
Connecticut Public Schools Staffing Trends: Examining Levels of Administrators, General Education Teachers, and Special Education Teachers in the 2010-11 through 2022-23 School Years

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Connecticut public school districts devote considerable effort to staff their schools. This requires meeting the needs of changing student populations, adjusting to district and school-level requirements, and adapting to widespread socially and economically impactful events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Districts must weigh complex factors in staffing decisions, considering skills and qualifications of each administrator, teacher, and staff member. At a more basic level, the number of personnel filling staff positions can greatly impact school districts' quality and capabilities.

This brief identifies Connecticut statewide trends between 2010-11 and 2022-23 in three educator categories: administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers in the state of Connecticut. The analysis demonstrates how many educators in each staffing category are being lost or added to overall state levels in the past 13 school years. This brief does not examine the specific certification categories of educators and their associated trends; for this information see a recent report published on the state of Connecticut's website (*Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools*, n.d.).

Overall, we find administrator levels have risen in Connecticut public school districts, with the number of central district administrators increasing more than school administrators in the 13 years examined. General education teacher levels have dropped, though in recent years some districts seem to have devoted efforts to hiring more general education teachers. Finally, districts in the state have increased the number of special education teachers employed, while in recent years, Connecticut Alliance school districts demonstrate relatively higher increases in special education teachers employed than other districts in the state.

Lower student enrollment in Connecticut public schools underlies these staffing trends. Detailed in Figure 8, student enrollment has been decreasing throughout the state over the 13 years examined, with only slight increases in students enrolled following a major loss of students after the onset of the COVID-19. Shifting student enrollment trends raise questions about the relative needs

of Connecticut school districts, and in particular, the implications of teacher and administrator staffing levels within the state’s current context.

Methods

To understand the trajectory of staffing levels in Connecticut public schools, the 13-year period from the 2010-11 school year through the 2022-23 school year was selected for analysis. This examination provides an understanding of staffing trends prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but after the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, when effects of the 2008 economic recession were still felt by school districts across the country. The most recent school year included was 2022-23, as this was the latest school year available at the time of analysis.

This work examines publicly available data from the Connecticut Department of Education website. Staff categories are named in this brief as named by the Connecticut data system; for example, “central office administrators” and “special education teachers” were used to examine district and state trends. The author created one additional category of staff type named “total administrators” by summing counts of “central office administrators” and “school administrators.”

Statewide staff level trends were calculated by combining district counts for each staff category of interest. In addition, year-to-year differences in staff count are presented for each staff category, demonstrating how many staff members of each type were added or lost compared to the prior school year.

Further, these analyses compare trends in Alliance school districts to all other school districts in the state of Connecticut (referred to here as “non-Alliance” school districts). Alliance districts are specially designated public school districts in the state which receive special funding designed to support increased student academic achievement and reduce achievement gaps. These districts are identified through low Accountability Index measures (Connecticut Department of Education, 2024). These comparative analyses contribute an understanding of the unique trends in staffing within Alliance districts compared to non-Alliance districts.

Alliance district trends include all 36 districts currently designated as Alliance school districts in the state of Connecticut, including the three most recent additions to Alliance district designations (see Table 1). The analyses identify trends over time prior to the creation of Alliance district designations.¹

1 More information on trends of prior group designations of Alliance district staffing trends is available upon request.

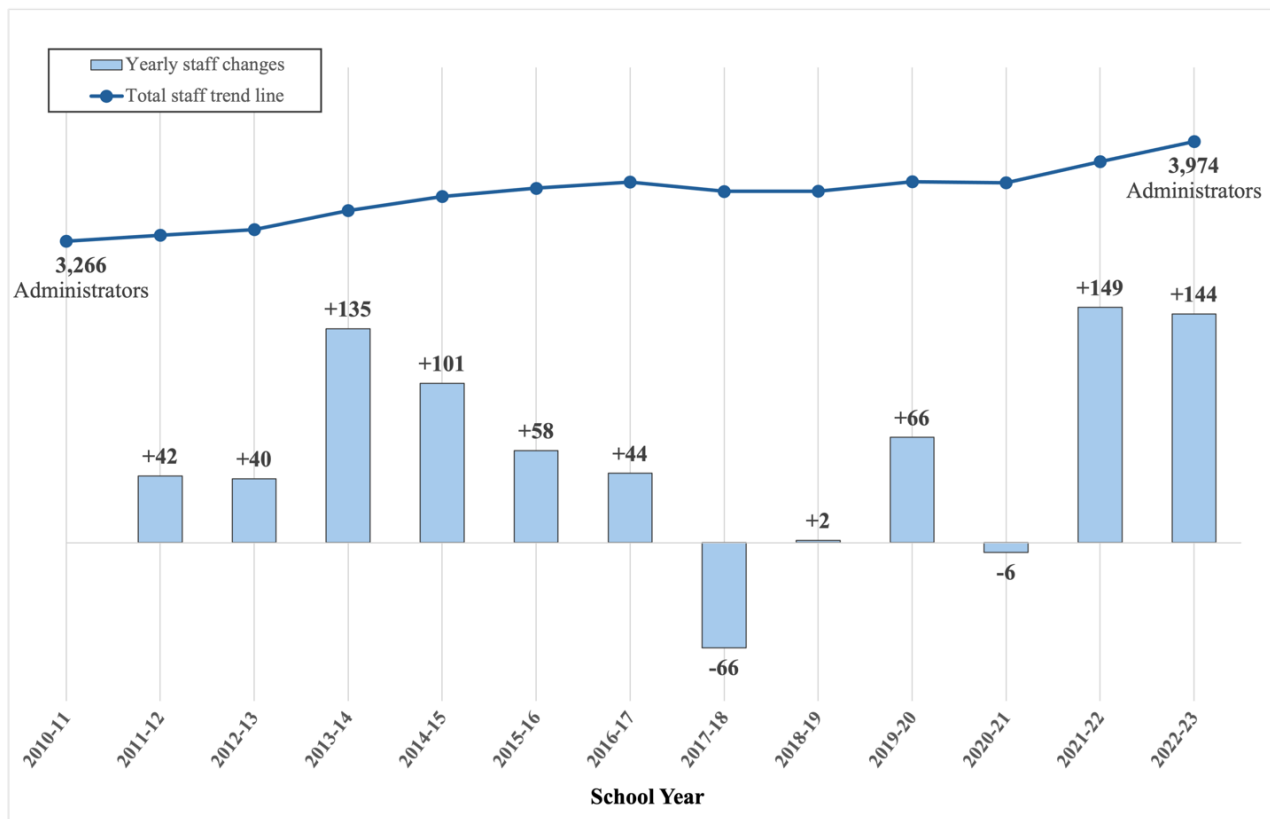
Findings

Administrators

On average, the number of school-level and central office administrators in Connecticut public school districts has increased in the 13-year period examined. Totalling the two categories of administrators, Connecticut has increased administrators employed by 21.7% compared to the 2010-11 school year. This increase was not consistent, with total decreases in the 2017-18 and 2020-21 school year. Figure 1 highlights how the number of administrators is rising across the state.

