

# Analysis of Data and the Case for Maintaining the E.O. Smith-Tolland Ice Hockey Co-op 2017-18



At E.O. Smith and Tolland, we believe in providing a wide array of athletic opportunities for a diverse body of students, whether they have played a sport for many years or are trying it for the first time. Athletic participation helps build confidence, camaraderie, and success in the classroom and life. As one of few hockey co-ops that provides a competitive varsity program as well as a jv hockey experience for younger or less-experienced players, our co-op hockey program has exemplified these beliefs for 25 years.

After many years of club play, E.O. Smith initiated varsity hockey in 1992. By 1994, in order to sustain hockey at E.O. Smith and give access to more area youth hockey players, a co-op was formed with Tolland and Windham Tech. Over the past 25 years, E.O. Smith and Tolland have continued this relationship, and maintained our commitment to offer hockey to players of all ability levels as best we can. In 2008, to better represent the cooperative, cohesive nature of the program, players identified a common mascot, and we changed the name of our program from the E.O. Smith Panthers to the E.O. Smith-Tolland Bucks. Tolland blue was also integrated into our color scheme.



2005



2018

The CIAC has placed our co-op with Tolland High School into phase out expiring prior to the 2018-2019 school year. We believe our hockey co-op has honored the central purpose of high school athletics for many years. We have offered a comprehensive program inviting to a range of athletes, while being an honest and fair competitive partner in the CCC and the CIAC. At 25 years, we are one of oldest and most stable co-ops in the CIAC hockey structure. In the immediate, we are requesting that the CIAC revise our phase out period to the allotted two years to give us time to ensure a proper hockey experience is in place going forward for all of our students, whether together or apart. More broadly, we request that the CIAC Hockey Committee and Co-op Committee take a close look and utilize the evidence provided herein (and based on data found directly on the CIAC website) to develop a formula that takes into better account the unique variables Connecticut high school hockey programs face. Ultimately, if participation is truly a central tenant of the CIAC, there must be a place for co-op programs who can demonstrate that numbers go slightly higher because they consistently give opportunities to non-varsity players. The alternative, as demonstrated in our case, would be a small varsity program at one school, with no jv opportunities and struggling to stay in place. Meanwhile, the second school would be left without a team, or with greater logistical issues with cost, distance, and transportation—and either a much diminished, or no jv opportunity.

## Co-op Participation by sport in the CIAC: Clearly, hockey is different.

The *number* of hockey co-ops and the percentage of hockey programs that *operate* in co-ops far exceed those of other sports. There are a many reasons for this. Clearly, individual schools face a variety of circumstances and variables in their efforts to provide hockey programs. We need a mechanism that recognizes and accommodates this reality, and that allows well-intended programs the flexibility to offer appropriately competitive programs and more broad access to the sport at the same time.

### Percentage of Boys Programs in Co-ops, By Sport

	<b>Programs</b>	<b>In Co-ops</b>	<b>in Co-ops</b>	<b>Participating</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>Participating</b>	<b># of Programs</b>	<b>% of Programs</b>	<b>Schools</b>
Ice Hockey	56	22	<b>39%</b>	107
Football	142	19	<b>13%</b>	171
Swimming	114	15	<b>13%</b>	135
Lacrosse	95	5	<b>5%</b>	100
Wrestling	133	4	<b>3%</b>	139
Baseball	178	4	<b>2%</b>	182
Tennis	143	3	<b>2%</b>	146
Soccer	177	2	<b>1%</b>	181
Basketball	182	0	<b>0%</b>	182
Outdoor Track	180	0	<b>0%</b>	180
Cross Country	165	0	<b>0%</b>	165
Golf	164	0	<b>0%</b>	164
Indoor Track	152	0	<b>0%</b>	152
Volleyball	40	0	<b>0%</b>	40

