



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Series: 2021-2022
Circular Letter: C-1

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner of Education

DATE: August 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Summary of Education-Related Legislation Enacted in the 2021 Regular Session and June Special Session of the Connecticut General Assembly

The Connecticut General Assembly has adjourned its 2021 Regular and Special Sessions. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is hereby providing you with a summary of the public acts passed during the regular session, and were signed by the Governor, that appear to be of applicability and interest to school districts.

In reviewing this summary, please keep the following in mind:

1. This document does not describe every 2021 public act affecting the operation of a school district or provide every detail of the summarized acts. This is a summary of new legislation that was being tracked by the Department, therefore, each superintendent or designated district leader should review the actual text of any act that may affect their district.
2. If you are viewing this document electronically, clicking the title of the act in the table of contents page will bring you to that section of the document, clicking the Public Act title appearing above each summary in the body of this report will allow you to view the full language of that act.
3. The summaries are organized by Public Act number.
4. Following the table of contents is a summary of each enacted bill, including the effective date. In some cases where only portions of a public act relate to education, only those sections of the act have been included in this summary.

If you have any questions, please contact Laura J. Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, at 860-713-6493 or laura.stefon@ct.gov.

2021 Public Acts Affecting Education

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PA 21-144 SB 145	<u>An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Department Of Education</u>	8-9
PA 21-168 HB 6517	<u>An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Task Force To Analyze The Implementation Of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction And Training</u>	9-10
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PA 21-199 SB 1032	<u>An Act Concerning Various Revisions To The Education Statutes</u>	11-12
PA 21-1 June Special Session SB 1201	<u>An Act Concerning Responsible And Equitable Regulation Of Adult-Use Cannabis</u>	12-13
PA 21-2 June Special Session SB 1202	<u>An Act Concerning Provisions Related To Revenue And Other Items To Implement The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30</u>	13-16

[An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor, And Making Deficiency And Additional Appropriations For The Fiscal Year Ending June Thirtieth, 2021](#)

This bill makes various changes to the budget for CSDE.

**Please see the [Office of Fiscal Analysis Report](#) for a complete summarization of this bill.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various

[An Act Establishing The Open Choice Vouchers Pilot Program](#)

The bill requires the Department of Housing (DOH) to establish the Open Choice Voucher Pilot Program to allow families to move into the communities within which their child is being educated through the State's Open Choice Program. The program is intended to utilize twenty existing vouchers under the state's rental assistance program (RAP) as they become available from regular turnover.

EFFECTIVE DATE: From Passage

[An Act Concerning Immunizations](#)

This bill eliminates the religious exemption from immunization requirements for individuals attending (1) public and private schools and institutions of higher education; and (2) childcare centers and group and family day care homes. The bill retains the existing exemption for those students enrolled in grades kindergarten or higher who submitted a religious exemption prior to the bill's passage. It continues the exemption for these students if they transfer to another public or private school in the state (i.e., a primary or secondary school). Under the bill, individuals with prior religious exemptions who are enrolled in pre-kindergarten or other preschool programs generally must comply with immunization requirements by September 1, 2022, or within 14 days after transferring to a different public or private program, whichever is later. However, the bill allows these children to extend the timeframe within which they must comply with the immunization requirements if they present a written declaration from the child's physician, physician assistant (PA), or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) that an alternative immunization schedule is recommended. The bill also retains current law's medical exemption from these immunization requirements for individuals who can document that the immunization is medically contraindicated. CSDE has issued [guidance](#) on this legislation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: From Passage

[An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access To Mental, Behavioral And Physical Health Care In Response To The Pandemic](#)

This bill includes various provisions related to racial disparities in public health, health care services, pandemic preparedness, and other related topics. As it relates to education, this bill establishes a working group related to the expansion of services by school-based health centers.