Figure 1

Total Administrators—Connecticut Statewide Levels

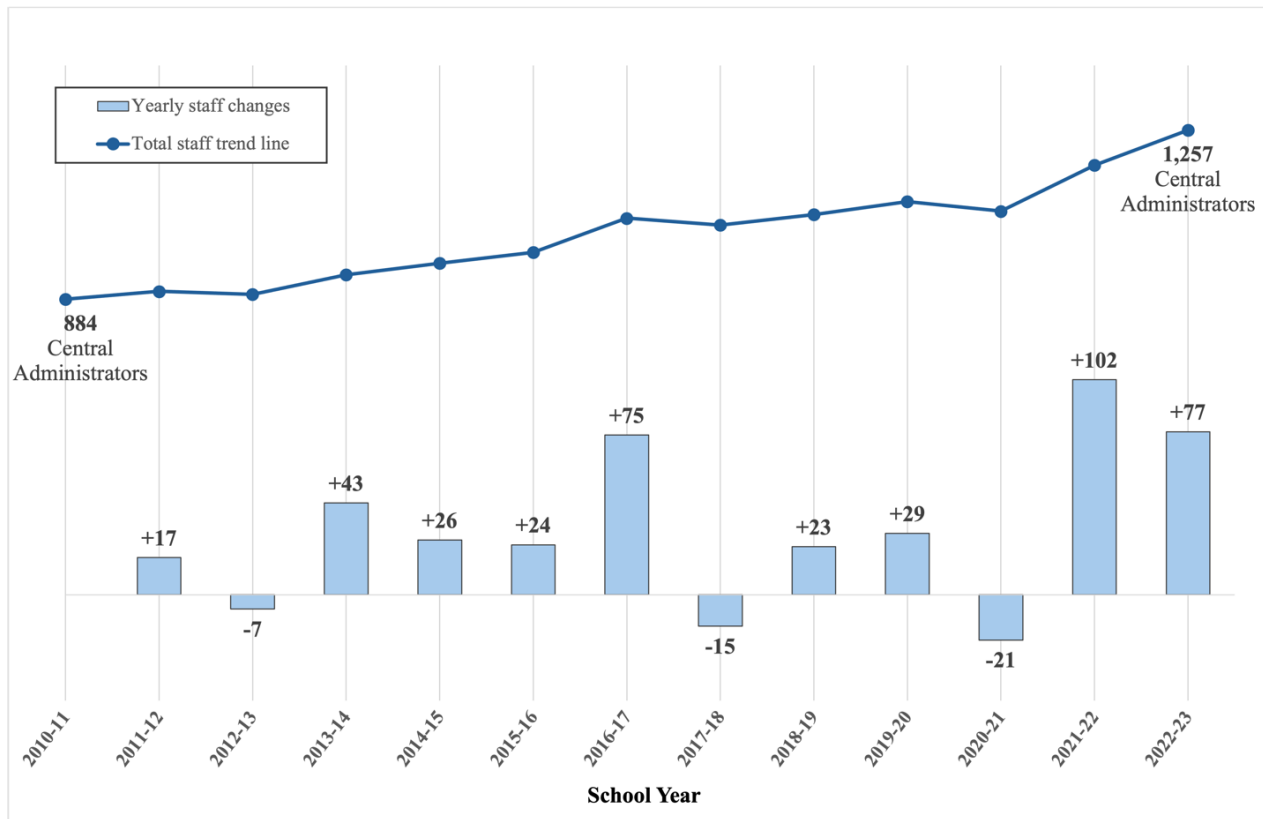


Statewide, the number of central office administrators has been rising faster than the increase in school-level administrators over the past thirteen years. The total number of central office administrators has risen 42.2% since 2010-11 vs. 14.1% for school administrators.

Large additions were made to this staffing group after the onset of the COVID pandemic. This did not happen immediately, as the state had a reduced number of 21 fewer central office administrators in the 2020-21 school year. Then, the state saw an increase of 102 central office administrators, far more than typical growth in a year, and much more than enough to make up for the previous year's losses. Growth continued in 2022-23, with 77 more central office administrators were added statewide. Figure 2 shows trends in the number of central office administrators from 2010-11 to 2022-23.

Figure 2

Central Office Administrators—Connecticut Statewide Levels



Numbers of school-level administrators have risen, even in the school years immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 3 below). School-level administrators make up a bigger portion of the total administrators across Connecticut school districts, but the growth in this staff type is proportionally smaller than the growth in central office administrators. Total numbers of school-level administrators have risen by 14.1% since 2010-11, even with three consecutive years of statewide decline in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19.

In the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, the state persistently increased the number of school-level administrators employed, even in the 2020-21 school year when numbers of central office administrators declined. Though school-level administrator numbers grew by 47 in 2021-22 and by 67 in 2022-23, the size of this growth is not out of the ordinary for the 13-year trend examined.

