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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:

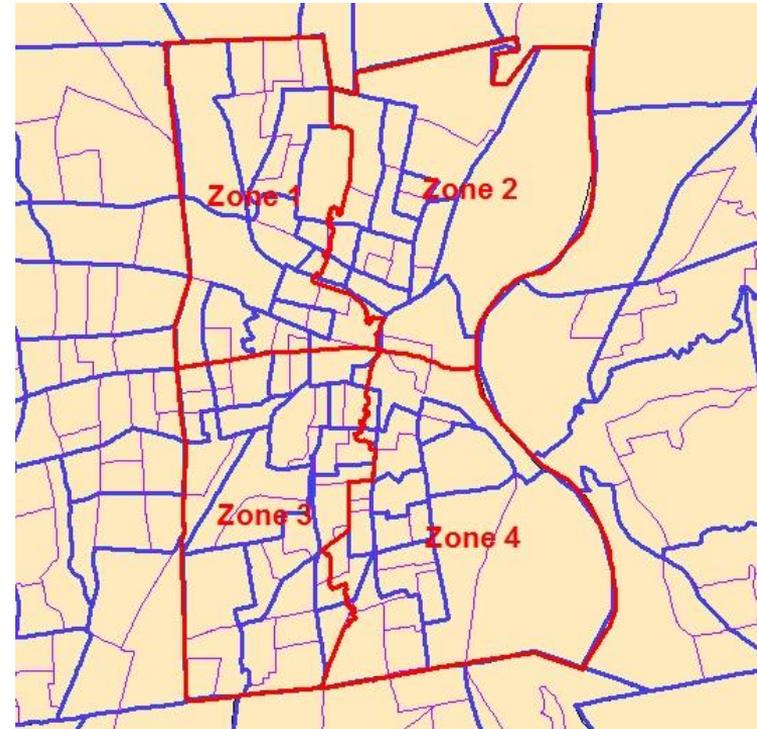
Which Hartford-area families are more/less likely to apply for public school choice options, and how do they vary?

- 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:

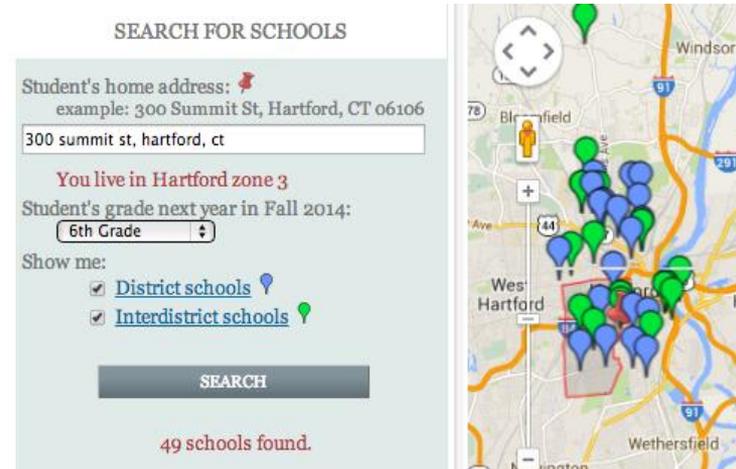
- lower levels by English language learners & special needs
- higher levels by high CMT scores, and living in census areas with higher incomes and owner-occupied housing

### 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 '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

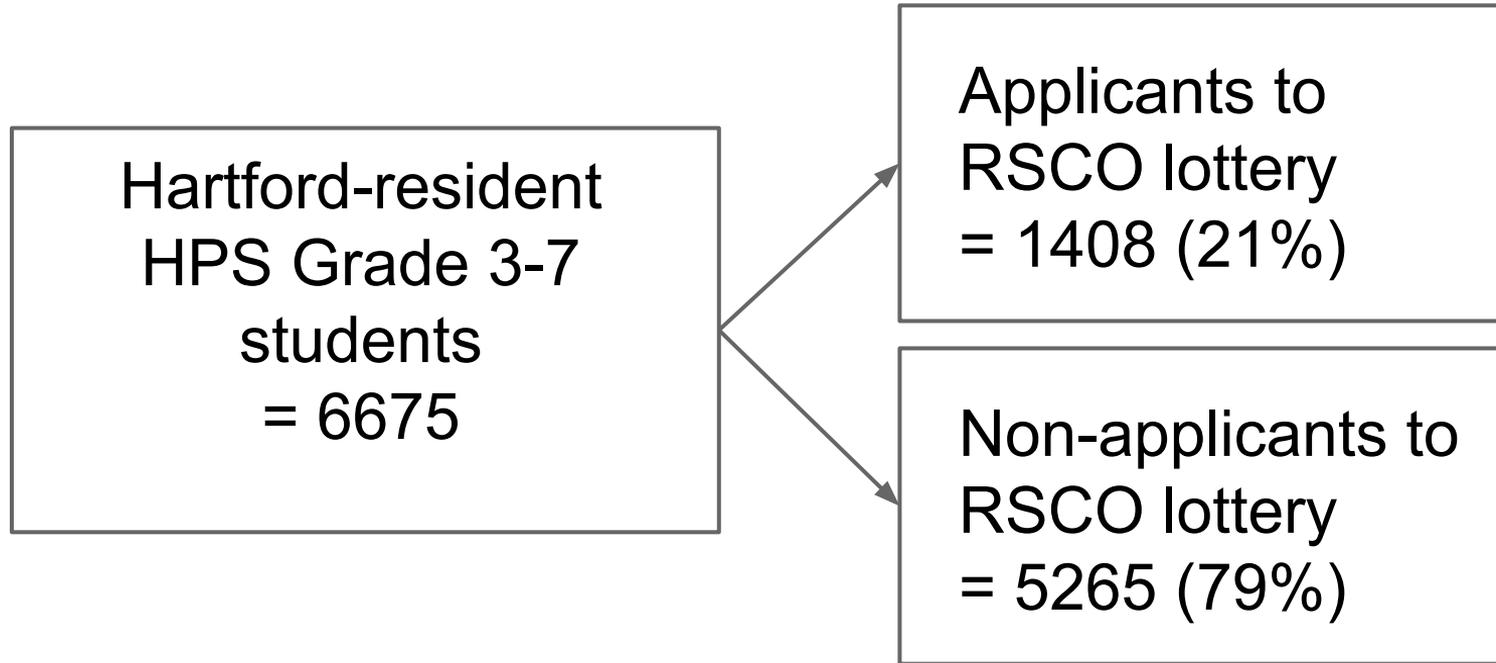
100 Main St.



100 Main St.

Census 500101

# Application Flow Chart (abbreviated) Spring 2012



+ 2 unmatched student records

# Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Probability of applying</b>	<b>of not applying</b>	<b>Magnitude of difference</b>
Male	.20	.80	no significant diff
Female	.20	.80	

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

# Analysis of Characteristics of RSCO Applicants

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

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

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

<b>Owner occupied home census blk grp</b>	<b>Probability of applying</b>	<b>of not applying</b>	<b>Magnitude of difference</b>
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.

## **Acknowledgements:**

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**Data provided by:** CT Dept of Education, under no-cost contract approved by CT Attorney General, which restricts use of confidential student records for the purpose of this study; Hartford Public Schools

**Stay tuned for Report 2 spatial analysis (with maps)**

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