**Please see the [Office of Legislative Research Report](#) for a complete summarization of this bill.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various

An Act Concerning Social Equity And The Health, Safety And Education Of Children

This bill makes various changes to laws affecting children and pupils and related entities, such as the Departments of Children and Families (DCF), Education (CSDE), Public Health (DPH); the Office of Early Childhood (OEC); and local and regional boards of education. Several sections of this bill pertain to local and regional boards of education and/or the CSDE, including but not limited to:

§§ 11-13 – pertain to social-emotional learning, and require, starting with the 2021-2022 school year and every school year thereafter, for local and regional boards of education to integrate the principles and practices of social-emotional learning throughout the components of its district’s professional development programs. Current law requires each board to make available, at no cost, at least 18 hours of individual and small group professional development each school year for certified employees. The bill also requires each board of education of each local or regional school district, in its statement of goals, to include goals for integrating principles and practices of social-emotional learning in the district’s professional development programs. By law, local and regional boards of education must establish professional development and evaluation committees to, among other things, develop, evaluate, and annually update the district’s professional development plan for certified district employees (CGA § 10-220a). The bill requires each board’s professional development and evaluation committee to consider student priorities and needs related to student social-emotional learning and student academic outcomes when developing, evaluating, and annually updating a district’s professional development program.

§14 – pertains to remote parent-teacher conferences and requires each school district, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year and every school year after that, in their policies and procedures encouraging parent-teacher cooperation, to:

1. offer parents the option of attending any parent-teacher conference by telephone, video conference, or other conferencing platform (i.e., remotely);
2. conduct (a) one parent-teacher conference, in addition to the two per year required under current law, during a period when the district provides virtual learning for more than three consecutive weeks, and (b) one additional parent-teacher conference every six months after that if sessions continue to be provided virtually;
3. provide a copy of the document developed pursuant to section 15 (see below) to the parent prior to the parent teacher conference; and
4. request from each student’s parent the name and contact information of an emergency contact person who may be contacted if the parent cannot be reached to schedule a parent-teacher conference required if the district is providing virtual learning.

Under the bill, if, after three attempts, a teacher is unable to contact a student’s parent in order to schedule a parent-teacher conference, he or she must report this inability to the school principal, school counselor, or other school administrator designated by the local or regional board of education. The principal, counselor, or administrator must contact the student’s emergency contact to determine the student and family’s health and safety.

§15 – relates to the creation of a community resources document by the CSDE. The bill requires CSDE, by December 1, 2021, to develop and annually update a document for local and regional boards of education that provides information on educational, safety, mental health, and food insecurity resources and programs available for students and their families. The document must include:

1. providers of such resources and programs, including, but not limited to, the CSDE, DCF, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the United Way of Connecticut, and local food banks;
2. descriptions of relevant resources and programs each provider offers, including any program that provides laptop computers, public Internet access, or home Internet service to students;
3. each provider's, resource's, and program's contact information; and
4. relevant websites. CSDE must annually electronically distribute the document to each local and regional board of education.

§16-18 – pertain to virtual learning and were amended in the [implementer bill](#).

§19 - requires, for the 2021-2022 school year and every school year after that, local or regional boards of education to allow any student enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12, to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, on which a student is not required to attend school. However, a student cannot take these mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

§20 - requires local or regional boards of education, starting with the 2021-2022 school year, and each school year after that, to include the following in policies or procedures for collecting unpaid school meal charges applicable to employees and third-party vendors who provide school meals:

1. a prohibition on publicly identifying or shaming a child for any unpaid meal charges, by (a) delaying or refusing to serve a meal to the child, (b) designating a specific meal for the child, or (c) taking any disciplinary action against the child;
2. a declaration of a child's right to purchase one meal (which may exclude a la carte items) for any school breakfast, lunch, or other feeding; and
3. a procedure for communicating with parents or guardians about collecting a child's unpaid meal charges, including (a) information on local food pantries, (b) applications for free or reduced-price meals and the Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program, and (c) a link to the school district's website that lists any community services available to town residents.