Figure 3

School-Level Administrators—Connecticut Statewide Levels

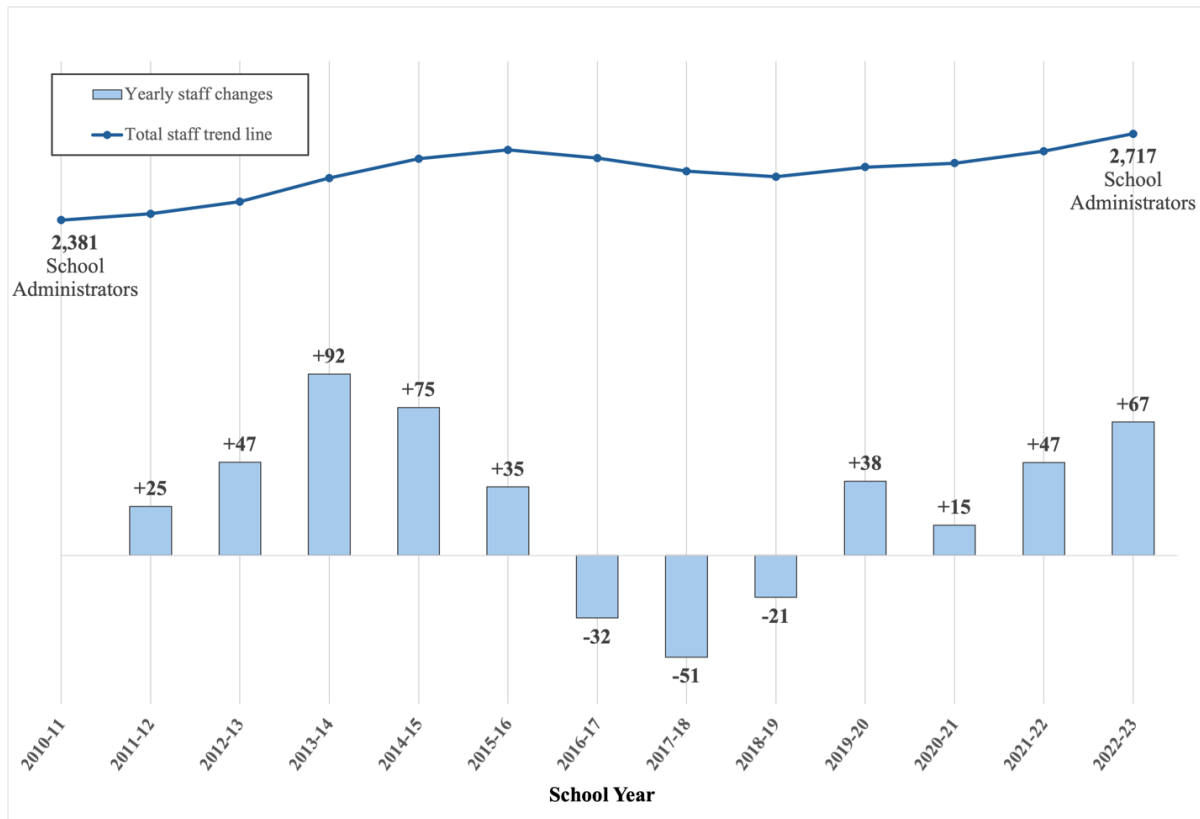


Figure 3. School-Level Administrators--Connecticut Statewide Levels

Alliance Districts– Administrators

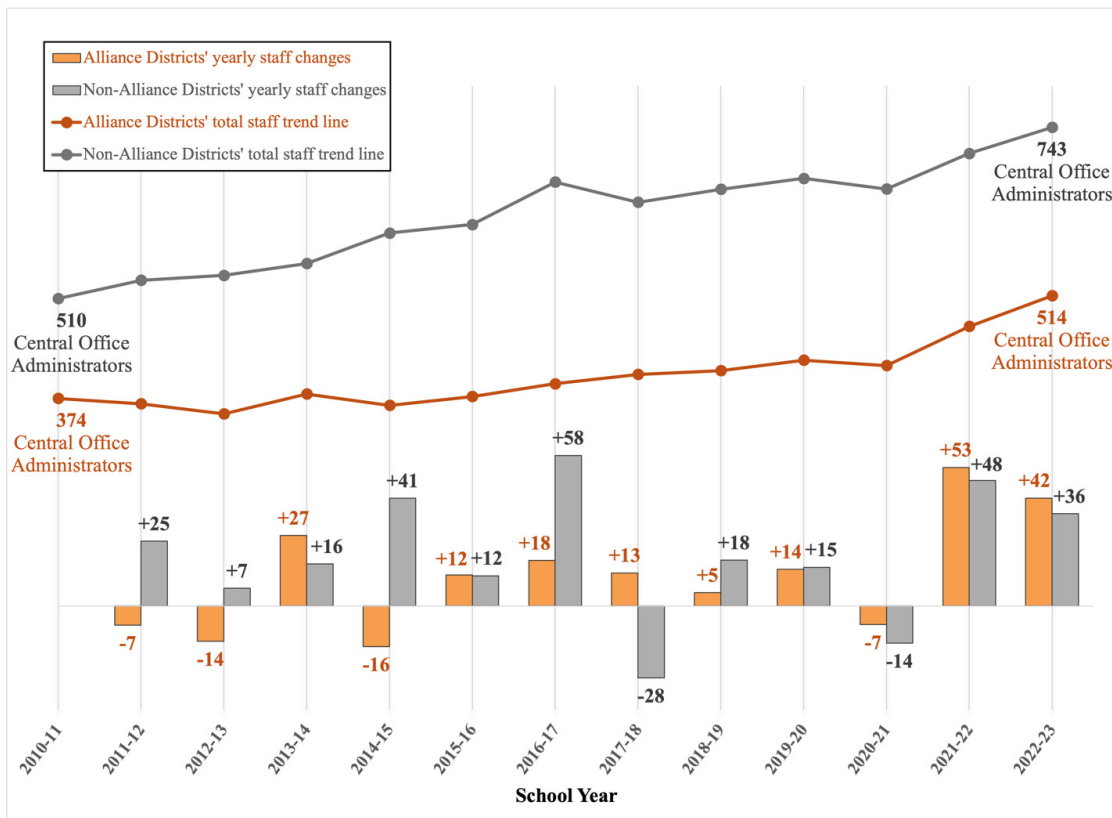
Alliance districts have experienced more years of decline and slower growth in their central office administrators than non-Alliance districts.

Alliance districts' central office administrators have grown by an overall 37.3% since 2010-11, compared to non-Alliance districts' 45.7% increase in the same staff type. Alliance districts also face more yearly losses in total number of central office administrators compared to non-Alliance districts, though both groups saw a decline in central office administrators in the year following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alliance districts may have intentionally put more focus into increasing the number of central office administrators in 2021-22 and 2022-23 than non-Alliance districts, when Alliance districts increased these total numbers by 53 and 42 central office administrators, respectively. Further, this increase is more impactful when considering the small number of Alliance districts compared to non-Alliance districts.

Figure 4

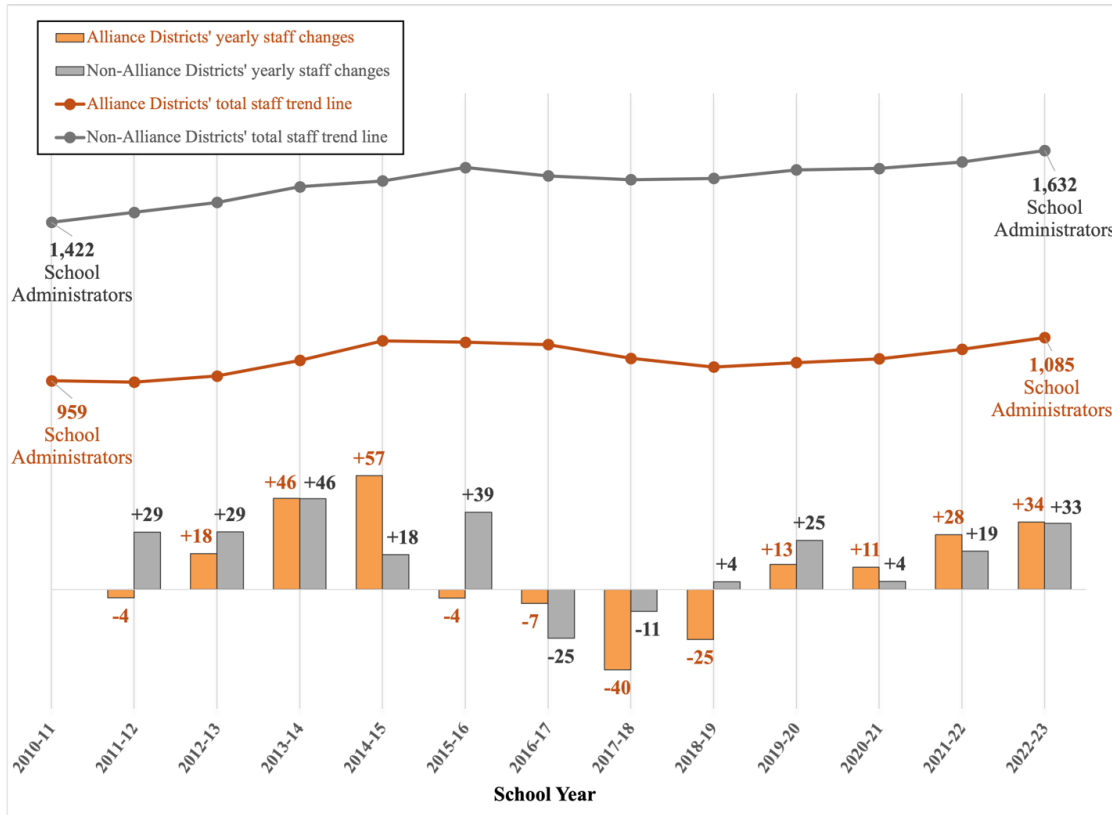
Central Office Administrators—Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts



Alliance district school administrator trends are quite similar to trends in non-Alliance districts (see Figure 5 below). Alliance districts' school administrator levels increased by 13.1% since 2010-11. This growth is slightly smaller than non-Alliance schools' increase of 14.7% over the same time period. Though trends are similar, the impact of an equal size gain is greater in Alliance districts, given that these districts employ fewer total educators than non-Alliance districts.

