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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sSB 1 (File 551, as amended by Senate "A")\*

#### **AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION.**

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS:

##### SUMMARY

##### § 1 — PUBLISHING SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURES, AND STATISTICS

*Requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2024, to annually publish each school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics for the previous fiscal year; requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2025, to prepare and publish the same data in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools*

##### §§ 2 & 3 — NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER REQUIRED TRAINING

*Requires SDE to provide, and newly elected school board members to take, training on the responsibilities and obligations of being a school board member*

##### §§ 4 & 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICTS

*Expands what alliance district funding may be used for to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school under an alliance district's jurisdiction; requires SDE to publish each alliance district's improvement plan*

##### § 6 — WHOLESOME SCHOOL MEALS PILOT PROGRAM

*Requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program to award five grants to alliance districts to embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs*

##### § 7 — VIRTUAL REALITY STUDY

*Requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality in grade 9-12 classroom instruction*

##### § 8 — EDUCATOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

*Requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience*

##### §§ 9 & 10 — SDE REVIEW OF SCHOOL BOARDS' INCREASING EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLANS

*Requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in current law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2) implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

##### §§ 11 & 18 — ASPIRING EDUCATORS DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

*Changes the name of the minority teacher candidate scholarship program to the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program, reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000, and requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program*

**§§ 12-14 — EDUCATOR DIVERSITY POLICY OVERSIGHT COUNCIL**

*Changes the name of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council to the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council and the term “minority” student to “diverse” student*

**§ 15 — ADJUNCT PROFESSOR PERMIT**

*Allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time nontenured college instructors to work part-time for a school district; establishes employment limits and criteria*

**§ 16 — ADDING CURSIVE WRITING AND WORLD LANGUAGES TO THE MODEL CURRICULUM**

*Adds cursive writing and world language to the K to eight model curriculum that SDE is currently developing*

**§ 17 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CREDIT FOR CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS**

*Allows school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an approved credit recovery program*

**§ 19 — USE OF CERTAIN OPEN CHOICE FUNDS**

*Changes terminology describing excess Open Choice funds from “nonlapsing” to “additional,” limits the amount of these funds for one earmarked use, and allows any remaining funds to lapse*

**§§ 20-23 & 86 — IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS**

*Requires a school board that received a waiver from using one of the recommended reading models to implement the alternative model under the waiver by the 2024-25 school year; allows school boards without a waiver, but that have not adopted a recommended model, to partially implement a recommended model over time; eliminates a provision that allows the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation due to insufficient resources or funding; extends a notification deadline*

**§ 24 — REVIEW OF ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE READING MODEL OR PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE’s literacy center to review issues related to implementation of the reading curriculum models and programs*

**§ 25 — STATEWIDE MASTERY TEST AUDIT**

*Requires the education commissioner to audit statewide mastery test and local testing requirements and preparation and administration time*

**§§ 26 & 27 — LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

*Creates in DoAg the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse eligible school boards for the purchase of locally or regionally sourced food for school meal programs; establishes reimbursement rates for locally- and regionally-sourced food; outlines the*

*grant process and requires DoAg to develop guidelines; redirects unexpended CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program funds to the new program*

**§§ 28 & 33 — AEROSPACE AND AVIATION TRAINING**

*Allows school boards to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students; requires creation of a working group to study the feasibility of an aviation and aerospace high school*

**§ 29 — MODEL PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

*Requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to develop a model paraeducator training program for high school students*

**§ 30 — DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON SCHOOL OPTIONS**

*Requires school boards to annually distribute information on vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education school options to middle school students*

**§ 31 — HIGH SCHOOL PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education that include DOL-registered pre-apprenticeship programs in their high school curriculum*

**§§ 32 & 33 — EXPANSION OF DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS**

*Requires SDE, in partnership with boards of education and public higher education institutions, to expand opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for high school students, including courses required for health care occupations*

**§§ 34 & 35 — SCHOOL NURSES AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS**

*Exempts school nurses and nurse practitioners from the work experience requirement in state regulations; requires employing boards of education to provide 15 hours of professional development biennially to school nurses and nurse practitioners beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

**§ 36 — COMMISSION TO STUDY EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

*Creates a new commission to study various educational issues including funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools and related accountability measures*

**§ 37 — APRIL ENROLLMENT REPORT**

*Requires local and regional boards of education, magnet school operators, and charter school governing councils to annually report enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE*

**§§ 38-40 — RENAMING AND REVISING THE ALLIANCE DISTRICTS**

*Renames the alliance districts the educational reform districts and reduces the number of these designated districts to 20; makes conforming changes in ECS and tiered PILOT grants law*

**§ 41 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT HOLDBACK FOR MINORITY TEACHER PROGRAM FUNDING**

*Requires SDE to calculate alliance districts' funding holdback for minority teacher residency candidates using a new formula for FY 24; limits this holdback to FY 24 only*

§ 42 — INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP

*Expands charge of, and extends deadline for, the school indoor air quality working group*

§§ 43 & 44 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROGRAM

*Requires more frequent indoor air quality inspections; requires the inspection reports to be submitted to DAS on a form the agency creates*

§ 45 — OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE COMFORT RANGE GUIDELINES

*Requires DPH to develop temperature comfort range guidelines for school buildings*

§ 46 — PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANT

*Requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts*

§ 47 — SCHOOL CLIMATE DEFINITION

*Defines “school climate” and related terms*

§§ 47 & 48 — SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS AND MODEL POLICY

*Requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to (1) develop school climate standards based on national guidelines and (2) create a uniform bullying complaint form; requires SDE and boards of education to post the form on their websites and in their handbooks*

