

Series: 2005-2006

Circular Letter: C-14

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education

DATE: May 22, 2006

SUBJECT: Highlights of the 2006 Regular Session of the Connecticut General Assembly

The Connecticut General Assembly has now completed its 2006 Regular Session. Despite the fact that this was a short, three-month session, a number of bills concerning education were enacted. Below are highlights of the most important bills. Please note that the Governor has signed only those bills that are noted as having been signed. Additionally, some of the bills have not yet been assigned public act numbers. For those bills for which a public act number has been assigned, we have included a link to the public act (hold 'control' and click on the public act title). For those bills for which a public act number has not yet been assigned, we will be posting them on the Department of Education's website under "Education Bills: 2006" at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/legal/index.htm> as soon as the public acts are available.

As in the past, we will provide you with a more detailed and comprehensive summary of all of the 2006 education legislation this summer. Please remember that the **Back-to-School Meeting** for superintendents has been scheduled for **August 17, 2006.**

2006 HIGHLIGHTS

AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF BUDGETED STATE AGENCIES WITH RESPECT TO THE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES OF SUCH AGENCIES (House Bill 5845, as amended; *signed by the Governor May 7, 2006*)

For 2006-07 **general fund appropriations (including surpluses) for education grants** will increase by approximately \$74M, a 3.3 percent increase. There are increases for special education excess cost-student based (\$20M), priority school districts (\$15.8M, with about \$7.8M allocated for school readiness programs), charter schools (\$7.4M, with \$2.3M for two new charter schools to begin operations and the balance for an increase in the state's per pupil contribution and enrollment growth), and magnet school transportation (\$500K).

Additionally, there is funding for (1) new grant initiatives for school nutrition (\$3M) and after-school programs (\$3M), (2) the establishment of a program to promote Connecticut agriculture and foods to children, and (3) three pilot programs to address some of the state's employment needs. The pilot programs are described below under "An Act Concerning Jobs for the Twenty-First Century." Grant caps will continue for the transportation, excess cost-student based, adult education, health services and regional educational service center (RESC) lease grants.

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE PROVISIONS OF THE BUDGET CONCERNING EDUCATION. (Public Act 06-135) This act makes **statutory changes to implement the budget**, above, and amends the **priority school district reading program** to (1) shift the focus of the program from grades 4 and 6 to grades 1 to 3, inclusive, and enhance it in these early elementary grades, (2) require that plans for intensive early intervention reading provide for on-site teacher training and coaching in the implementation of research-based reading instruction, and (3) provide funding for an early reading success program coordinator.

AN ACT CONCERNING JOBS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. (Public Act 06-83; *signed by the Governor May 1, 2006*) This act establishes the following three **pilot programs**: (1) a high school mathematics and science challenge program, for which \$350K has been appropriated; (2) a matching grant program for schools participating in externally funded programs that provide supplemental mathematics and science programming and instruction to certain students in grades 8 to 10, inclusive, for which \$125K has been appropriated; and (3) a program to provide industry-based job shadowing and internship experiences to high school students and externship experiences to teachers, for which \$125K has been appropriated.

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTHY FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN SCHOOLS. (Public Act 06-63) This act provides that boards of education may permit at their schools the sale to students from any source of only the **beverages** that are listed in the legislation. Portion sizes of beverages other than water that are offered for sale may not exceed 12 ounces. However, boards of education may permit the sale to students of beverages that are not listed provided (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend, (2) the sale is at the location of the event, and (3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

Also, if a school district that participates in the National School Lunch Program certifies in its annual application for school lunch funding that all **food items** made available for sale to students in its schools meet nutrition standards published annually by the Department of Education, and are not exempted from those standards, it will be eligible to receive an additional ten cents for each lunch served in the prior school year. However, boards of education certifying compliance with the nutrition standards may exclude from such certification the sale to students of food items that do not meet the standards provided (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend, (2) the sale is at the location of the event, and (3) the food is not sold from a vending machine or school store.