Figure 5

School-Level Administrators—Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts



Teachers

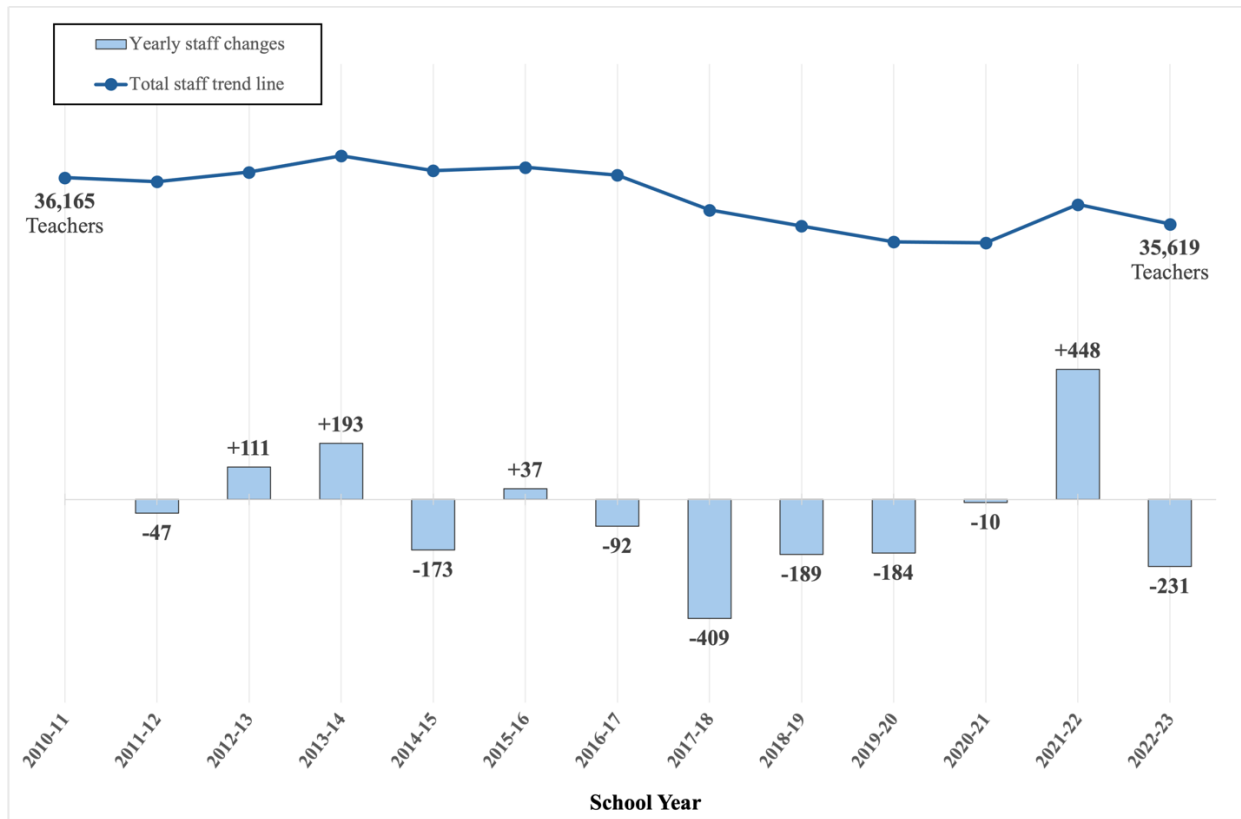
Connecticut's total number of general education teachers has declined between the 2010-11 and 2022-23 school years. While the total number of general education teachers in the state has decreased by about 1.5% since the 2010-11 school year, there is great variability in this change year-to-year. Some years saw large decreases, some years slight increases, and some stayed relatively static, as the total numbers of teachers employed in Connecticut public schools fluctuated but still followed a negative trend.

In the school years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, general education teacher trends appear different. In the 2020-21 school year, the state's total number of general education teachers only decreased by 10 from the previous year. This is far less than the average rate that the state had been losing general education teachers over the prior decade, at about 133 teachers

per year. In 2021-22, Connecticut saw unusual growth in their general education teachers employed statewide, with an increase of 448 teachers. Figure 6 illustrates these trends in general education teacher levels.

Figure 6

General Education Teachers—Connecticut Statewide Levels



The number of students enrolled in Connecticut schools has steadily declined alongside general education teacher levels over the 13-year period examined, leading to lower student-teacher ratios in the state over time. Averaging the student-teacher ratios of school districts across the state, there were 15.0 students per general education teacher in 2010-11, and 13.8 students per teacher in 2022-23. Figures 7 and 8 highlight how average student-teacher ratios are decreasing across the state as general education teacher levels drop and student enrollment declines.

Figure 7

Average Student-Teacher Ratios—Connecticut Statewide Levels

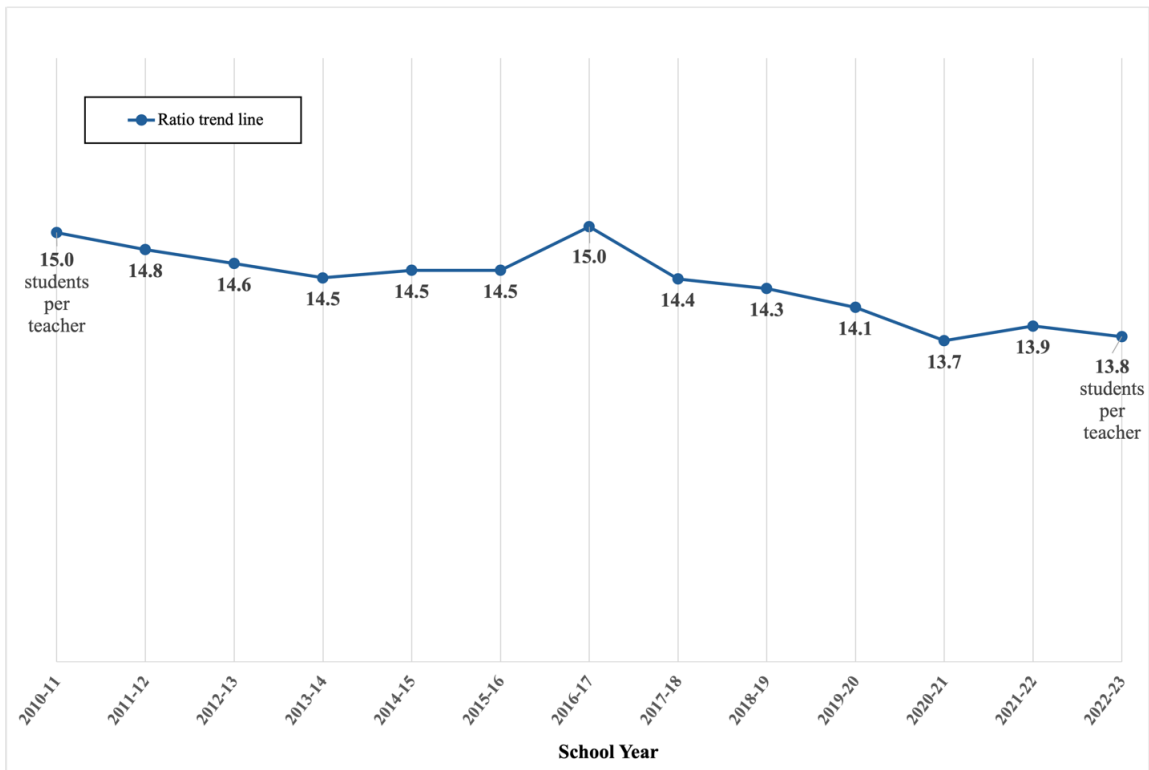
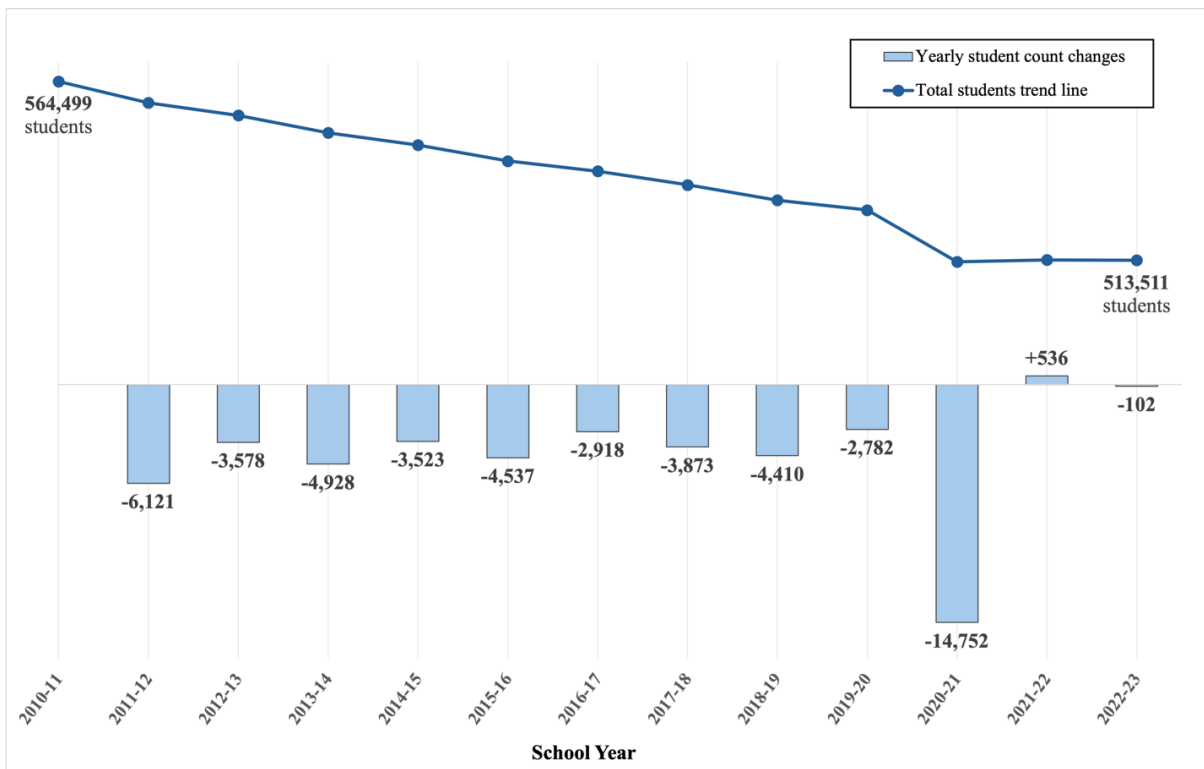


