, fair, or poor?

15%	Excellent
42	Good
20	Fair
9	Poor
14	DK/REF

3. And how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in your own community...excellent, good, fair, or poor?

22%	Excellent
42	Good
19	Fair
9	Poor
9	DK/REF

4. Have you heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case which concerns the quality of education and racial isolation in Connecticut public schools, or haven't you heard anything about this?

43%	Yes, have heard
56	No, haven't heard
1	DK/REF

5. Have you read or heard a lot, some, or just a little about this case?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case which concerns the quality of education and racial isolation in Connecticut public schools (43%).

35%	Heard a lot
31	Some
34	Just a little
0	DK/REF

6. From what you have heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case, which best describes the state's response... 1) Creation of a two-way voluntary integration program for urban and suburban students, 2) Redrawing school district lines to racially balance schools, or 3) Requiring suburban students to attend city schools.

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case which concerns the quality of education and racial isolation in Connecticut public schools (43%).

- 47% Creation of a two-way voluntary integration program for urban and suburban students
- 20 Redrawing of school district lines to racially balance schools
- 11 Requiring suburban students to attend city schools
- 22 DK/REF

7. Have you heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice, or haven't you heard anything about this?

- 23% Yes, have heard
- 75 No, haven't heard
- 2 DK/REF

8. Have you read or heard a lot, some, or just a little about the Open Choice program?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have you heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice (23%).

- 17% Heard a lot
- 26 Some
- 54 Just a little
- 3 DK/REF

9. Where would you say you get most of your information about the Open Choice program... from newspapers, radio, television, internet websites, or word of mouth?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice (23%).

- 45% Newspapers
- 6 Radio
- 16 Television
- 4 Internet websites
- 26 Word of mouth
- 3 DK/REF

For the next two questions please tell me which of the two statements best describes the Open Choice program.

10. A) Open Choice is an integration program available to Hartford city students only OR B) Open Choice is an integration program available in urban areas throughout the state?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice (23%).

30% Open Choice for Hartford only  
60 Open Choice is available throughout the state  
10 DK/REF

11. A) The Open Choice program allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns OR B) The Open Choice program allows only the top performing urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the state's Open Choice program also known as Project Choice (23%).

57% Open Choice allows urban students to attend  
27 Open Choice program allows only the top performing urban students to attend  
17 DK/REF

12. The Open Choice program allows urban students to attend schools in nearby suburban towns where space is available. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose the Open Choice program?

52% Support  
16 Mildly Support  
7 Mildly Oppose  
13 Oppose  
11 DK/REF

13. Have you heard or read about the regional Magnet school programs, or haven't you heard anything about this?

62% Yes, have heard  
37 No, haven't heard  
1 DK/REF

14. Have you read or heard a lot, some, or just a little about the regional Magnet school programs?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the regional Magnet school programs (62%).

31% Heard a lot  
32 Some  
36 Just a little  
1 DK/REF

15. Where would you say you get most of your information about the regional Magnet School programs... from newspapers, radio, television, internet websites, or word of mouth?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the regional Magnet school programs (62%).

45%	Newspapers
3	Radio
10	Television
5	Internet websites
36	Word of mouth
1	DK/REF

16. From what you have heard or read, do the regional Magnet school programs create specialized schools for... suburban students, urban students, or both urban and suburban students.

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who said have heard or read about the regional Magnet school programs (62%).

6%	Suburban students
11	Urban students
74	Both suburban and urban students
9	DK/REF

17. The regional Magnet School programs are Connecticut voluntary integration programs that create specialized schools that are open to both city and suburban students. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose the magnet school programs?

68%	Support
16	Mildly Support
3	Mildly Oppose
6	Oppose
7	DK/REF

18. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district?

60%	Support
16	Mildly support
5	Mildly oppose
14	Oppose
5	DK/REF

19. If there were room, would you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose opening up more seats in your local school district to urban students?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Asked of those who were coded as suburban (66%).

60%	Support
13	Mildly support
6	Mildly oppose
15	Oppose
6	DK/REF

20. How likely are you to send your child to a school outside your district if you thought that he or she could get a better education? Are you...very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all?

46%	Very likely
25	Somewhat likely
8	Not too likely
13	Not likely at all
9	DK/REF

Now I am going to read you some statements about integration. For each, please tell me whether the statement makes you more supportive of integrating public schools, less supportive, or whether it doesn't change your level of support. (AFTER EACH STATEMENT READ: Does this make you more supportive or less supportive?)

21. Students in racially integrated schools tend to have more cross-racial friendships, which helps promote social tolerance and reduces racial prejudice.

70%	More supportive
7	Less supportive
23	Doesn't change level of support

22. There are currently hundreds of urban children on waiting lists hoping to obtain a space in suburban schools.

55%	More supportive
11	Less supportive
34	Doesn't change level of support

23. The two-way integration programs developed under Sheff v. O'Neill are mandatory for the state of Connecticut but voluntary for participating families.