If a child's unpaid meal charges equal or exceed the cost of 30 meals, the bill requires the local or regional school board to refer the child's parent or guardian to the board's local homeless education liaison. The bill also allows local or regional boards of education to accept gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private source to pay off unpaid meal charges.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various

**An Act Concerning The Enrollment Of Children Of Members Of The Armed Forces In Public Schools
And The Establishment Of A Purple Star School Program**

This bill requires local and regional boards of education to accept, as proof of residency for any child of an armed forces member who is seeking enrollment in a public school, the military orders directing the member to the state, or any other armed forces' documents indicating the member's transfer to the state. By law and under the bill, "armed forces" means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard when under federal service.

The bill also requires the State Board of Education (SBE), within available appropriations, to establish a Purple Star School Program to designate schools that provide specific support services, assistance, and initiatives for military-connected students and their families. Under the bill, a "military-connected student" is a public-school student who (1) is a dependent of a current or former armed forces member; or (2) was a dependent of a member killed in the line of duty.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

**An Act Concerning Education And Training In Exertional Heat Illness For Coaches, Parents, Guardians
And Students**

This bill requires any person with a State Board of Education (SBE) coaching permit who coaches intramural or interscholastic athletics beginning with the school year commencing July 1, 2022, to complete an exertional heat illness awareness education program. They must do this before beginning their coaching assignment for the season and then review the program annually before the start of each coaching season. It authorizes the SBE to revoke the permits of coaches who do not comply with the requirement.

The education program must be developed or approved by January 1, 2022, by the intramural and interscholastic athletics governing authority, which is the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC), in consultation with specified organizations. SBE must then publish the plan on its website.

In addition to the program, CIAC must also develop for school board use:

1. review materials on current and relevant exertional heat illness information annually, starting by October 1, 2022; and
2. a model exertional heat illness awareness plan, by January 1, 2022.

The bill also requires school boards to implement the model plan using written materials, videos, or online or in-person training. Starting with the 2022-23 school year, the bill requires school boards to prohibit a student athlete from participating in intramural or interscholastic athletics unless the student and his or her parent or guardian reads written materials, views online training or videos, or views the training materials or attends an in-person training. The parent or guardian must sign an athletic participation informed consent form issued by the school board that acknowledges compliance with the requirement.

Under the bill, an “exertional heat illness” means an illness resulting from engaging in physical activity in the heat, including heat cramps, heat syncope (i.e., a medical emergency characterized by sudden dizziness, feeling faint, and fainting), heat exhaustion, and heat stroke (i.e., neuropsychiatric impairment and a high body temperature, typically 105.8 degrees or higher).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

An Act Concerning Emergency Action Plans For Interscholastic And Intramural Athletic Events

This bill requires each local or regional school district and private schools to create and apply, starting with the school year beginning July 1, 2022, an emergency action plan to respond to serious and life-threatening sports-related injuries during interscholastic or intramural athletic events .

Under the bill, each plan must (1) have procedures to follow for when a student sustains a serious injury or illness while participating in an interscholastic or intramural athletic event; and (2) include certain components, such as the staff responsible for implementing the plan, the location of the event and equipment and supplies that may be available to assist in responding to an emergency, protocols for cardiac or respiratory emergencies, suspected concussions, traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injuries, and heat and cold related events. The bill requires the plan to be developed in consultation with local emergency medical services providers and allied health professionals. It must also be reviewed annually, updated as necessary, and annually rehearsed by the implementing staff.

The bill also specifies (1) staff qualifications related to the plan; (2) the method of plan distribution and posting; and (3) that a board of education or the supervisory agent of a private school may accept gifts, grants, or donations for the plan’s development.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions And Additions To The Education Statutes

This bill requires a number of actions related to social-emotional learning, including assessing students annually for social-emotional learning, developing a statewide social-emotional learning strategy, and developing social-emotional learning standards. The bill includes provisions on social-emotional learning and teacher professional development and school resource officer training. It also requires the state law regarding bullying in school to be reviewed for possible changes and modifies the membership of safe school climate committees.

