



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



**To:** Superintendents of Schools  
**From:** Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education  
**Date:** March 19, 2026  
**Subject:** Summary of Senate Bill 298, An Act Concerning the Reallocation of Certain State Funds and Various Provisions Relating to Education, Public Safety, General Government, Elections, Intermediate Care Facilities and Warehouse Distribution Centers

The House of Representatives and Senate passed [Senate Bill 298](#) on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> respectively. The Governor signed the bill into law on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. There are several provisions that pertain to school districts which are summarized below utilizing information from the Office of Legislative Research.

**§§ 20 & 21 — Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education**

*Creates the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education, which may be placed on student diplomas to indicate high proficiency in civics education and engagement; requires SDE to develop criteria for awarding the seal.*

This bill creates the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement and allows school governing boards to place the seal on eligible high school graduates’ diplomas to signify that they achieved high proficiency in civics education and engagement. The bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish criteria for awarding the seal, which must at least require the student to: 1) successfully complete a history or social science course for at least two school years, including one U.S. government or civics course; 2) participate in at least one civic engagement project (e.g., community service, student government, internship with an elected official, or civic organization involvement); and 3) demonstrate proficiency in civics knowledge through a standardized assessment, work portfolio (including civics related essays, projects, or presentations), or other mastery-based assessment or process. Under the bill, the seal may be awarded by local and regional boards of education and by governing boards of any other diploma-awarding school. If a local or regional board of education chooses to award this seal to eligible students, it must also indicate on each recipient student’s transcript that he or she was awarded the seal. School boards may award this seal starting with classes graduating in 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§§ 22 & 23 — Multilingual Learner Data**

*Expands the statewide PSIS to include data on the: 1) academic progress of students in bilingual education programs; and 2) evaluation of these programs.*

The bill expands the statewide public school information system (PSIS) to include data on the: 1) academic progress of students in bilingual education programs; and 2) evaluation of these programs. By law, PSIS contains data related to each K-12 student and teacher in Connecticut public schools (see Background — Public School Information System). It contains both public information (e.g., school population and graduation rates) and confidential information (e.g., individual student and teacher information, such as teacher certifications and student mastery examination scores). School districts use the student data to evaluate their educational performance and growth. Specifically, the bill requires this student data to include mastery examination results for students in bilingual education programs in order to monitor their academic progress. Existing law already requires SDE to collect and disaggregate this data and report it annually to the Education Committee.

The bill adds to SDE’s existing bill of rights for parents and guardians of multilingual learner students, the right of these students and their parents and guardians to access publicly available data on bilingual students and programs, which the bill requires to be added in the PSIS. By law, beginning with the 2024-25 school year, each school board that provides bilingual education or English as a second language (ESL) must give parents and guardians a copy of the bill of rights, which currently includes 15 declarations related to bilingual education.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 24 — Islamic And Arab Studies Curriculum**

*Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to make curriculum materials available to school boards on Islamic and Arab studies and encourage them to provide this instruction.*

The bill requires the SBE, within available appropriations and using available resource materials, to: 1) make curriculum materials available to local and regional boards of education on Islamic and Arab studies; and 2) encourage them to provide instruction in this area. Boards may use these materials to develop an instructional program for the public schools under their jurisdiction. The law already requires SBE to make curriculum materials available for various other programs, such as: 1) African-American and Black studies, Puerto Rican and Latino studies, Native American studies, and Asian American and Pacific Islander studies; 2) personal financial management; 3) the Holocaust and genocide awareness; and 4) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of automatic external defibrators.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 25 — Working Group to Address Antisemitism in Schools**

*Creates a 15-member working group to address antisemitism in public schools by assisting boards of education and other education stakeholders.*

The bill establishes a 15-member working group to address antisemitism in public schools. Under the bill, the group must develop guidance and resources to address issues relating to antisemitism that affect students, families, educators, and school personnel. The guidance and resources may include, but are not limited to: 1) suggested amendments to school district policies to ensure that all students, educators, and school personnel feel safe inside and outside of the school setting; 2) recommended antisemitism-related training for educators and administrators; and 3) guidance for creating or providing curriculum materials and resources about antisemitism, Jewish heritage, and Holocaust and genocide education and awareness. The curriculum materials and resources must be appropriate for school districts to use in meeting the existing requirement that Holocaust and genocide education and awareness be part of every school district's social studies curriculum.

### **Working Group Membership**

The 15-member working group includes the following individuals or their designees: 1) the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Executive Director; 2) the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Executive Director; 3) the Connecticut Education Association President; and 4) the SDE Commissioner. Additionally, there are 10 members appointed by legislative leaders and one appointed by the governor.

