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Who Chooses in Hartford? Regional School Choice Office Applications from Hartford-resident HPS students in 2012

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Who Chooses in Hartford?

Regional School Choice Office Applications
from Hartford-resident HPS students in 2012

presentation for

Magnet Schools of America, May 2014

by Jack Dougherty and Stephen Spirou

with Diane Zannoni and Marissa Block

Cities Suburbs & Schools Project

Trinity College, Hartford CT

Research question:

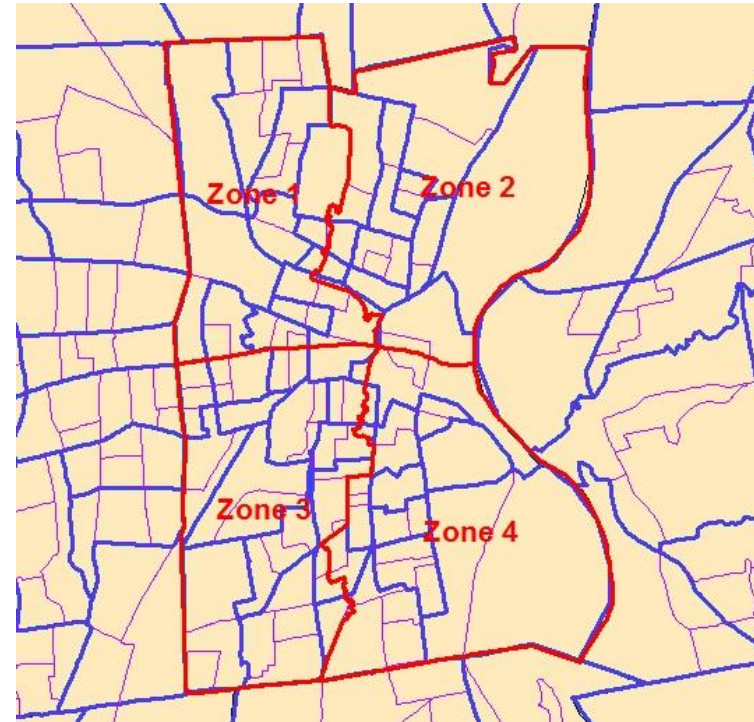
Which Hartford-area families are more/less likely to apply for public school choice options, and how do they vary?

- student characteristics
- achievement levels
- school composition
- neighborhood demographics

Hartford Public School zones

Census tracts

Census block groups



Findings from Who Chooses Report 1:

We analyzed RSCO applicants vs non-applicants among Hartford-resident HPS grade 3-7 students in Spring 2012:

Applications not random, but linked to student socioeconomic characteristics that often showed higher participation by more privileged families:

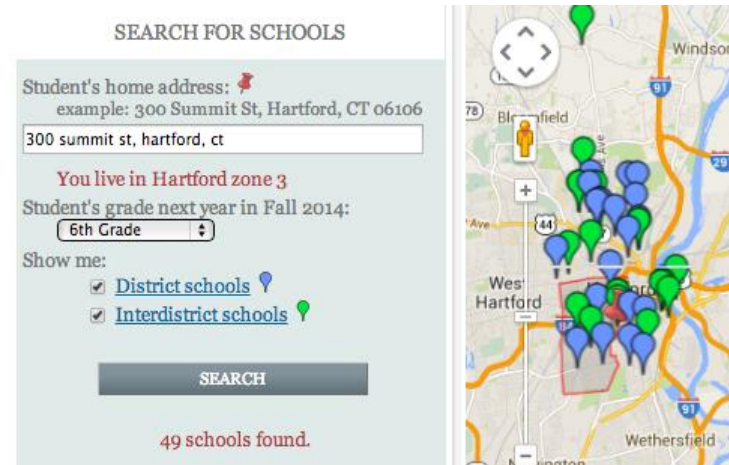
- lower levels by English language learners & special needs
- higher levels by high CMT scores, and living in census areas with higher incomes and owner-occupied housing

3 policies increased public school choice in Hartford:

- 1) Sheff v O'Neill school desegregation raised interdistrict magnets and Open Choice through RSCO ***our focus***
- 2) State legislature approved public charter schools
- 3) HPS shifted from neighborhood attendance areas to “all-choice” initiative for district schools


Typical parent of Hartford 6th grader eligible to apply to over 40 district & interdistrict options in metro region

<http://SmartChoices.trincoll.edu>



The screenshot displays the 'SEARCH FOR SCHOOLS' interface. It includes a search bar with the address '300 summit st, hartford, ct' and a dropdown menu for 'Student's grade next year in Fall 2014' set to '6th Grade'. Below the search bar, there are checkboxes for 'District schools' and 'Interdistrict schools', both of which are checked. A 'SEARCH' button is located at the bottom of the search form. To the right of the search form is a map of Hartford, CT, showing various school locations marked with blue and green pins. The map also shows major roads like I-91 and I-291, and surrounding areas like Windsor and Wethersfield.

SEARCH FOR SCHOOLS



Student's home address: 
example: 300 Summit St, Hartford, CT 06106

300 summit st, hartford, ct

You live in Hartford zone 3

Student's grade next year in Fall 2014:
6th Grade

Show me:

- District schools 
- Interdistrict schools 

SEARCH

49 schools found.