Source: CIAC website

**2017-18 ICE HOCKEY CO-OPS BY COMBINED ENROLLMENT AND JV INVOLVEMENT**

	<b>Comb. Enrollment.</b>	<b># Schools</b>	<b>Co-op Schools</b>	<b>JV Team</b>	<b># JV games 2017-18</b>
1	5662	8	Fitch, East Lyme, Griswold, Hale Ray, Ledyard, Stonington, Waterford, Wheeler	No	
2	5218	6	NFA, Bacon, ST. B, Killingly, Lyman, Montville	No	
3	4768	3	Brookfield, Bethel, Danbury	Yes	3 + jv tourney
4	4278	4	Newington, Berlin, Manchester, Cromwell	No	
5	4106	4	Farmington, Avon, Lewis Mills, Windsor	No	
6	3903	2	Westhill-Stamford	No	
7	3816	4	Wethersfield, Middletown, Plainfield, Rocky Hill.	Yes	6 + jamb
8	3450	2	Hall-Southington	No	
9	3097	2	Norwalk-McMahon	No	
10	2996	2	Fairfield Warde & Fairfield Ludlowe	Yes	4
11	2618	4	Bolton, Coventry, Rockville, RHAM	Yes	7 (1 year)
12	2551	3	Jonathan Law, Foran, Platt Tech	Yes	14
13	2226	3	Lyman Hall, Coginchaug, Haddam Killingworth	Yes	1 + jamb
14	2176	3	Enfield, East Granby, Stafford	No	
15	2112	4	East Haven, East Hampton, Old Lyme & Old Saybrook	No	
16	2054	2	Watertown-Pomperaug	No	
<b>17</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>E.O. Smith-Tolland</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>10</b>
18	1855	3	Suffield, Granby, Windsor Locks	Yes	16
19	1851	4	Shepaug, Litchfield, Nonnewaug, Thomaston	No	
20	1695	3	Housatonic, Northwestern, Wamago	No	
21	1548	3	Ellington, East Windsor, Somers	No	
22	1313	2	New Fairfield-Immaculate	Yes	10

Source: EdSight (Conn. Dept of Ed) 2016-17 Data

**Average Combined**

**Enrollment: 2966**

***EOS-Tolland enrollment is 65% of the average total co-op enrollment***

(See narrative on next page)

A review of the table on the previous page shows that of the 22 cooperative teams, E.O. Smith-Tolland is 17th overall in combined student enrollment, meaning we are drawing from far fewer students than other co-op programs. In fact, our combined enrollment is 65% of the average combined enrollment of all other cooperative teams with an average pool of students in excess of 2,966, opposed to our 1,925. Yet, despite our smaller combined enrollment, we consistently offer a ten game junior varsity schedule, which puts us in the company of just three of the other 21 co-op programs. Clearly, our commitment to the jv level athlete drives our overall participation numbers higher than other “varsity only” co-ops that pull from larger combined populations. The fact is we are providing consistent, comprehensive access to the sport for a variety of kids in our schools. Northeastern Connecticut lacks facilities and access to hockey beyond high school programs adolescents. Once players age out of bantam level youth hockey after grade nine, there is no other hockey option for them in our area. In many areas, kids just “drift away” from the game when faced with a varsity only program. For years, we have worked hard to maintain access to the sport for *all* players as they go through high school:

In 2017-18, there were 34 players on the CIAC roster for The Bucks. While this number seems high, many of these players were inexperienced or developmental, lacking fundamental skills. Others were just young, freshmen or sophomores who would sit on the bench all season, or simply not come out for, a varsity only program, but who participated because we offered the jv opportunity. Keeping true to our core belief, we have always offered JV hockey for those student-athletes that would otherwise be cut from-- or never get the opportunity to compete in-- an independent varsity-only program.



The JV Bucks



Teagan Fransen

With no access to girls high school hockey in our area, and girls youth programs few and far between, the breadth of our program also allows us to offer a good hockey experience to girls. In 2017-18, we had a senior and a freshman. The senior completed her third year in our program. Though she rarely played in varsity contests, she enthusiastically dressed for each game. Meanwhile, she played in thirty jv games over three years. Every year, each high school team honors one senior with the Hobey Baker Character Award for commitment to team, and citizenship as an athlete and in the school and community. An outstanding teammate and highly involved student athlete, Teagan Fransen earned our 2017-18 Hobey Baker Award.

**Total E.O. Smith-Tolland Program Participation Numbers By Year**

Year	E.O. Smith	Tolland	Windham	Total
2005-06	6	8	4	18
2006-07	6	17	7	30
2007-08	8	20	5	33
2008-09	10	20	5	35
2009-10	10	16	4	30
2010-11	10	14	3	27
2011-12	14	16	1	31
2012-13	15	21	0	36
2013-14	12	16		28
2014-15	12	16		28
2015-16	18	8		26
2016-17	18	10		28
2017-18	24	10		34
			<b>Average</b>	<b>29.5</b>

As this table demonstrates, year over year neither Tolland nor E.O. Smith have the numbers to realistically support, or sustain, independent hockey programs. In fact, only in the past three years have E.O. Smith players out-numbered Tolland players. The above table demonstrates consistency in numbers over time, with some bubbles and anomalies. While our overall numbers have spiked every few years, our co-op has always remained intact--which has allowed us to run a stable, consistent program for a wide variety of student athletes. In 2008-2009 we had 35 on the roster and in 2012-2013, 36. This past season we had 34. The major difference is that Tolland players out-numbered the E.O. players in those earlier seasons.

