

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**The Legislation and Policy Development Committee**

Wednesday, June 11, 2025 - 2:30 p.m.

State Office Building, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut

Conference Room: **Plaza North, Meeting Room E**

**Minutes**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee [LPDC] met in person on June 11, 2025.

**I. Call to Order**

Committee Chair Bonnie E. Burr called the meeting to order at 2:40. In addition to Ms. Burr, also present at the meeting were Committee Members Seth D. Zimmerman and Gladys B. Labas, as well as State Board Vice Chair Erin Benham and State Board student member Sreenidi Bala. Joining the Board members from the CSDE were: Charles Hewes, Deputy Commissioner; John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Child Nutrition and Family Services; and Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs.

**Presenter:** John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Child Nutrition and Family Services

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Zimmerman moved, and Dr. Labas seconded, approval of the April 1, 2025, and April 2, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. Review and Discussion: School Security and Safety Plans**

John Frassinelli noted that districts and schools are required to implement school safety plans and that if the CSDE does not receive these plans, the CSDE will contact districts and schools and ask for their status. The CSDE works with Connecticut's Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection [DESPP], primarily the emergency services division, on these safety plans, which must be submitted every July 1, 2025, and must detail the number and frequency of school crisis drills.

Private, non-profit schools do not have to submit these plans. Ms. Burr raised concerns about private schools not having such plans and asked whether the CSDE inquires as to whether private schools have coordinated with their local EMS officials. Mr. Frassinelli noted that there are five regional emergency services areas in Connecticut, and Ms. Burr asked whether the CSDE can take steps to confirm that private schools are liaising with their local emergency services.

Ms. Benham notes that State Representative Leeper was pushing for more drills, but the bill was not acted on. Mr. Frassinelli added that DESPP would like as many drills as possible as that would enhance school response times and measures if an actual situation actually arises. At the same time, Mr. Frassinelli explained that the national association of school psychologists has warned that these drills can traumatize students. Consequently, there have been suggestions that districts advise parents of these drills in advance

so if their children are particularly sensitive to trauma, they can be held out of school. Additionally, it has been suggested that these drills not include police as part of the scenario.

Attorney McKeon noted that while private schools are not covered under the statute, the public-school mandate establishes a standard of care of which -- from a strict civil-liability perspective -- private schools need to be aware and comply with. Additionally, some private schools have their own security forces.

Mr. Frassinelli stated that schools have to conduct two fire drills and one crisis drill each school year, and the logs of these three drills have to be submitted by July 1 of each year. The CSDE is also asking for additional information as to whether any students were traumatized by it.

There was a lengthy discussion of ICE and how schools deal with potential visits to the school. The CSDE and Office of the Governor previously issued guidance on this issue. Mr. Frassinelli then began a more detailed discussion of the various aspects of school security and safety plans, and Ms. Bala added to that by recounting what she had experienced at her high school.

Committee member raised various questions, including how school volunteers are made aware of the safety plans, and whether they are provided guidance as to where they need to go and what they need to do with particular student populations in specific situations. Ms. Bala asked whether there are provisions for English-language learners so that they can better understand between drills and real situation. John notes that law enforcement officials monitor the drills for effectiveness and do not want students and staff to know what is a drill and what is not as they want the same response in both situations.

In concluding his discussion, Mr. Frassinelli noted the various forms of crisis drills – including lockdown, active shooter, toxic chemical spill – adding that as the most vulnerable access to schools is the loading dock near the cafeteria, school cafeteria staff have also been trained. Mr. Frassinelli indicated that he is going to reach out to discuss possible private school coverage, adding that it would be optimal to share the best parts of public-school plans with private schools.

Mr. Frassinelli then discussed student suicide intervention protocols, noting that the CSDE was charged a couple of years ago with conducting a suicide assessment. The CSDE uses the Columbia Suicide Rating Scale and is also looking into other possible assessment tools. Districts have long been required to have student suicide policies in place. Ms. Burr asked whether the CSDE has numbers of students who seek counseling. Although the CSDE does not have such numbers, Mr. Frassinelli affirmed that students will seek help. Ms. Benham referenced the efficacy of health care centers in schools, citing Killingly, and Mr. Frassinelli noted the importance of having adults with whom students can feel safe and comfortable.

Mr. Frassinelli shared the fact that DPH has a grant working with five districts to enhance their suicide policies. Ms. Bala observed that over the summer, the in-school counseling students receive generally does not continue. Mr. Frassinelli, however, responded that although the CSDE had received \$8,000,000 three years earlier for districts to use to provide summer mental health assistance, the CSDE “couldn’t give it away.” More specifically, the money was not fully drawn down by districts, and the CSDE essentially ended up giving them stipends. Ultimately, the programs were not limited to behavioral health specialists, but also other activities for students. In closing, Mr. Frassinelli cited the “Handle With Care” program, in which the police will notify school districts of trauma a student has experienced so that the school can offer the student assistance.

There being no further matters before the Committee, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded and pass unanimously. The meeting ended at 3:42.