Our study linked records across four data silos

Reg School Choice Office

18,000 city &
suburban
applications to
interdistrict
magnets &
Open Choice

CT Dept of Education

Public Sch
Info System
+ CMT tests
for 180,000
students in
region

Hartford Public Sch

22,000
student
addresses
and more
test data

Census Bureau

American
Community
Survey 5yr
for 100
census block
groups

John Smith



John Smith

1234567890



1234567890

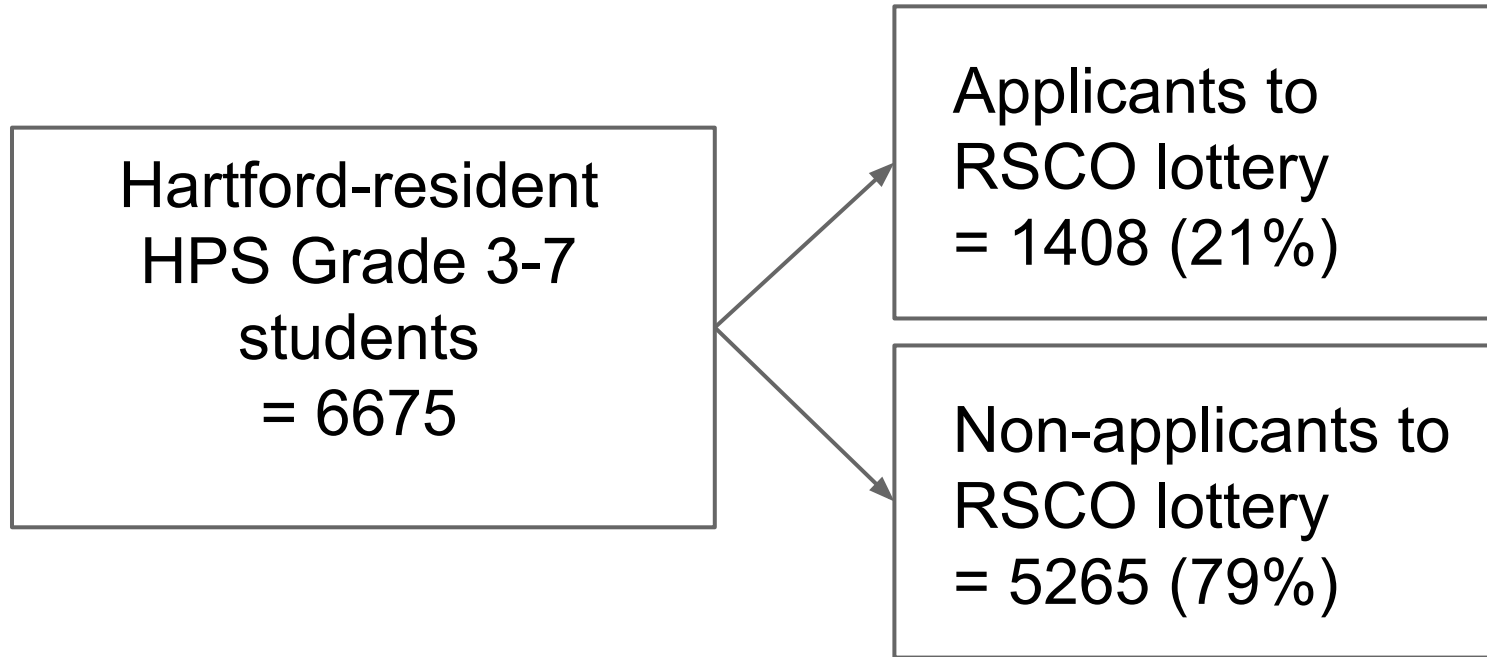
100 Main St.



100 Main St.

Census 500101

Application Flow Chart (abbreviated) Spring 2012



+ 2 unmatched student records

Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

Gender	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
Male	.20	.80	no significant diff
Female	.20	.80	

English Language Learner	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
ELL	.14	.86	89 fewer ELL students applied than expected
non-ELL	.23	.77	

Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

Special Ed	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
SPED	.16	.84	57 fewer SPED students applied than expected
non SPED	.22	.78	

High scoring CT Mastery Test (4-5)	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
High scoring	.26	.74	33 more high scoring students applied than exp.
Lower scoring	.21	.79	

Median household income	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
Over \$40k	.25	.75	47 more students in upper group applied than exp.
Under \$20k	.18	.82	

Owner occupied home census blk grp	Probability of applying	of not applying	Magnitude of difference
Over 40%	.26	.74	74 more students in upper group applied than exp.
Less than 1%	.17	.83	

Policy considerations:

- 1) If State wishes to evaluate public school choice, then link RSCO applications to CSDE records and make data available to researchers.
- 2) If State and Sheff plaintiffs desire more equitable choice participation, establish benchmarks by student characteristics (e.g. ELL, SPED, Income), in addition to the traditional total goal (e.g. 41% Hartford minority students).
- 3) Possible strategies to achieve equity participation benchmarks:
 - School choice fairs and door-to-door outreach in under-represented areas
 - Magnet themes (e.g. Dual Language) to attract under-represented students
 - Weighted lottery to increase odds for under-represented Hartford areas
- 4) Explore why patterns exist: Creaming by schools and/or climbing by parents? Support qualitative research to explore what quantitative data does not reveal.

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Stay tuned for Report 2 spatial analysis (with maps)

For more information, contact: Jack.Dougherty@trincoll.edu