All initial working group appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill takes effect, and any vacancy must be filled by the appointing authority. The House Speaker and the Senate President Pro Tempore must each select a co-chairperson from among the members. The co-chairs must jointly schedule the first meeting of the working group within 60 days after the bill takes effect. The administrative staff of the Education Committee serves as the working group's administrative staff. By January 1, 2027, the working group must submit the guidance and resources it develops, and any recommendations for legislation, to the Education Committee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

## **§§ 26 & 27 — Kindergarten Waivers**

*Makes the kindergarten waiver process optional for school districts starting July 1, 2026, and eliminates the optional waiver process starting July 1, 2027.*

Existing law generally requires a child to be at least age five by September 1 of the school year in order to enroll in public school kindergarten. Current law establishes a mandatory waiver process that allows children under age five to be admitted if: 1) the child's parent or guardian makes a written request to the school principal; and 2) the principal and an appropriate certified school staff member do an assessment that shows the child is developmentally ready. Starting

July 1, 2026, the bill makes the waiver process optional for school districts by allowing children under age five to enroll in kindergarten only if the school board adopts an early admissions policy. Any admissions policy must require the same written request and evaluation as required under current law. Starting July 1, 2027, the bill eliminates this waiver process entirely (both mandatory and optional).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, for the provision making the process optional and July 1, 2027, for the provision eliminating the waiver process entirely.

### **§§ 28-30 — Racial Imbalance Law**

*Extends the pause on enforcement of the state’s law on racial imbalance at public schools until July 1, 2030.*

The racial imbalance law requires SBE, when it finds a racial imbalance at a public school, to give the school’s board of education written notification. In response, the notified school board must prepare a plan to correct the imbalance and submit it to SBE for approval. PA 24-93, §§ 3-5, paused enforcement of this law for one year by prohibiting SBE from notifying a school board about a racial imbalance at one of its schools until July 1, 2025. The bill extends this prohibition until July 1, 2030. It similarly extends provisions of: 1) suspending the requirement for a notified board to prepare and file a correction plan; and 2) prohibiting SBE from taking any action on any plan received on or after July 1, 2024. By law a “racial imbalance” is a proportion of minority (terminology used in law) students enrolled in all grades in a public school that substantially exceeds, or substantially falls short of, the proportion of minority students in the same grades in all the district’s public schools.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### **§§ 31-33 — Information on Prior and Current Year Original and Actual Expenditures in School Budget Processes**

*Requires information on prior and current fiscal year line items to be included in the itemized estimates prepared during the local and regional school budget processes (§§ 31 & 32)*

By law, local boards of education must prepare an itemized estimate of school expenses in the upcoming fiscal year and submit it to the board of finance or other authority making appropriations to the school district at least two months before the meeting at which appropriations will be made. The itemized estimate is one where broad budget categories (e.g., salaries, utilities, grounds maintenance) are divided into line items (CGS § 10-222). The bill requires superintendents to annually give local school board members the following information: 1) the amount that was appropriated to each line item at the start of the fiscal year (“original amount”) and the amount of the line item at the end of the fiscal year (“actual amount”) for the two most recently completed fiscal years; and 2) the original amount for each line item and the current amount for the fiscal year currently in progress.

Under the bill, the superintendent must provide this information during the preparation of the itemized estimate for FY 28 and each fiscal year after this. The bill also requires the local board of education to include the above information on original, actual, and current amounts in the itemized estimate of school operating expenses.

### **Regional School Districts (§ 33)**

The bill requires the proposed budget that a regional school board presents at a public district meeting to include the same information on budget line items required for the local school budgets, described above. It also requires the same information to be included in the budget presented at the annual meeting on the first Monday in May.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except that the provision on information superintendents must give the board (§ 30) is effective January 1, 2027.

### **§ 34 — School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding**

*Sets a deadline for when certain information must start being incorporated into school resource officer (SRO) memorandum of understanding (MOU) and requires these MOUs to be updated at least every three years.*

By law, each local or regional board of education that assigns a SRO to its schools must have an MOU with a local law enforcement agency. The MOU must address the SRO's role and responsibility in the school.