Figure 8

Student Enrollment—Connecticut Statewide Levels



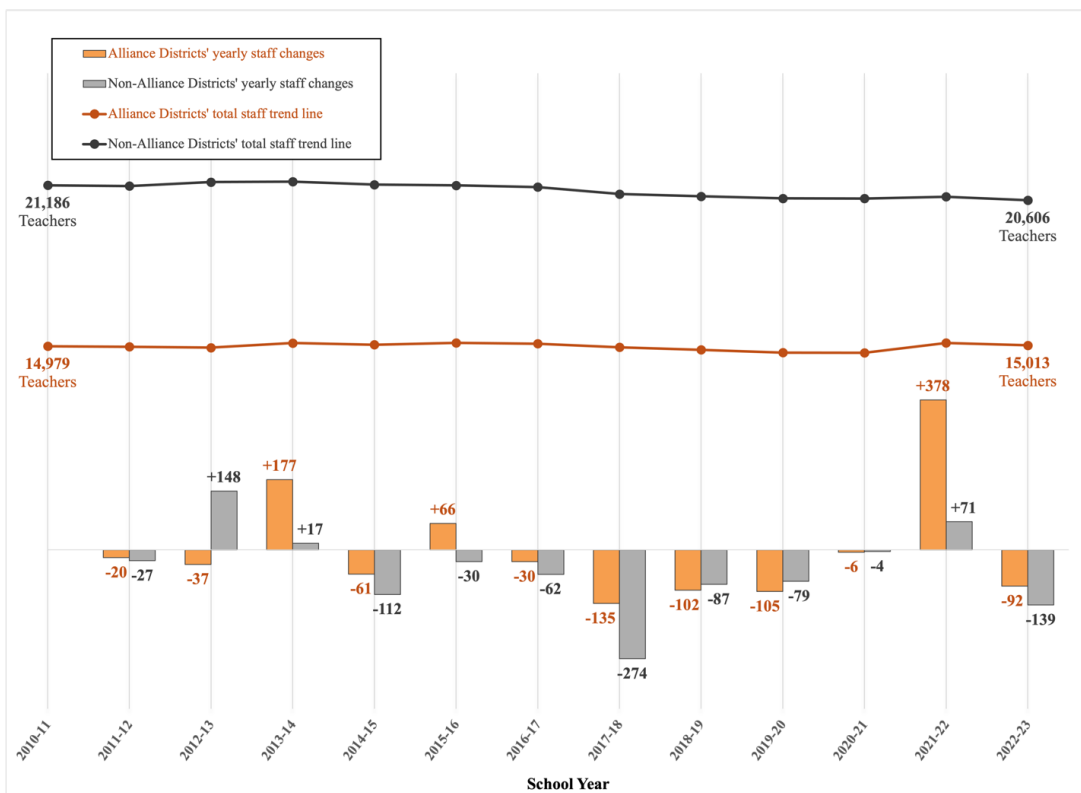
Alliance Districts– Teachers

Alliance districts’ total number of general education teachers has declined in nine of the past 13 years, with non-Alliance districts seeing the same number of years of decline. These two groups of districts differ however, in that non-Alliance districts’ total number of teachers has declined by 2.7%, whereas Alliance districts’ teacher counts are higher than they were 13 years ago. Figure 9 demonstrates this overall increase in Alliance district teachers compared to non-Alliance districts’ decrease.

In the school year immediately following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, both Alliance and non-Alliance districts experienced a slight loss in the total number of general education teachers. In 2021-22, Alliance districts’ numbers of general education teachers grew enormously compared to prior years, with 378 teachers added to their districts overall. Meanwhile non-Alliance districts added 71 total general education teachers in that year. Considering the smaller number of districts within the Alliance district group, this increase in general education teachers inevitably impacted schools in Alliance districts more than the increase in non-Alliance districts’ teacher levels. Further, Alliance districts lost general education teachers in 2022-23, but this loss did not undo the overall growth experienced in Alliance districts during the years after the onset of COVID-19. Figure 9 illustrates these COVID era differences between general education teacher hiring in Alliance districts versus non-Alliance districts.