The bill also makes various unrelated changes in the education statutes about (1) the topics for which a board of education can be petitioned to hold a public hearing; (2) in-school vision screening equipment; (3) a special education services and funding task force; (4) a plan for a statewide virtual school; and (5) acting superintendents’ probationary periods.

The bill was amended to add provisions about social-emotional learning and training (§§ 4-11), the School Paraeducator Advisory Council (§§ 12 & 13), safe school climate committee membership (§ 14), a statewide virtual school plan (§ 15), and acting superintendents’ probationary periods (§ 16). The amendment also changes the membership of the new special education task force, adjusts its reporting deadline, and adds to and clarifies the scope of its study (§ 3).

**Changes to the section of this bill pertaining to assessing students' social emotional learning were made in the [implementer bill](#).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various

An Act Requiring The Provision Of Information Concerning Children's Behavioral And Mental Health Resources In Hospital Emergency Departments And Schools

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), by December 1, 2021, to develop a document for each mental health region describing the behavioral and mental health evaluation and treatment resources available to children. DCF must do so in consultation with the Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council (BHPOC), the Mental Health and Addiction Services and Public Health departments, and DCF's Youth Suicide Advisory Board.

Under the bill, BHPOC must (1) distribute the documents electronically to each licensed hospital that has an emergency department and to each local and regional board of education; and (2) make them available on the council's website.

Starting by December 1, 2022, the bill requires DCF to annually review and update the documents as necessary. DCF must provide any updated documents to BHPOC, and the council must distribute and make them available in the manner described above.

The bill also requires hospital emergency departments, starting on January 1, 2022, to provide a copy of the applicable documents to the parents or guardians of each child upon the child's discharge from the emergency department.

It also requires each local and regional board of education to (1) distribute the applicable document to parents and guardians and certain students starting January 1, 2022; and (2) make the document available on its website by that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Passage, except the provisions on board of education distribution, which is effective July 1, 2021.

An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Department Of Education

This bill makes the following changes in the education statutes:

1. requires planning and placement teams (PPTs) for special education students to write transition services into individualized education programs (IEPs) when a child turns 14 years of age, or younger in the PPT determines it is appropriate (§ 1);
2. makes various changes to the bilingual education certificates and creates alternative methods by which candidates may fulfill the certificates' written competency requirement (§ 2);
3. requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2022, to approve guidelines for bilingual STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and humanities teaching certificate endorsements and establishes coursework eligibility requirements for secondary bilingual STEM and humanities teachers (§ 2);

4. removes the grade point average (GPA) requirement for the resident teacher certificate and broadens its eligibility pool (§ 3);
5. requires charter school governing councils and cooperative arrangements to have their requested criminal history records checks for school personnel conducted in accordance with the federal National Child Protection Act of 1992 and the federal Volunteers for Children Act of 1998, in addition to state law (§§ 4 & 5);
6. expands the means by which criminal history record checks for charter school governing council or management organization members and certain contractors may be conducted (§ 6);
7. allows the attorney general, on behalf of the State Department of Education (SDE), to bring a civil suit against an organization to recover misused state funds (§ 7);
8. clarifies the appointment process for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) superintendent (§ 8);
9. creates a new PPT process that must occur before a student receiving special education services enrolls in CTECS (§ 9); and
10. removes obsolete language from state law and repeals certain education reports and programs (§§ 10-12). The bill also makes conforming and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021, except the provisions on fingerprinting, criminal history records checks, and civil suits (§§ 4-7) take effect upon passage.