Under existing law: 1) school boards must post their MOU on their website and in the school where the SRO is assigned and maintain the MOU in a central location in the district; and 2) these MOUs must include information on the officer's daily interactions with students and staff and a student discipline graduated response model. The bill requires these two requirements to be met by January 1, 2027. The bill also requires these MOUs to be updated at least every three years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

### **§ 35 — Regional School Board Reserve Funds**

*Explicitly allows regional boards of education to deposit funds previously appropriated to and currently in a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures into a reserve fund for educational expenditures.*

PA 24-45 allows regional boards of education to create reserve funds for educational expenditures. Prior law had instead allowed boards to create reserve funds for capital and nonrecurring expenditures. Starting with FY 26, the bill explicitly allows regional boards of education to deposit funds previously appropriated to and currently in a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures into a reserve fund for educational expenditures.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§ 36 — Vision Screenings for Students**

*Explicitly allows school boards to offer vision screenings in preschool and second grade.*

The bill allows school boards to offer vision screenings to students in preschool and second grade. By law, vision screenings must be provided to all students in kindergarten, first grade, and third through fifth grade.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§ 37 — Open Choice Program Addition**

*Adds Madison to the Open Choice program as a receiving and sending district.*

The bill adds the town of Madison to the Open Choice program as a receiving and sending district with New Haven beginning the 2026-27 school year. This addition allows students from Madison to attend school in the New Haven system and vice versa.

The Open Choice Program is a voluntary interdistrict attendance program that allows students from large urban districts to attend suburban schools and vice versa, on a space-available basis. Its purpose is to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation; improve academic achievement; and provide public school choice.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§ 38 — Attendance at Teacher and Administrator Negotiations**

*Requires at least one school board member to be present during teacher and administrator negotiations but prohibits school board members who are also teachers' union or administrators' union members from attending.*

The bill requires at least one school board member to be present during teacher and administrator negotiations, but no school board member who is also a member of the teachers' or administrators' union may be present during the negotiations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§ 39 — Health Assessment Forms**

*Allows nurses to reject health assessment forms that are not the form required by SBE and requires asthma action plans to be included in these forms if a student has asthma.*

By law, student health assessments and screenings must be recorded on specific forms provided by SBE and included in the student's cumulative health record.

The bill explicitly allows school nurses to reject assessments or screenings submitted in a format other than the SBE-required form and require resubmission on the SBE form.

Additionally, the bill requires that an asthma action plan be included in health assessment forms for students diagnosed with asthma.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

#### **§ 40 — Out-Of-School Suspension for Students in Preschool Through Grade Two**

*Limits the use of out-of-school suspension for students in preschool through grade two to instances constituting serious physical harm.*

The bill limits the circumstances under which school administration may give out-of-school suspension to students in preschool through grade two.

Under current law, school administration may impose out-of-school suspension on students in these grades if an administrator finds, at the student's informal disciplinary hearing, that the suspension is appropriate due to evidence that the student's conduct on school grounds is behavior that causes physical harm. Under the bill, the administrator must find that the physical harm was serious.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

#### **§ 41 — Twice-Expelled Students**

*Requires school boards to offer an alternative education opportunity for students ages 16 to 18 who are expelled for the first or second time.*

The bill requires school boards to offer an alternative education opportunity to students ages 16 to 18 who are expelled for the first or second time and wish to continue their education. Current law requires school boards to do so only for students in this age range who are expelled for the first time. As under existing law, a student may be offered the alternative education opportunity only if he or she complies with conditions the school board sets, and an expulsion before age 16 counts when school boards determine whether an alternative education opportunity is required for students ages 16 to 18.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 42 — Notification of Restraint or Seclusion**

*Requires school boards to notify parents of a student placed in physical restraint or seclusion on the day it happens.*

The bill requires school boards to notify the parents or guardian of a student placed in physical restraint or seclusion on the day it happens, rather than within 24 hours after it happened as current law requires. As under existing law, the school board must make a reasonable effort to notify them immediately after the restraint or seclusion begins.

Existing law prohibits school employees from physically restraining a student or placing the student in seclusion except as an emergency intervention to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or others (CGS § 10-236b(b) & (d)). A restraint or seclusion may exceed 15 minutes only if an administrator or certain other school personnel (e.g., health professionals) deems it necessary to prevent such an injury, and this determination must be done every 30 minutes (CGS § 10-236b(f)).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 43 — State Education Resource Center Funding**

*Specifies the education commissioner must allocate funds to SERC as provided in SDE's annual budget.*

The bill creates a line item in the SDE budget for SERC and requires the Commissioner to allocate those funds when they are provided by the General Assembly. By law, SDE provides funds to SERC to provide professional development training, technical assistance and evaluation activities, policy analysis, and other assistance to school boards, charter schools, SDE, and the Technical Education and Career System.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§§ 44-47 — Crisis Response Drills**

*Establishes new protocols for school crisis response drills that prohibit active assailant simulations; requires the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention to develop guidance for crisis responses and crisis debriefing by April 1, 2026; establishes certain requirements including advanced notice and specific drill day procedures.*

Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, the bill establishes new protocols for school crisis response drills that, among other things, prohibit active assailant simulations, are designed to support the physical and psychological safety of students and school personnel, and provide a one-week advance notice to students, school personnel, and parents and guardians before a drill is held. By law, and unchanged by the bill, each public school must conduct a quarterly crisis response drill.