Clearly, the 24 players in 2017-2018 are an anomaly and represent a bubble cohort. In no other year have we had more than 18 players from E.O. Smith. While we expect a similar number next year, in coming years, all indications point toward downward pressure on numbers. Smaller youth hockey numbers, declining school enrollments, and the potential for one of E.O. Smith's sending towns, Columbia, to send their students to RHAM High School rather than E.O. Smith could decrease E.O. Smith enrollment by nearly 400 students.

Also important to consider is that we do not discourage or turn away inexperienced players. In fact, whether it's 26 players or 34 players, we always offer JV level for kids. Most co-ops do not. It is this fact that puts our numbers higher than other co-ops, as demonstrated by the chart on the next page.

### Number on Varsity Roster by School and Year

					Total Varsity	JV Only	Total Participation
		E.O. Smith	Tolland	Windham			
2005-06		6	8	4	18	0	18
2006-07		4	13	5	22	8	30
2007-08		3	16	4	23	10	33
2008-09		5	12	4	21	14	35
2009-10		6	12	3	21	9	30
2010-11		9	14	3	26	1	27
2011-12		8	12	1	21	10	31
2012-13		11	13	0	24	12	36
2013-14		11	13		24	4	28
2014-15		10	15		25	3	28
2015-16		15	9		24	2	26
2016-17		15	9		24	4	28
2017-18		14	8		22	12	34
				<b>Avg.</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>88</b>	

This chart shows our varsity and junior varsity participation levels over the past thirteen years--the tenure of our current head coach. (Year by year rosters can be provided upon request). As indicated, an average of seven players each year play jv hockey exclusively. Another 23 spend some or all of the time as varsity players. In many cases, younger or less developed players have the opportunity to dress for varsity games while getting most of their actual competitive time at the jv level. ***Varsity player numbers are right in line with the many co-op programs in Connecticut who do not offer jv hockey.***

Last season, twelve of our players were able to have a fulfilling hockey season without ever being on our varsity roster. It is our contention that without a weekly jv game to motivate them, most of these players would not participate. Who wants to practice four nights a week and never play a game? Without these players, our co-op would be “safe” within state co-op guidelines—like many other co-ops who do not offer jv-- but we would be leaving kids at home. Ending the Co-op, consequently, would eliminate jv hockey and decrease participation rates for the sport. It would also mean one less jv opponent for the few programs that offer JV. Again, we believe in the power of sports at all levels for kids--and we have demonstrated this for years.

**Varsity Performance and JV Activity by Year**

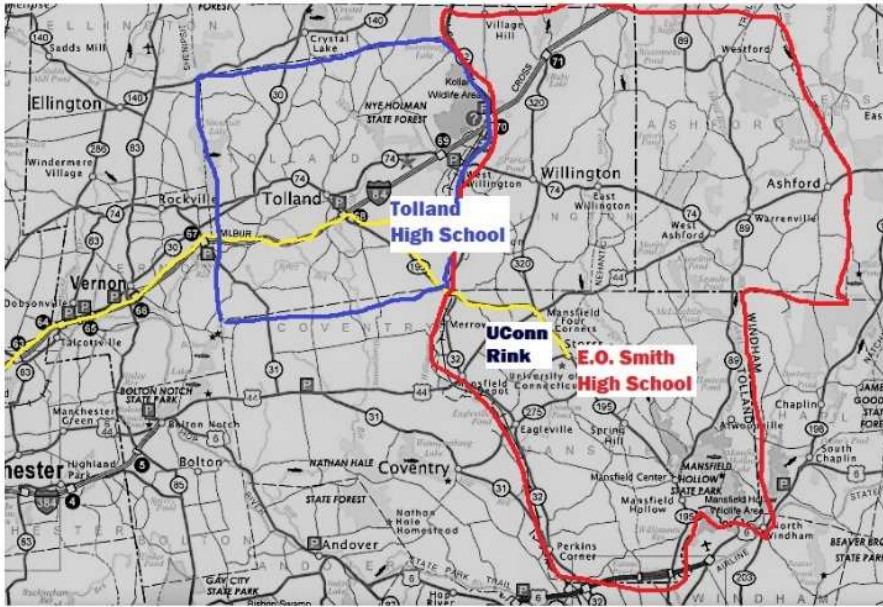
	<b>Wins</b>	<b>Losses</b>	<b>Ties</b>	<b>Tournament</b>	<b>JV Games</b>
2005-06	7	13	0		5
2006-07	7	13			7
2007-08	7	12	1		13
2008-09	7	12	2	D3 first round	8
2009-10	12	10	1	D3 quarters	8
2010-11	6	12	2		10
2011-12	7	13			10
2012-13	11	9	1	D3 quarters	10
2013-14	17	7	1	D3 Finals	8
2014-15	23	3		D3 Champions	10
2015-16	15	8	1	D2 quarters	9
2016-17	12	10		D2 first rnd	10
2017-18	9	12	1	D2 first rnd	10
	<b>Wins</b>	<b>Losses</b>	<b>Ties</b>		<b>JV games</b>
	<b>140</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>118</b>