Figure 9

General Education Teachers—Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts

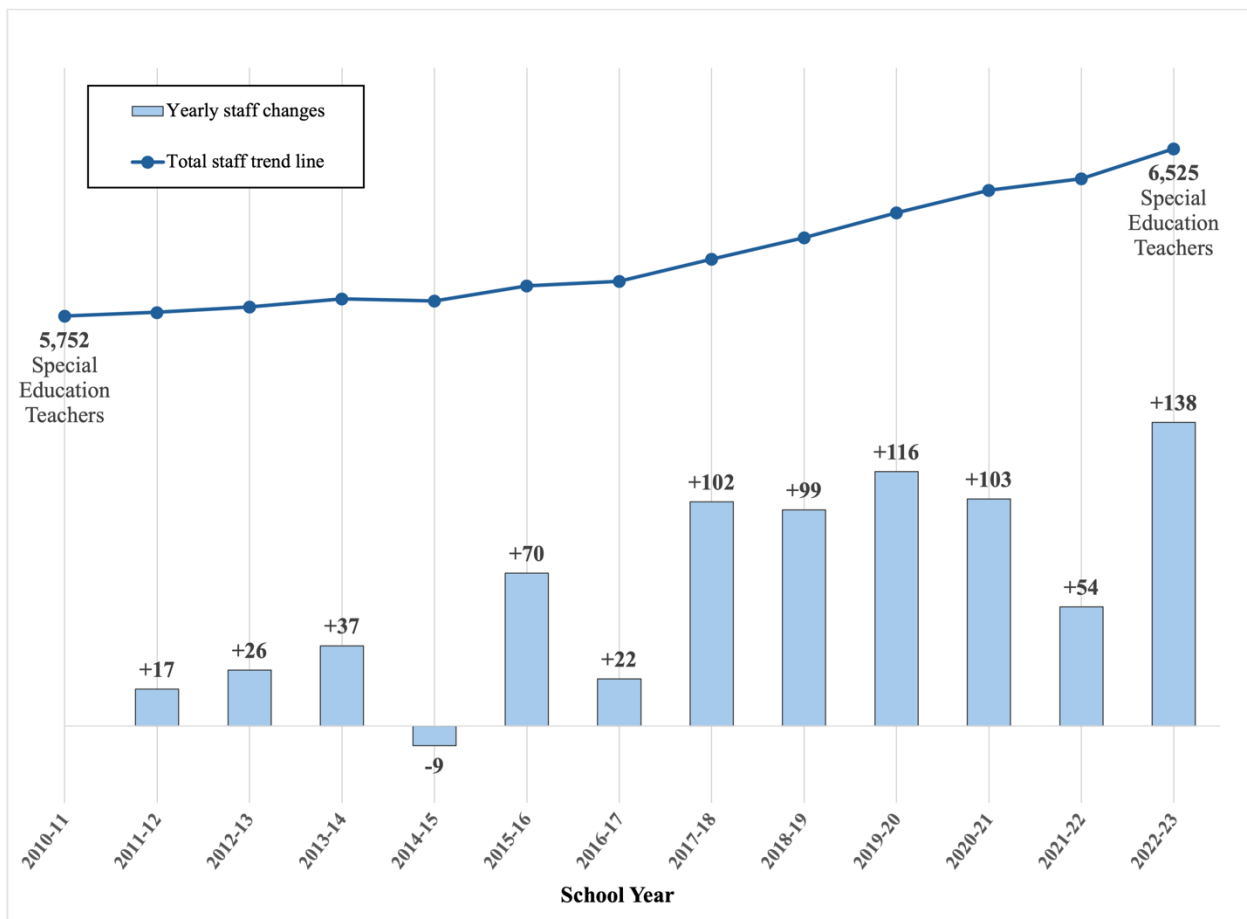


Special Education Teachers

Connecticut's total number of special education teachers has increased by 13.4% (773 more educators) between 2010-11 and 2022-23. Across the majority of school years in the 13-year period examined, Connecticut has seen growth in the number of special education teachers employed. In the years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, no notable changes occur in this average growth, though persistent growth in overall numbers of special education teachers in the state may be important to note. Figure 10 demonstrates how special education teacher levels are rising across the state.

Figure 10

Special Education Teachers—Connecticut Statewide Levels



Connecticut has seen a steady and steep climb in the number of students identified with disabilities, rising from 13.0% of the student population in 2010-11 to 17.4% of the student population in 2022-23 (see Figure 11 below). Even though the number of total special education teachers is on the rise in Connecticut, a widening special education student-teacher ratio has emerged. Figure 12 demonstrates how the number of special education teachers is not keeping up with the increase in identified students with disabilities, leading to a growing ratio of students with disabilities per special

education teacher. On average, Connecticut districts taught 12.2 students with disabilities per special education teacher in 2010-11, but this number has increased to 13.7 students with disabilities per special education teacher in 2022-23. This increase in students per special education teacher may be particularly impactful within the area of special education, where student needs often require more attentive teacher support.

Figure 11

Students with Disabilities Enrollment—Connecticut Statewide Levels

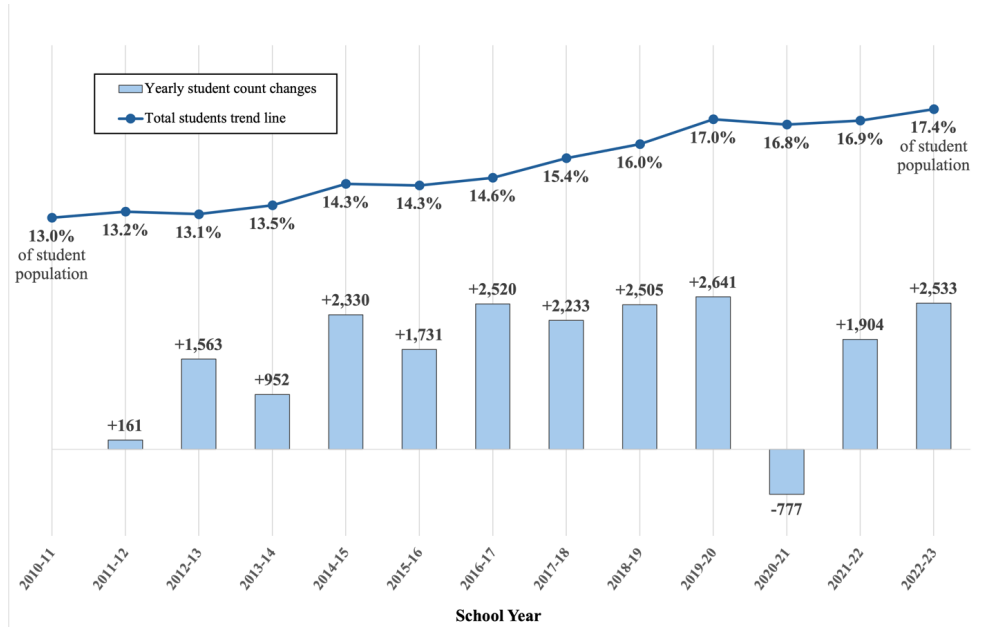
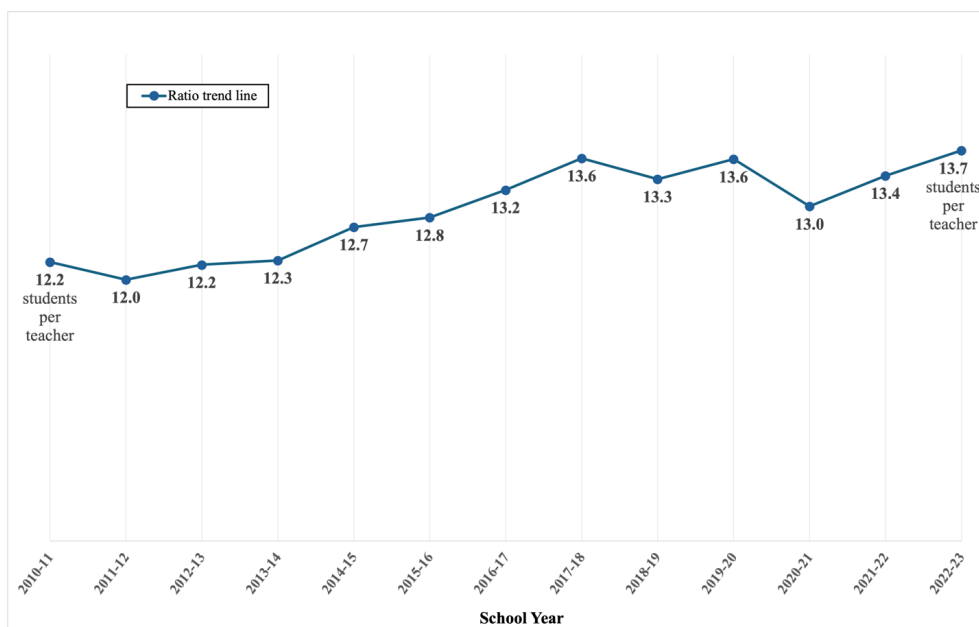


