



**THE OFFICE OF  
STATE TREASURER  
DENISE L. NAPIER**

---

# **NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

## **CHET Challenges Connecticut Students to Dream Big!**

### *Competition Inspires Creative Thinking about College*

CHET, Connecticut's 529 College Savings Program, has launched the 2010 CHET Dream Big! Competition, a drawing and writing contest aimed at students in grades K-5 throughout Connecticut. The CHET Dream Big! Competition is designed to inspire students' artistic expression in a way that is educational and motivates them to "dream big" about their future careers after college.

The Competition also provides an opportunity for CHET (Connecticut Higher Education Trust) to emphasize to students and their families that it is never too soon to start saving for college and to educate them about savings strategies, particularly in a difficult economic climate.



School districts and principals in the state's eight counties have been contacted announcing the Competition which is running from February 8, 2010 through April 5, 2010. All entries for the CHET Dream Big! Competition must be postmarked by April 5, 2010 and received by April 10, 2010 and is sponsored by the State of Connecticut Treasurer's Office, and CHET's program manager, TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc.

"Our goal in promoting the CHET Dream Big! Competition is to raise public awareness about the need to maintain confidence in the value of long term investing," said Connecticut State Treasurer Denise Nappier, who serves as trustee for CHET. "Even during these challenging economic times, families should consider opening a CHET account or continue to contribute to their CHET accounts. In that way, parents and guardians demonstrate to children that being a patient investor can help achieve financial success."

"On that point, according to a national survey of state-sponsored 529 college savings plans, as conducted by College Savings Plans Network (CSPN), the size of 529 assets and number of accounts continued to grow throughout the 2008 – 2009 period of market turmoil and economic stress. That CHET's average account balance of \$17,660, greater than the national average of \$11,751, is one positive indication of our commitment to providing an affordable and accessible program for Connecticut families," said Nappier.

The CHET Dream Big! Competition helps families get started in talking about college by asking children in grades K through one and grades two and three to draw a picture that represents the answer to the question, "What do I want to do after I go to college?". Students in grades four and five are asked to write an essay explaining, "How will I change the world after I go to college?". An award ceremony will be held in May, where friends and family will be invited to join the celebration. "The importance of investing early for future higher education expenses is immense," said Nappier. "The greatest potential to prepare for college expenses occurs when a family starts early and continues to invest in a child's future over time."

Last year's contest was a huge success generating more than 1,800 entries. Due to this positive response, the 2010 CHET Dream Big! Competition is increasing the number of prizes from 20 County winners and three Statewide winners to 96 County winners and 48 Merit winners, with the successful students receiving prizes of \$250 or \$50, respectively. Additionally, this year we will provide ten teachers, whose students submit the most entries, a \$50 OfficeMax® gift card to help purchase classroom supplies.

For official contest rules and more information, or to receive CHET Dream Big! materials, schools and parents are asked to call (860) 305-4605 or visit [www.chetdreambig.com](http://www.chetdreambig.com). The CHET Dream Big! Competition is sponsored by the State of Connecticut Treasurer's Office, TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc. and CHET. **THERE IS NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN THE 2010 CHET CHALLENGE DREAM BIG! COMPETITION.**

The CHET 529 college savings plan, a tax advantaged investment program, was established in 1997, and has grown to more than \$1.14 billion in assets and now represents more than 88,000 individual accounts (October 31, 2009). Connecticut State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier serves as Trustee of CHET and has been granted the authority to oversee the program. TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc. (TFI) serves as Program Manager for CHET. TFI is part of the TIAA-CREF group of companies. TIAA-CREF has been providing financial services and investment experience for 90 years. Their combined assets under management equate to approximately \$402 billion (as of September 30, 2009) and they are best known as the leading provider of retirement services in the academic, research, medical and cultural fields. For more information about CHET, visit [www.aboutchet.com](http://www.aboutchet.com), or call the customer service center at 866-314-3939.

\*\*\*