[An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Task Force To Analyze The Implementation Of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction And Training](#)

This bill makes the following changes in state laws governing teacher preparation programs, teacher certification, and elementary student reading proficiency assessments:

1. establishes an Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities (hereafter “the office”) in the State Department of Education (CSDE) to verify whether teacher preparation programs and teacher certification applicants comply with requirements in state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§§ 1-4);
2. bars the State Board of Education (SBE) from approving any teacher preparation programs, beginning September 1, 2022, until the office verifies that the program complies with state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§ 3);
3. requires CSDE to issue a teaching certificate to any level of applicant (initial, provisional, or professional), beginning September 1, 2023, if the office verifies that he or she has fulfilled certain literacy training and education requirements (§ 4);
4. allows applicants for certain teaching certification endorsements to substitute student teaching experience for supervised practicum hours (§ 5);

5. requires the office to provide guidance to higher education institutions and other teacher preparation program providers about how to verify whether practicum hour supervisors have obtained certain qualifications (§ 6);
6. requires CSDE to revise previously developed reading assessments for grades kindergarten through three to include new methodologies for measuring reading proficiency (§ 7);
7. allows CSDE to partner with a public college or university to establish a data center to guide the department and boards of education in the use and effectiveness of reading assessments (§ 7);
8. requires each local or regional board of education to develop a voluntary family history questionnaire to help identify students who are at risk of reading proficiency challenges (§ 8); and
9. requires CSDE to report to legislative committees about the (a) progress of the office's establishment and staffing; (b) results of the verification of teacher preparation programs' and teacher certificate applicants' compliance with state law; and (c) guidance given to boards of education about the administration of reading assessments (§§ 9 & 10).

The bill also makes various minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

[An Act Concerning The Recommendations Of The Juvenile Justice Policy And Oversight Committee](#)

This bill makes several changes affecting juvenile justice matters, including the education and treatment of children in the juvenile justice system. Concerning educating children, the bill requires:

1. the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create and implement a plan for an educational unit to improve educational and vocational outcomes for children who are incarcerated or in a juvenile justice facility (§§ 2 & 3);
2. the State Department of Education (CSDE), by August 1, 2021, to assemble a list of people who may serve as reentry coordinators to help obtain child records (§ 4);
3. local or regional boards of education to award diplomas to students educated at the DCF education unit and who meet certain requirements (§ 5);
4. the CSDE and DCF Commissioners to develop a system to standardize the conversion of transferred credits, which must allow for a determination whether the credits apply to graduation requirements within 30 days after a credit transfer occurs (§ 6); and
5. the transfer of student education records to occur within five days after receiving notice that a child transferred from education by DCF's education unit to a new school or state charter school, or vice versa (§ 7).

Regarding the treatment of children in the juvenile justice system, the bill:

1. raises the age of children subject to juvenile court delinquency jurisdiction from age seven to age 10 (§ 1);
2. requires the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to provide written notice to the child or the child's parents or guardians upon discharge from the supervision of the Superior Court, DCF or any other institution or agency to which the child was committed on the erasure of a child's police and court records, if certain conditions are met (§ 9);
3. requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) Commissioner to review and report on the department's use of chemical agents on anyone under age 18 in a juvenile detention center or correctional facility (§ 11);
4. requires the judicial branch to develop an implementation plan to securely house in its custody anyone under age 18 who is arrested and detained prior to sentencing or disposition (§ 13); and
5. generally allows information obtained about a child during a detention screening or assessment to be disclosed to CSSD (§ 14).

The bill establishes committees to study the (1) effects of, and possible alternatives to, student suspensions and expulsions (§ 8); and (2) telephone call rates and commissary needs of 18 to 21-year-olds incarcerated in DOC facilities (§ 10). It also requires a team to develop plans for mandatory prearrest diversion of low-risk children (§ 12).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various

[An Act Concerning Various Revisions To The Education Statutes](#)

This bill makes the following revisions in the education statutes:

1. creates a new reporting requirement for boards of education with schools or districts that decline to implement the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Lunch Program (§ 1);
2. requires local and regional boards of education to adopt a policy by July 1, 2022, for equitable identification of gifted and talented students that uses multiple identification methods that comply with State Department of Education (CSDE) guidelines (§ 2);
3. requires boards of education to create or revise a policy for student placement in advanced academic courses or programs that is not based exclusively on prior academic performance and that use of a student's prior academic performance rely on evidence-based indicators (§ 3);
4. creates new a content requirement for grades 6-12 student success plans and generally requires the plans to be created in collaboration with students and their parents or guardians (§ 4);
5. requires boards of education to adopt a new challenging curriculum policy and to create an academic plan for certain identified students designed to enroll such students in one or more advanced courses or programs (§ 5);

6. requires boards of education to adopt a policy to improve the completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) among grade 12 students or students in adult education programs (§ 6);

7. adds the implementation of the policy to improve FAFSA implementation rates to the list of goals that a board of education may include in its application to the education commissioner for alliance district funds (§ 7);

8. requires CSDE to publish and make available on its website the annual FAFSA student completion rate for the graduating class of each high school and each school district (§ 8);

9. requires the education commissioner to establish a working group to develop ways to improve student FAFSA completion rates (§ 9);

10. raises, from age 17 to 18, the age when a student may withdraw from high school, beginning in the 2023-24 school year, but also allows a parent or guardian of a 17-year-old student to withdraw the student if he or she simultaneously enrolls in an adult education program (§ 10);

11. generally raises, from age 17 to 18, the minimum age at which a student can get permission from the education commissioner to take the GED or another CSDE-approved high school equivalency test, but provides that the Commissioner may for good cause allow a person who is 17 to apply to take the examination; also raises to 18 the age for the Commissioner issue a state high school diploma based on the presentation of evidence demonstrating educational qualifications deemed equivalent to those required for graduation from a public high school (§ 11);

12. allows the education commissioner to make recommendations to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Education Committee about policies relating to the net cost of college, how applying for Pell grants can make college more affordable, and the income potential of college and certificate programs; strategies to improve access to high quality post-secondary education; establishing an early graduation from high school program and a local or regional board of education scholarship, and the feasibility of developing a standardized exit survey for all students in grade 12 (§ 12); and

13. requires boards of education to update their written policy for calculating grade point average and determining class rank to address additional courses and programs (§ 13).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021, except the provisions on the FAFSA working group (§ 9) and CSDE recommendations about new initiatives (§ 12) take effect upon passage.

[An Act Concerning Responsible And Equitable Regulation Of Adult-Use Cannabis](#)

This bill makes several changes to the use of cannabis laws as they pertain to schools and students, including, but not limited to:

§ 19 — prohibits school board disciplinary policies from setting stricter penalties for violations involving cannabis than for alcohol.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2021

§ 95 — prohibits, with some exceptions, a positive drug test result that only indicates a specified metabolite of THC from being the only basis for school discipline. The bill generally prohibits a student’s drug test that yields a positive result only for a specified metabolite of THC from being the only basis for an educational institution to refuse to enroll or continue to enroll, or otherwise punish, the student. The bill makes an exception in cases where (1) failing to do so would put the institution in violation of a federal contract or cause it to lose federal funding; or (2) the student is being drug tested as required by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the penalizing action taken is required by NCAA policies.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

An Act Concerning Provisions Related To Revenue And Other Items To Implement The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2023

§ 258 — requires each local and regional board of education, starting in the 2022-23 school year, to make certain annual calculations to determine which students qualify for the automatic admissions program. Specifically, each board must do the following:

1. calculate a GPA using the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) standardized method for each student who completes grade 11;
2. determine whether these students’ class rank percentile is above or below the BOR-established minimum; and
3. share a student’s GPA, and whether the student is above or below the minimum class rank percentile, with the student; his or her parents or guardians; the State Department of Education (CSDE); and, upon the student’s request, a participating institution for purposes of the program. The bill specifies that it does not require a board of education to (1) publish or provide any student’s class ranking; (2) publish the BOR established GPA calculation on a student’s transcript; or (3) publish on the transcript whether a student is above or below the BOR-established minimum class rank percentile for the automatic admissions program.