The chart above demonstrates that our co-op does not create an unfair advantage. In fact, we do not have a competitive advantage in any capacity. In ice hockey, the purpose and function of CIAC divisional placements is to ensure appropriate competitive leveling. As shown above, over three seasons from 2013-2015, The Bucks performed well in division 3, eventually winning the D3 title. Consequently, in 2015 we were moved up to division 2, where we have remained. Notice our overall wins and losses in bold at the bottom of the chart. In the past 13 years, across both divisions, our win/loss percentage is .505, almost dead-average in the CIAC. In line with our belief in promoting athletics, the highlight here isn't our varsity record, but the fact that we have provided a steady varsity hockey program while also offering **118 jv games** for kids who would not otherwise have had a place to play hockey games; AND will not have the opportunity to play high school hockey if this co-op disbands.

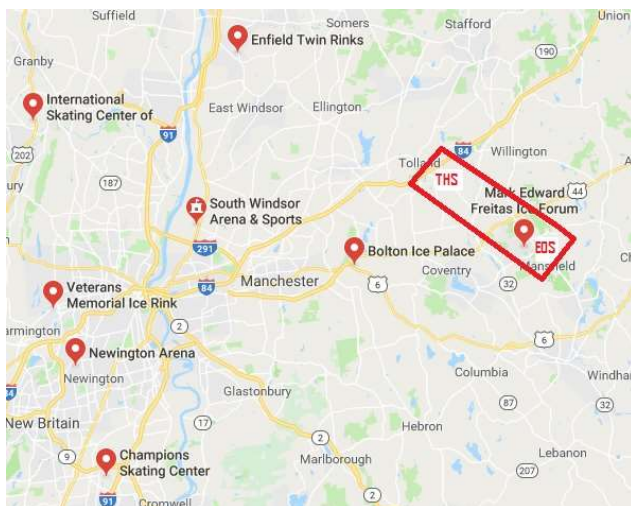


CCC South					CCC South Goals	
Team	Win	Loss	Tie	Points	GF	GA
Enfield/East Granby/Stafford	8	2	0	16	34	15
Hall/Southington	6	3	1	13	31	17
<b>EO Smith/Tolland</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>
Newington/Berlin/Manchester/Cromwell	5	5	0	10	25	25
Wethersfield/Middletown/Rocky Hill/Plainville	4	5	1	9	26	22
Boton/Coventry/Rockville/RHAM	1	9	0	2	13	48

Within our own conference, E.O. Smith-Tolland enjoys no competitive advantage, either. In nineteen seasons since E.O. Smith joined the CCC in 2000, our hockey program has won a total of two division titles. Our co-op program also fits the profile of the league we play in. Each member of our six-team league is part of a co-op program. Together, we proudly provide access to high school hockey for students from 17 schools. Our program represents just two of those schools, and of the six programs draws from the smallest combined student population. In 2017-18, our team won 5 games, and lost 5.



This co-op makes efficient geographic sense for both of our neighboring schools--the two Eastern-most CCC Schools. Our varsity and JV game buses (bus route in yellow) originate at E.O. Smith High School. Fifteen minutes later, the bus arrives in Tolland and picks up Tolland players. It is a direct path from E.O. Smith, through Tolland, and on to I-84, the Hartford area, and points west and south. On the way home, the path is followed in reverse. Moving to another co-op would create significant transportation and supervision issues and expenses for Tolland.



The only two rinks in our geographic region are UConn and Bolton Ice Palace. Both rinks operate full schedules in the winter months. Bolton Ice Palace hosts the Bolton-Coventry-Rockville-RHAM co-op. That co-op reports that it is currently playing near capacity with a four-school co-op. It also supports the continuation of ours. Not only are we CCC South partners, but we work together to provide hockey to players exiting our mutual feeder programs. Last season, we played three JV games. Travel to another rink is inefficient and unrealistic for Tolland and its student athletes.

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