AN ACT PROMOTING THE PHYSICAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS. (Public Act 06-44; *signed by the Governor May 8, 2006*) This act requires the Department of Education to develop **guidelines** for addressing the physical health needs of students in a comprehensive manner and make the guidelines available to boards of education. Boards of education may establish coordinated and comprehensive plans to address the physical health needs of students and may base these plans on the Department’s guidelines.

AN ACT CONCERNING TESTING START TIMES. (Public Act 06-8; *signed by the Governor April 21, 2006*) This act repeals the statute that prohibited the administration before 9:00 a.m. of examinations required by state or federal law for students in grades seven to twelve, inclusive. In other words, these tests may now be administered before 9:00 a.m.

AN ACT CONCERNING BULLYING POLICIES IN SCHOOLS AND NOTICES SENT TO PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIANS. (Public Act 06-115) This act expands the statutory provisions concerning **bullying policies** that boards of education must develop and use to address the existence of bullying in schools. The act adds that the policies must (1) require students to be notified annually of the process by which they may make anonymous reports of bullying to teachers and school administrators and (2) direct the development of case-by-case interventions, such as counseling and discipline, to address repeated incidents of bullying. The act also amends the definition of bullying to include overt acts by a student or group of students directed against another student with the intent to harass that student and overt acts of bullying that occur on a school bus. Additionally, it provides that bullying policies may include provisions addressing bullying outside of the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student’s academic performance or safety in school.

This act also requires districts to provide, to the parent or legal guardian with whom a student does not primarily reside, all **school notices** that are provided to the parent with whom the student primarily resides.

AN ACT CONCERNING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT REPORTING IN SCHOOL PROFILES. (Public Act 06-167) This act requires superintendents to report information about parental involvement in schools in the narrative portion of the strategic school profile report.

AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND OTHER SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROVISIONS. (Public Act 06-158) This act authorizes the Commissioner of Education to enter into **grant commitments** for identified school construction projects, including previously authorized projects that have changed substantially in scope or cost.

The act also makes a number of **changes to the school construction statutes** including, but not limited to, (1) specifying rules for the reimbursement of the costs of “turn-key” projects, (2) requiring that reports on the condition of school facilities be submitted biennially rather than annually, (3) limiting state reimbursement for change orders and the number of times a project can be submitted to the General Assembly for an increase in costs, (4) establishing standards for architectural services contracts used on state-reimbursed school

projects, (5) extending the design-build pilot program for two more years, and (6) requiring the Department of Education to develop a series of standard school construction contracts which may be used by towns and regional boards of education.

(Note: The Office of School Facilities will soon be sending an e-mail providing greater detail about these school construction changes.)

AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES. (Substitute House Bill 5758, as amended) This bill makes a number of changes to the education statutes including, but not limited to:

(1) requiring **Unified School District #1** within the Department of Correction to send the education records of a **student** transferring out of that district to the student's new school district, which must credit the student for all instruction received in the unified school district within 30 days of receiving the records;

(2) providing for **student teaching** in other countries;

(3) providing for **durational shortage area permits** to be issued to individuals who are qualified graduates of a national corps of teachers' training program and who will teach in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven;

(4) permitting **regional school districts** to establish reserve funds for capital and nonrecurring expenditures and for accrued liabilities for employee sick leave and severance benefits;

(5) requiring boards of education to participate in **national or international measures of student progress** as may be determined by the Commissioner of Education;

(6) providing that a board of education can only **reemploy a retired teacher** in a subject shortage area when no other qualified candidate is available; and

(7) requiring the Department of Education to encourage the use of **regional educational service centers** as providers of goods and services for boards of education.

AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION. (Public Act 06-18; *signed by the Governor May 2, 2006*) This act conforms state law with the recently reauthorized federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

We hope that this is helpful. If you have questions about the budget, please contact the Department's Chief Financial Officer, Brian Mahoney, at brian.mahoney@ct.gov or (860) 713-6464. All other questions should be directed to Katherine Nicoletti, Esq., at katherine.nicoletti@ct.gov or (860) 713-6520.