10 Years Later: An Updated Look at CT's District Reference Groups (DRGs)

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Note: The 2016 District Reference Groups mentioned and listed in this document are not official but rather meant for research and reference use. The 2016 DRGs were determined through calculations by the Connecticut School Finance Project and are not official classifications produced by the Connecticut State Department of Education. While the 2016 DRGs listed are not official, they were calculated using the same methodology and variables used by the CSDE in 2006 to determine the current DRGs.

What are District Reference Groups (DRGs)?

The District Reference Groups (DRGs) classification system, used by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), groups local public school districts together based on the similar socioeconomic status of their students. DRGs are useful in making comparisons among districts and can provide both district leaders and policymakers with helpful context when making resource decisions. The DRGs, which were last updated in 2006, are classified by letters A through I, with DRG A consisting of very affluent, low-need suburban districts and DRG I consisting of the state's urban districts that have high socioeconomic needs.

What factors determine a school district's DRG?

The CSDE used the below seven variables in 2006 to determine DRGs. All variables were based upon families with children attending public school. The Connecticut School Finance Project has used the same variables—updated with the most recent available data—and cluster analysis methodology to determine what DRGs would look like today. Four variables (income, education, occupation, and family structure) for the updated DRGs are based on National Center for Education Statistics census data from the 2006-10 American Community Survey. The remaining variables (poverty, home language, and district enrollment) are based on 2011 data from the CSDE.

Income – Median household income

Education – Percentage of parents with a bachelor's degree or higher

Occupation – Percentage of students with parents aged 16 years or older, employed, and holding jobs in executive, managerial, and professional specialty occupations

Family Structure – Percentage of students living in families without a wife or husband present or in non-family households

Poverty – Percentage of students from families with incomes eligible to receive free or reduced price meals

Home Language – Percentage of students whose families speak a language other than English at home

District Enrollment – Gross enrollment for the local public school district

What average district characteristics does each updated DRG represent?

DRG A
- Affluent Fairfield County
- Significantly higher than other DRGs in:
  - Median household income
  - Education attainment
  - % of management professionals

DRG B
- Smaller rural and suburban
- Low poverty levels, high incomes
- Above average in:
  - Education attainment
  - % of management professionals

DRG C
- Mid-size suburban
- 3rd highest income & education levels
- Higher rates than DRGs A, B, & D in:
- Low-income students and single-parent non-English speaking households

DRG D
- Small & rural, 2nd lowest enrollment
- Slightly lower income than DRG C
- Lower than adjacent groups in:
  - Low-income students and single-parent and non-English speaking households

DRG E
- Very small & rural, lowest enrollment
- Much lower income & education attainment than DRGs A-D
- Low-income student rates higher than than DRGs A-D but much lower than F-I

DRG F
- 3 large districts with 2nd highest enrollment
- Highest rate of non-English households
- 3rd highest rate of low-income students
- Higher than DRG E in education attainment and management professional rates

DRG G
- Mid-size to large towns, suburbs
- Slightly lower income and rate of low-income students than DRG F
- 3rd highest in single-parent households

DRG H
- Larger towns and suburbs
- 2nd lowest income level and significantly lower than all DRGs except I
- 2nd highest rate of low-income students and students from single-parent homes
- 2nd lowest education attainment rate

DRG I
- State's largest cities and urban centers
- Far and away the highest in enrollment, low-income students, and single-parent homes
- Lowest in income, education attainment, and % of management professionals

How do the updated DRGs compare with the current DRGs from 2006?

2006 DRG	# of Districts	Average Enrollment	Avg. Median Household Income	Avg. FRPL Rate	Avg. Non-English Speaking Rate	Avg. Single Parent Family Rate	Avg. Attainment Rate	Avg. Management Professional Rate
A	9	3,359	$199,220	1.61%	2.02%	10.60%	80.53%	69.11%
B	21	4,647	$129,161	7.03%	5.66%	14.58%	63.73%	61.82%
C	30	1,302	$104,679	8.05%	2.04%	16.35%	47.88%	52.11%
D	24	3,471	$95,742	13.30%	6.29%	22.13%	42.67%	48.65%
E	31	735	$84,581	14.28%	1.24%	26.09%	32.63%	40.26%
F	15	1,835	$77,497	26.39%	4.14%	27.31%	20.03%	33.16%
G	15	4,267	$69,754	41.71%	7.42%	35.59%	22.94%	35.40%
H	9	7,290	$60,011	55.67%	24.13%	40.03%	21.89%	29.42%
I	7	13,421	$35,208	82.91%	31.93%	60.84%	11.49%	21.67%

2016 DRG	# of Districts	Average Enrollment	Avg. Median Household Income	Avg. FRPL Rate	Avg. Non-English Speaking Rate	Avg. Single Parent Family Rate	Avg. Attainment Rate	Avg. Management Professional Rate
A	10	4,817	$197,896	3.53%	4.14%	11.13%	80.12%	68.12%
B	36	2,428	$120,789	6.30%	2.72%	13.79%	58.46%	59.79%
C	23	3,970	$94,009	14.18%	7.93%	24.19%	45.49%	49.88%
D	39	1,156	$92,169	12.17%	1.61%	19.18%	37.06%	45.47%
E	21	1,103	$73,523	22.97%	2.24%	33.59%	18.33%	27.64%
F	3	12,225	$71,796	45.57%	37.57%	29.73%	34.93%	34.78%
G	16	4,334	$71,638	40.10%	8.10%	34.87%	24.85%	37.06%
H	8	4,387	$49,662	65.61%	20.93%	47.93%	14.28%	25.20%
I	5	17,556	$34,775	83.96%	32.11%	62.70%	11.68%	22.10%

How the Current DRGs from 2006 Compare to the Updated 2016 DRGs

The tables below show the change in DRG rankings between the current 2006 classification and the 2016 classification calculated by the Connecticut School Finance Project.