Figure 12

Students with Disabilities per Special Education Teacher Ratios—Connecticut Statewide Levels



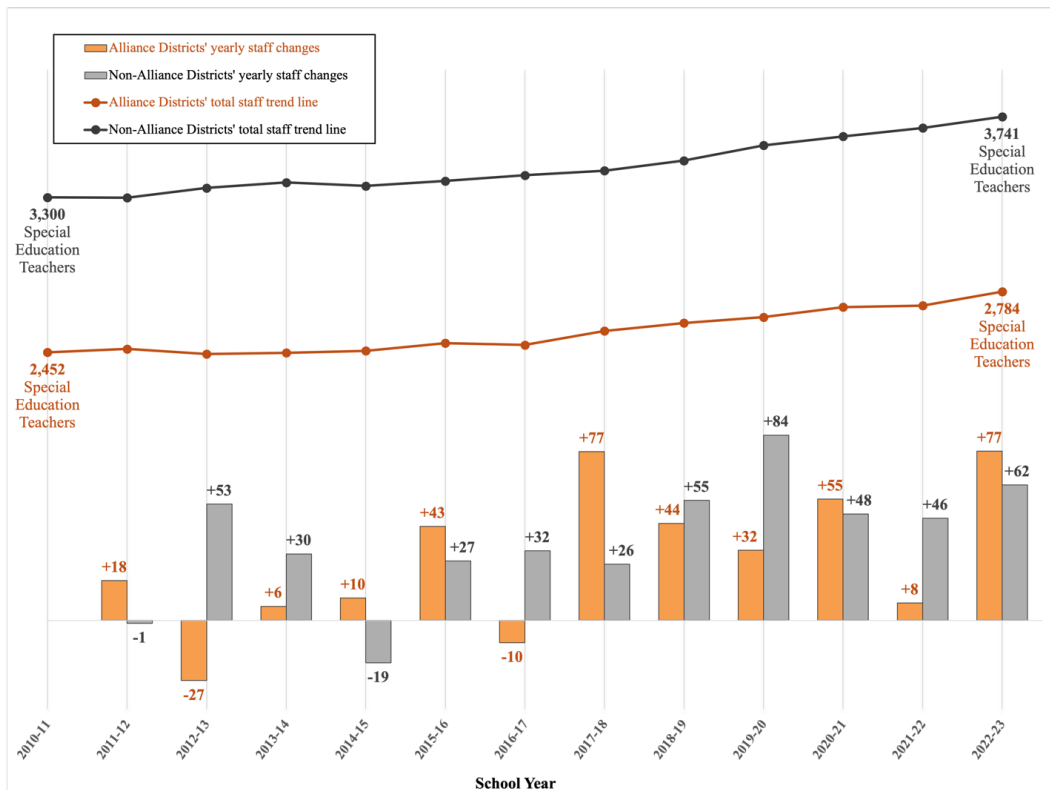
Alliance Districts– Special Education Teachers

Alliance school districts’ increases in special education teachers follow positive trends alongside non-Alliance school districts, with a 13.5% increase in special education teachers in Alliance school districts since 2010-11 compared to a 13.4% increase in non-Alliance districts. However, in some years there are notable differences between these two groups. For example, in 2017-18 there was an increase in Alliance districts’ overall number of special education teachers by 77 while the number of special education teachers in non-Alliance districts only grew by 26. Figure 13 illustrates these years of special education teacher growth in Alliance districts.

Immediately after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, both Alliance and non-Alliance districts added to their special education teacher populations. In the following year, non-Alliance school districts saw steady growth in this staff type, while Alliance districts only grew their special education teacher levels by 8 teachers in 2021-22. After this stagnation, Alliance districts seem to have rebounded to high growth in 2022-23, with 77 more special education teachers added to their districts, resulting in greater overall growth in special education teachers employed in Alliance districts compared to non-Alliance districts during the years following the start of COVID-19. Figure 13 demonstrates that over the three most recent years examined, Alliance districts added more special education teachers than non-Alliance districts overall.

Figure 13

Special Education Teachers—Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts



This special education teacher staffing trend in Alliance districts better aligns with the rising levels of students with disabilities compared to non-Alliance district trends.

Recently, Alliance districts are employing special education teachers at a higher average rate than non-Alliance districts, resulting in decreasing ratios between special education teachers and students with disabilities in Alliance districts since the 2019-20 school year (see Figure 14 below).

Figure 15 illustrates how Alliance districts serve a higher percentage of students with disabilities in their districts than non-Alliance districts, on average. This fact has held true over the 13-year period examined, with 18.9% of Alliance districts' students holding an identified disability in 2022-23, and 17.0% of non-Alliance districts students identified with a disability in the same year.

Figure 14

*Students with Disabilities per Special Education Teacher Ratios—
Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts*