The bill requires each board of education, starting in the 2022-23 school year, to annually notify each student in his or her final year of high school, and their parent or guardian, about whether the student may be admitted to at least one participating institution under the automatic admissions program, based on the academic threshold described above.

§ 346 – The bill makes permanent the current allowances for MBR reductions under the circumstances described below, subject to statutory exceptions.

Reductions in Enrollment – A school district may reduce its MBR if it has reduced student enrollment during any of the five years immediately prior to the fiscal year for which the MBR is being calculated. However, it cannot count the enrollment reductions from any year that was previously used for an MBR reduction. The bill additionally prohibits them from counting enrollment reductions from FY 21. The district can reduce its MBR by 50 percent of the net current expenditure per resident student, multiplied by the net reduction in the number of enrolled students.

No High School – A town without a high school that pays tuition to other towns for its resident students to attend there and is paying for fewer students than it did in the previous year can reduce its MBR by the full amount of its lowered tuition payments. Except under the bill, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, the number of resident students attending high school for a district with no high school for the prior school year will be the number of resident students attending high school for that district for October 1, 2019, using the data of record as of January 31, 2020. This essentially freezes the student count for one year.

School Closures – The Commissioner may permit a town to reduce its MBR if it has permanently closed a school due to declining enrollment at the school in the seven FYs immediately prior to the FY for which the MBR is being calculated.

Cost Savings – A town can reduce its MBR to reflect half of any new and documented savings from (a) increased efficiencies within its school district, as long as the education commissioner approves the savings; or (b) a regional collaboration or cooperative arrangement with at least one other district. This reduction is limited to a maximum of 0.5 percent of the budgeted appropriation for the prior year.

Catastrophic Events – When a self-insured school district experiences a loss due to one or more catastrophic events during the prior year and must increase the following year’s education budget as a result, the increase due to the loss is not required to be counted for the following year’s MBR. The catastrophic event must be declared as such by a nationally recognized catastrophe loss index provider.

ECS Reduction – A town that has a reduction in ECS aid (see below) when compared to the previous year can reduce its MBR by an amount that equals the amount of the reduction.

Revising Local Education Budgets – The bill supersedes any provision of a special act, municipal charter, local ordinance, home rule ordinance, or other ordinance that prohibits or otherwise limits a town from appropriating additional funds to its education budget after the budget is adopted. Specifically, for FY 22, it allows the town to appropriate additional funds to its education budget to satisfy the MBR requirements if the town’s ECS grant is greater than what the town anticipated when it originally adopted its FY 2022 education budget.

§ 347 – Under current law, school districts must determine whether they have an FY 21 ECS aid increase or decrease in order to determine their MBR. The bill makes this requirement permanent. As with current law, the bill requires districts to compare the ECS aid a town is entitled to with the amount the town received the prior year. If the current amount is greater than the prior year’s amount, the difference between the two is the aid increase. Likewise, if the amount the town is entitled to is less than the amount the town received in the prior year, then the difference is the aid decrease.

§§ 348–350 — suspends, for two years, scheduled decreases in ECS grants for certain towns; extends the phase-in period for grant increases and decreases until FY 29; revises the ECS formula by changing several formula components including the weighting for “total need students”; and expands the regional per-student bonus to include endowed academies that function as public high schools.

§ 348 – pertains to scheduled town increases and decreases in ECS. By law, the base grant amount is the ECS grant amount a town was entitled to for FY 17, minus authorized cuts implemented during FY 17. The base grant amount is used to determine whether a town will get an ECS increase or decrease. A town is entitled to receive, for FYs 21 through 27, an ECS grant in an amount determined by comparing

its base grant amount to its fully funded grant, as calculated in the bill, with an exception for alliance districts. The fully funded grant is the amount a town would receive under the formula if there were no phase-ins.