Districts in **RED** have moved down at least one DRG, while districts in **BLUE** have moved up at least one DRG.

When analyzing DRGs, it is important to note that districts are categorized relative to other districts using a statistical model. Districts are not grouped into DRGs according to absolute measures of socioeconomic status, need, or enrollment. Furthermore, changes in DRG designation may reflect a shift in a district's relative status rather than declines and/or increases in its individual data variables.

*Learn more about the updated DRGs at **www.bit.ly/DRGs2016***

District	2006 DRG	2016 DRG
Andover	C	D
Ansonia	H	H
Ashford	E	E
Avon	B	B
Barkhamsted	C	D
Berlin	D	C
Bethany	C	B
Bethel	D	C
Bloomfield	G	G
Bolton	C	D
Bozrah	E	D
Branford	D	C
Bridgeport	I	I
Bristol	G	G
Brookfield	B	B
Brooklyn	E	E
Canaan	E	E
Canterbury	F	D
Canton	C	B
Chaplin	E	E
Cheshire	B	B
Chester	E	B
Clinton	D	D
Colchester	D	C
Colebrook	E	D
Columbia	C	B
Cornwall	C	B
Coventry	E	D
Cromwell	D	C
Danbury	H	F
Darien	A	A
Deep River	E	D
Derby	H	H
East Granby	D	B
East Haddam	E	D
East Hampton	D	D
East Hartford	H	H
East Haven	G	G
East Lyme	D	B
East Windsor	F	G
Eastford	E	E
Easton	A	A
Ellington	C	B
Enfield	F	G
Essex	C	B
Fairfield	B	A
Farmington	B	C
Franklin	E	E
Glastonbury	B	B
Granby	B	B
Greenwich	B	A
Griswold	F	E
Groton	G	G
Guilford	B	B

District	2006 DRG	2016 DRG
Hamden	G	G
Hampton	E	D
Hartford	I	I
Hartland	E	D
Hebron	C	B
Killingly	G	G
Lebanon	E	E
Ledyard	D	D
Lisbon	E	D
Litchfield	E	D
Madison	B	B
Manchester	G	G
Mansfield	C	C
Marlborough	C	B
Meriden	H	H
Middletown	G	G
Milford	D	C
Monroe	B	B
Montville	F	E
Naugatuck	G	G
New Britain	I	I
New Canaan	A	A
New Fairfield	B	B
New Hartford	C	D
New Haven	I	I
New London	I	H
New Milford	D	C
Newington	D	C
Newtown	B	B
Norfolk	E	D
North Branford	E	D
North Haven	D	C
North Stonington	E	D
Norwalk	H	F
Norwich	H	H
Old Saybrook	D	C
Orange	B	B
Oxford	C	D
Plainfield	G	E
Plainville	F	E
Plymouth	F	E
Pomfret	C	D
Portland	E	D
Preston	E	E
Putnam	G	G
Redding	A	A
Regional District #1	E	D
Regional District #4	C	D
Regional District #5	B	B
Regional District #6	E	D
Regional District #7	C	D
Regional District #8	C	D
Regional District #9	A	B
Regional District #10	C	B

District	2006 DRG	2016 DRG
Regional District #11	F	E
Regional District #12	C	D
Regional District #13	C	D
Regional District #14	C	B
Regional District #15	B	B
Regional District #16	E	D
Regional District #17	C	D
Regional District #18	C	B
Regional District #19	C	C
Ridgefield	A	A
Rocky Hill	D	C
Salem	C	B
Salisbury	E	E
Scotland	E	D
Seymour	F	E
Shelton	D	C
Sherman	C	B
Simsbury	B	B
Somers	C	B
South Windsor	B	C
Southington	D	C
Stafford	F	E
Stamford	H	F
Sterling	F	E
Stonington	D	C
Stratford	G	G
Suffield	C	B
Thomaston	E	D
Thompson	F	E
Tolland	C	B
Torrington	G	G
Trumbull	B	B
Vernon	G	G
Voluntown	F	E
Wallingford	D	C
Waterbury	I	I
Waterford	D	D
Watertown	D	C
West Hartford	B	C
West Haven	H	H
Westbrook	E	D
Weston	A	A
Westport	A	A
Wethersfield	D	C
Willington	E	D
Wilton	A	A
Winchester	G	E
Windham	I	H
Windsor	D	C
Windsor Locks	F	G
Wolcott	F	D
Woodbridge	B	B
Woodstock	E	D

To be consistent with CSDE's methodology, Kent, North Canaan, Sharon, Sprague, and Union have not been included in this analysis, as updated Educational Attainment data for these districts is unavailable.

Sources: Connecticut State Department of Education. (2006). *Research Bulletin: District Reference Groups, 2006*. Retrieved from http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/EvalResearch/DRG_2006.pdf. Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Connecticut Education Data and Reserach (CEDaR). Available from http://sdeportal.ct.gov/Cedar/WEB/ct_report/DTHome.aspx. National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE): American Community Survey (ACS), 2006-10*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/tables.aspx?ds=acsProfile&y=2010.