47%	More supportive
13	Less supportive
41	Doesn't change level of support

24. Children in integrated schools may be more prepared for the diverse settings of college and the workplace than children who attend segregated schools.

65% More supportive  
7 Less supportive  
28 Doesn't change level of support

25. Classrooms where students from different backgrounds and races have different experiences help students think in more complex ways and improve critical thinking skills.

70% More supportive  
7 Less supportive  
24 Doesn't change level of support

26. Many suburban schools opening up seats to city students are under capacity. Adding additional students from the Open Choice program will not significantly affect class size.

53% More supportive  
15 Less supportive  
32 Doesn't change level of support

27. There is concern that suburban schools are not fairly reimbursed to reflect the cost of adding new students from other districts. What if the state would give the suburban schools a fair amount of funding to cover these new costs?

67% More supportive  
11 Less supportive  
23 Doesn't change level of support

28. Studies show school integration does not have a negative impact on the test scores of white students.

44% More supportive  
11 Less supportive  
45 Doesn't change level of support

29. School integration programs address the harmful impact of poverty concentration in city schools by giving city students the opportunity to attend economically mixed schools.

61% More supportive  
10 Less supportive  
30 Doesn't change level of support

30. Expanding voluntary integration programs has been shown to improve high school graduation and college attendance rates of urban students.

70%	More supportive
6	Less supportive
24	Doesn't change level of support

31. If the State of Connecticut were contemplating a new program initiative concerning quality of education, what would be the best way for the State to communicate its ideas with you...by mail, radio, newspaper, television, websites, or e-mail?

18%	Mail
9	Radio
29	Newspaper
31	Television
6	Websites
5	E-Mail
2	DK/REF

32. What year were you born in? (Age)

28%	18-34
29	35-49
18	50-64
20	65+
6	DK/REF

33. What is your highest level of education completed...less than high school, high school graduate, some college with no degree, 2-year college or trade school graduate, 4-year college graduate, Master's or law degree, or Doctoral Degree?

8%	Less than high school
37	High school graduate
12	Some college, no degree
13	2-year college or trade school graduate
18	4-year college graduate
9	Master's or law degree
2	Doctoral degree (e.g. PhD or M.D.)
1	DK/REF

34. Are you, yourself, of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background...yes or no?

7%	Yes
92	No
1	DK/REF

35. What is your race....White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race or mixed?

81%	White
10	Black or African American
2	Asian
1	American Indian or Alaska Native
0	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
4	Some other race or mixed
3	DK/REF

36. I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please tell me which describes your total household income last year: \$20,000 or less, 20,001 to 40,000, 40,001 to 60,000, 60,001 to 80,000, 80,001 to 100,000, or More than 100,000.

10%	\$20,000 or less
17	20,001 to 40,000
14	40,001 to 60,000
13	60,001 to 80,000
8	80,001 to 100,000
16	More than 100,000
22	DK/REF

37. Do you currently have any children living in your household who are 18 years or younger and attend Connecticut public schools...yes or no?

33%	Yes
66	No
1	DK/REF

38. Respondent Gender

49%	Male
51	Female

39. Respondent Geography

24%	Urban
66	Suburban
10	Rural

40. Harford Resident or Not

92%	Not Harford resident
8	Harford resident



## **Appendix B**



## Appendix B Trend Comparison of 2008 to 1997 Survey

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1. How long have you lived at your current address... less than one year, one to five years, five to ten years, or more than ten years?

<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>	
9%	11%	Less than one year
24	30	One to five years
15	19	Five to ten years
52	40	More than ten years
0	0	DK/REF

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in Connecticut... excellent, good, fair, or poor?

<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>	
15%	10%	Excellent
42	45	Good
20	25	Fair
9	8	Poor
14	12	DK/REF

3. And how would you rate the quality of education in the public schools in your own community...excellent, good, fair, or poor?

<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>	
22%	19%	Excellent
42	41	Good
19	20	Fair
9	9	Poor
9	10	DK/REF

4. Have you heard or read about the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case which concerns the quality of education and racial isolation in Connecticut public schools, or haven't you heard anything about this? IF "YES" ASK: Have you read or heard a lot, some, or just a little about this case?

<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>		<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>	
56%	29%	No, haven't heard			
43	70	Yes, have heard:	15	21	Yes, a lot
1	1	DK/REF	13	28	Yes, some
			15	21	Yes, a little

5. Do you support, mildly support, mildly oppose, or oppose giving parents the option of sending their children to schools outside of their own school district?

<u>08*</u>	<u>97</u>	
76%	58%	Support
19	36%	Oppose
5	5	DK/REF

\*The scales for the 2008 survey were support/mildly support and oppose/mildly oppose as compared to the 1997 survey which were strongly support/mildly support and strongly oppose/mildly oppose.

6. How likely are you to send your child to a school outside your district if you thought that he or she could get a better education? Are you...very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all?

\*\* Subpopulation note: Only those labeled as parents were included.

<u>08</u>	<u>97</u>	
48%	36%	Very likely
26	21	Somewhat likely
11	11	Not too likely
14	29	Not likely at all
2	4	DK/REF