§§ 349 – The bill modifies the weights assigned to the students that comprise the category of “total need students,” which is one of the three key ECS formula factors for determining grant amounts.

§ 351 — Pertains to federal funds for otherwise unentitled schools. Beginning in FY 22, the bill requires the State Department of Education to distribute, to the extent federal law allows, federal funding provided from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that would otherwise be unavailable to the following schools: (1) any school ineligible for federal Title I funding; or (2) any State Board of Education-approved incorporated or endowed high school or academy (i.e., The Gilbert School, Norwich Free Academy, and Woodstock Academy). The bill specifies that the above provisions do not require CSDE to distribute any state or federal funding in a way that conflicts with federal law, including U.S. Department of Education guidance, rules, or regulations about the ESSER Fund.

§ 352 — creates a new, foundation-based funding formula to replace the uniform per-pupil operating grant for state charter schools in current law. The foundation-based formula weighs pupil counts with a school’s “charter-grant adjustment,” which is based on student needs, to arrive at a per-pupil cost for public education.

Prior to passage of this legislation, the fiscal authority for a state charter school receives a uniform per-pupil operating grant of \$11,250 per fiscal year. Under the bill, a state charter school’s fiscal authority will receive a per-pupil grant determined by the new foundation-based formula equal to:

1. for FY 22, the foundation plus 4.1 percent of its charter grant adjustment, and
2. for FY 23, the foundation plus 14.76 percent of its charter grant adjustment.

§ 353 — requires CSDE to review and recommend approval of charter school material change requests, and creates new submission and review procedures for material change requests seeking to increase charter school enrollment capacity by a certain percentage.

§§ 355-357 — reauthorizes the prohibition on CSDE awarding certain magnet school grants to schools that fail to meet certain residency-based enrollment conditions, but also allows the commissioner to waive certain conditions.

§ 357 —requires the state to fully fund per-pupil magnet school operating grants.

§ 358 — changes the payment schedule and number of payments for a supplemental transportation grant for Sheff magnet schools.

§ 359 — allocates \$5 million in both FY 22 & 23 for Priority School Districts.

§ 360 — allows FY 21 Youth Service Bureau applicants to be eligible for a state grant.

§ 363 — increases the amount a regional board of education may deposit in a capital and nonrecurring expenditures reserve fund.

§§ 374-375 — requires CSDE, in collaboration with the State Education Resource Center, to develop a K-8 model curriculum that boards of education may use.

§ 376 — adds Native American studies to the public-school social studies curriculum beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

§§ 378-379 — Effective July 1, 2021, creates the candidate certification, retention, or residency year program for teacher certification candidates; beginning in FY 23, requires each alliance district to partner with a residency program operator to enroll minority candidates; and beginning in FY 23, requires CSDE to (1) withhold from each alliance district 10 percent of any increase in alliance aid over the amount of such funds it received in FY20; and (2) use the funds for grants to cover costs related to the residency program. Also beginning in FY 23, school districts not designated as alliance districts may partner with a residency program operator to enroll minority candidates and may apply for grants from the CSDE, as prescribed by the Commissioner, for the costs of such programs.

§ 386 — allows each board of education to administer a social-emotional learning assessment provided by the CSDE to students for the upcoming school year and following years. In the following years districts may use the assessment provide by CSDE or another assessment. If using another assessment parents and guardians are to be given prior notice of the assessment and grant permission before the assessment can be administered.

§§ 400-402 — creates a new Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success with responsibilities including, among others, implementing a coordinated state-wide reading plan for K-3 students. Effective July 1, 2022, the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success must, within available appropriations, establish a reading readiness program that provides tiered supports in early literacy for each alliance district.

§§ 406-407 — requires the State Education Resource Center to provide technical assistance for teacher professional development and in-service regarding the teaching of the Black and Latino studies course; and allows school districts to accept grants and gifts for the professional development and training.

§ 418 — increases, by \$1,000, the state per-student grant for agricultural science and technology education centers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various