The bill requires the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention (“crisis prevention center”) at Western Connecticut State University, in collaboration with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), to develop: 1) standard terminology and definitions; and 2) guidance for crisis responses and crisis debriefing by April 1, 2027.

The bill also requires each board of education to make the parts of each school’s security and safety plan that are not prohibited from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) available, upon request, to members of the school community.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

### **New Crisis Response Drill Protocols (§§ 45 & 46)**

Starting with the 2027-28 school year (the school year that begins July 1, 2027), the bill requires: 1) each school district to take certain steps before holding a crisis response drill; and 2) that the drill be done following the bill’s requirements.

#### **Requirements and Steps Before Conducting a Drill**

The bill requires the school security and safety committee to collaborate with the school climate committee to plan crisis response drills that prioritize the physical and psychological safety of students and school personnel. By law, each public school must have a school security and safety committee to help develop and administer the school’s security and safety plan and each school’s school climate committee is charged with duties related to the school’s anti-bullying climate improvement plan and related activities. The bill also requires that:

1. crisis response drills use the definitions, terminology, and guidance developed under the bill (see § 44 below);
2. drills be trauma-informed, using an approach that considers prior traumatic experiences and is designed to prevent emotional harm to, and support the psychological safety of, students and school personnel, with mental health professionals’ participation integrated throughout the drill;
3. prior to conducting a drill, school staff provide age-appropriate education to students and training for school personnel to build knowledge and skills intended to reduce the potential for confusion or emotional distress, including reviewing the drill’s purpose and procedures before the first drill of the year;
4. staff notify students, school personnel, and parents and guardians one week in advance before holding a drill; and
5. staff communicate, in a clear way, the nature and purpose of the drills to the parents and guardians of students at the school before holding one (presumably, this could be part of the notification one week in advance of a drill). The bill also prohibits drills done with students from including an active assailant simulation or simulated violence with highly sensorial elements (such as fake assailants, firearms, gunfire sounds, blood, or injuries).

A drill may include an active assailant simulation or simulated violence if it is held outside of the regular school day and exclusively for school personnel, first responders, and other school volunteers.

### **Drill Day Requirements**

At the start of a crisis response drill, the bill requires school staff to inform students and other school personnel that they are participating in a drill to avoid confusion when an actual emergency occurs. Also, the school must accommodate students with cognitive, physical, or sensory disabilities, to the extent practicable, during the drill to ensure their safety and participation.

### **Evaluation**

The bill requires school staff to evaluate each crisis response drill using the evaluation template the bill requires to be developed.

### **Drill Definitions, Terminology, and Guidance (§ 44)**

Under the bill, DESPP and the crisis prevention center must by April 1, 2026, develop:

1. a school crisis response drill definition;
2. standardized terminology for conducting and reviewing crisis response drills;
3. guidance on standardized: a) crisis responses; and b) debriefing protocols following a crisis; and
4. an evaluation template that allows school districts to use drill participant feedback to: a) assess drill efficacy; and b) adjust future drills to improve preparedness while preventing emotional harm and supporting psychological safety.

Additionally, the bill requires the crisis prevention center, in collaboration with DESPP, to study the impact of crisis response drills on the school community.

The bill requires the crisis prevention center to submit the guidance on standardized responses and a report on the crisis response drills impact study to the Education Committee by July 1, 2028.

### **School Security and Safety Plan Available to School Community (§ 47)**

By law, each local and regional board of education must annually submit the school security and safety plan for each school under its jurisdiction to DESPP. The bill also requires each board to make any part of the plan that is not prohibited from disclosure under FOIA (CGS §§ 1-200 to -243) available to school community members upon request.

While FOIA generally requires government documents and records to be made available to the public, there are exceptions. Existing exceptions include when there are reasonable grounds to

believe disclosure of records could result in a safety risk, including emergency plans and emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation plans (CGS § 1-210(b)(19)).

School security and safety plans, by law, must be based on DESPP standards that include, among other things: 1) an all-hazards approach to emergencies at public schools; 2) crisis management procedures; 3) fire drill and crisis response drill evaluation by local law enforcement and other local public safety officials; and 4) procedures for managing various types of emergencies.