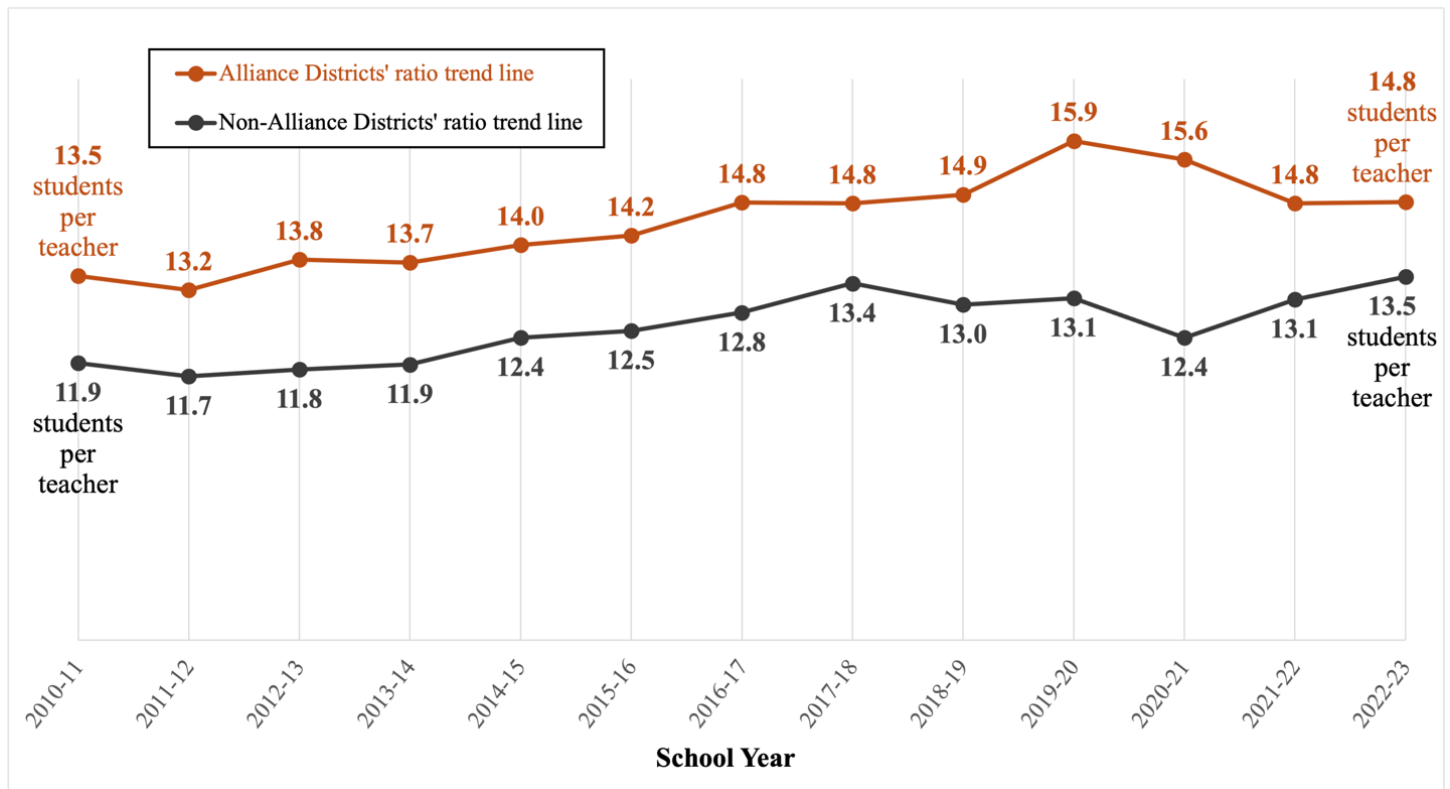


Figure 15

Students with Disabilities Enrollment—Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts

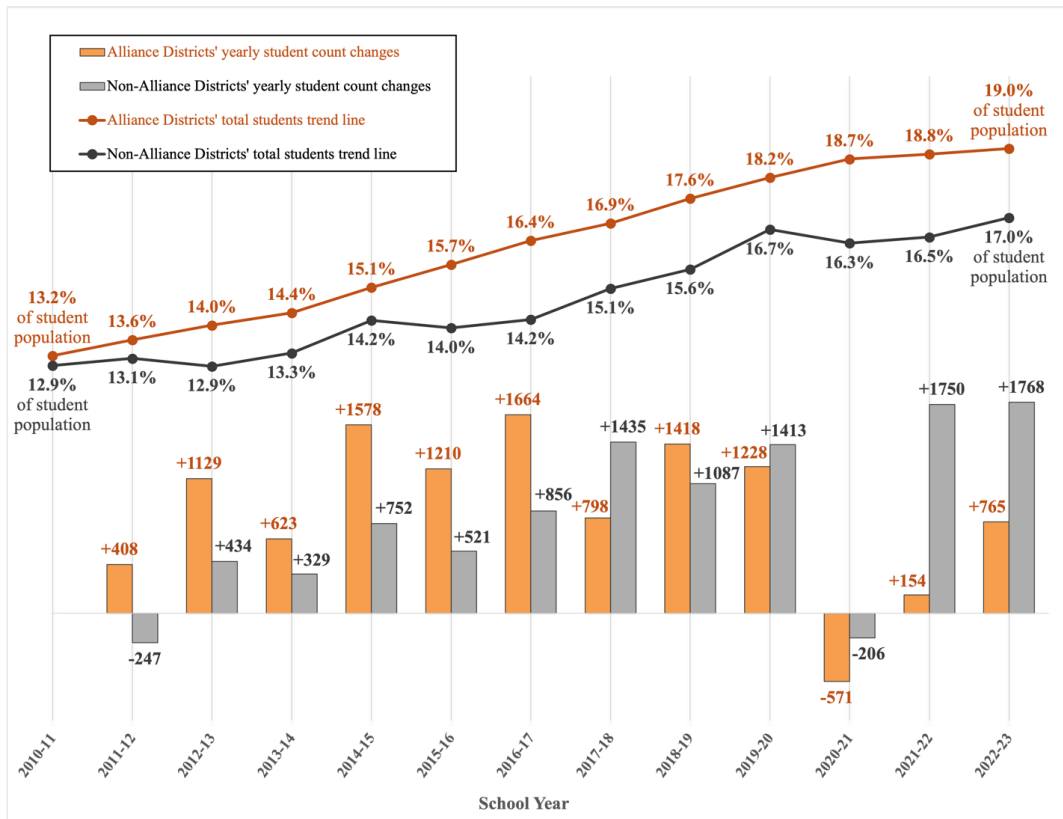


Figure 15. Students with Disabilities Enrollment--Alliance Districts vs. Non-Alliance Districts

Conclusion

Overall, Connecticut public school districts are seeing rising numbers of administrators and special education teachers, while general education teachers and student enrollment levels have declined in the past 13 school years. Alliance districts, on average, seem to experience notable staffing differences from all other public school districts in the state, which may significantly affect the needs of their schools and students, though these staffing decisions and funding allocations should be examined alongside these overall staffing trends.

Further analysis is needed to understand both why staffing levels have shifted in Connecticut school districts, and how these changes affect school districts and their students. These levels illuminate areas of need relative to change over time, and major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic may explain some dramatic shifts seen in staffing trends in the 2020-21 or 2021-22 school years. Reasons behind Connecticut school districts' average growth, decline or stagnant staffing levels remain to be fully uncovered.

References

Connecticut Department of Education. (2024). Alliance Districts. <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/alliance-districts/alliance-and-opportunity-districts>

Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools. (n.d). Connecticut State Department of Education. https://portal.ct.gov/sde/talent_office/talent-office-home-page/shortage-areas

Appendix

Table 1

Years of Alliance District Designation, State of Connecticut

2012	2017	2022
Ansonia School District	Groton School District	Enfield School District
Bloomfield School District	Thompson School District	Plainfield School District
Bridgeport School District	Torrington School District	Stratford School District
Bristol School District		
Danbury School District		
Derby School District		
East Hartford School District		
East Haven School District		
East Windsor School District		
Hamden School District		
Hartford School District		
Killingly School District		
Manchester School District		
Meriden School District		
Middletown School District		
Naugatuck School District		
New Britain School District		
New Haven School District		
New London School District		
Norwalk School District		
Norwich School District		
Putnam School District		
Stamford School District		
Vernon School District		
Waterbury School District		
West Haven School District		
Winchester School District		
Windham School District		
Windsor School District		
Windsor Locks School District		

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Author Biography

Julia Oas is a doctoral student in the Research Methods, Measurement and Evaluation program at the University of Connecticut. She works to bridge gaps between research, school practice, and education policy, emphasizing the reformative change required to achieve equitable and empowering school experiences for all children. Julia's research interests include research methods attuned to the needs of under-resourced school settings and causal inference within the field of education. In particular, she is motivated to study education policies and practices that improve the capacity of teachers to employ anti-racist, inclusive, and emotionally supportive pedagogies. Prior to her time at UConn, Julia taught for over five years in K-8 public schools as a classroom teacher and a math interventionist. She holds a B.A. in elementary education and sociology from the College of William and Mary, and an M.S.Ed. in education policy from the University of Pennsylvania.