§ 49 — CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CLIMATE POLICY

*Phases in the requirement for boards of education to adopt and implement a new Connecticut school climate policy over the next three school years*

§§ 50-52 & 70 — SCHOOL CLIMATE PERSONNEL

*Requires each school district to have a school climate coordinator and each school to have a school climate specialist and a school climate committee*

§ 53 — SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

*Requires each school climate committee to annually administer a school climate survey*

§§ 54 & 71 — SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

*Requires the creation of a school climate improvement plan in each school that aligns with the Connecticut school climate standards and includes protocols and supports to enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior*

§ 55 — TRAINING RESOURCES

*Requires each local and regional board of education to provide training and resources for school employees on school climate, social and emotional learning, and restorative practices; repeals a law requiring the statewide safe school climate resource network*

§§ 56-69 — TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING CHANGES

*Makes technical and conforming changes*

§§ 72 & 73 — SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

*Requires the MOU between a school board that assigns an SRO to its schools and the SRO’s local law enforcement agency specify the SRO’s duties and procedures; requires school boards to post the MOUs on their website and in the SRO’s assigned school; and*

*requires each SRO to submit a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts*

**§ 74 — RESTORATIVE PRACTICES RESPONSE POLICY**

*Requires school boards to adopt a restorative practices response policy*

**§ 75 — SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES WORKING GROUP**

*Requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group, under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, to study current school discipline practices and report the study's results to the Education Committee*

**§§ 76-82 — RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CONCERNING EDUCATION**

*Makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion*

**§§ 83 & 84 — GRANTS FOR THE HIRING OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, COUNSELORS, NURSES, LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, AND SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS**

*Pushes out by one year the dates by which SDE must administer the school mental health therapist grant program; removes the requirement that grant recipients in both programs refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE; adjusts education commissioner reporting dates*

**§ 85 — GRANT FOR DELIVERY OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

*Pushes out by one year the dates by which SDE must administer a grant program to provide student mental health services to certain youth camp and summer program operators; removes the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE*

**§§ 86 & 87 — REPEALER**

*Repeals laws containing school climate-related requirements for school boards and SDE that conflict with the bill's provisions*

**SUMMARY**

This bill makes various changes to education laws. A section-by-section analysis follows.

\*Senate Amendment "A" is a strike-all amendment that replaces the underlying bill (File 551). Among other things, it removes provisions on (1) field experience for student teachers and (2) limits on the sale of certain foods in schools.

**§ 1 — PUBLISHING SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURES, AND STATISTICS**

*Requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2024, to annually publish each school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics for the previous fiscal year; requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2025, to prepare and publish the same data in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools*

By law, school superintendents must make returns of the school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics to the education commissioner by September 1 of each year while allowing for revisions up to December 31. The returns must be made pursuant to the commissioner's instruction and certified by an independent public accountant by December 31. The bill requires that the returns be "filed" rather than "made."

The bill also requires State Department of Education (SDE), by February 15, 2024, and each following year, to publish on its website the data in the required reports and returns by education program type, expense function, expense object, and funding source. Sources must include federal, combined state and local, and combined private and other sources for the school and district level. SDE must also develop and publish a guide with definitions for each category of expenditure and funding source.

Additionally, the bill requires SDE, beginning by February 15, 2025, and each following year, to develop and publish (presumably, on its website) the data mentioned above in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools, including student enrollment and demographic statistics as of October 1 of the school year in which the reports and returns were filed.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§§ 2 & 3 — NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER REQUIRED TRAINING**

*Requires SDE to provide, and newly elected school board members to take, training on the responsibilities and obligations of being a school board member*

The bill requires SDE to develop an annual training program that at least includes the role and responsibilities of a school board member, duties and obligations of a board of education, and school district budgeting and education finance. When developing the training, SDE may collaborate with an association that represents Connecticut boards

of education and accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations.

The bill requires SDE to begin offering the annual training by July 1, 2023. The first-time elected school board members must complete the training at a time and in a way SDE determines, but within one year after assuming office.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### **§§ 4 & 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICTS**

*Expands what alliance district funding may be used for to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school under an alliance district's jurisdiction; requires SDE to publish each alliance district's improvement plan*

The bill expands the items that alliance district funding may be spent on to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school under the school board's jurisdiction. Family resource centers provide child care services, remedial educational and literacy services, families-in-training programs, and support services to parents getting temporary family assistance or other parents in need.

By law, alliance districts must spend their alliance funds (1) according to the plan submitted with the application; (2) on the minority candidate certification, retention, and residency program; (3) on Education Cost Sharing (ECS) spending requirements; and (4) for any other items allowed under SDE guidelines. The bill specifies that the plan is an "improvement plan" (see *Background*).

The bill also requires SDE to publish on its website the improvement plan each alliance district must submit with its application for the alliance portion of its ECS aid.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### ***Background — Alliance Districts***

Under current law, there are 36 alliance districts that have been designated for five years, beginning with FY 23. The designation applies to (1) the 33 school districts with the lowest accountability index (AI) scores and (2) three districts that were designated in previous years but

that may not now be among the 33 with the lowest scores (see below). State law allows the education commissioner to withhold some of an alliance district's ECS aid until the district has submitted a satisfactory application and improvement plan.

(§§ 38-40 of the bill make additional changes to alliance districts, including decreasing their number (see below).)

### **Background — Accountability Index Scores**

By law, the "accountability index score" for a school district or an individual school is the score resulting from multiple weighted measures that (1) include the mastery test scores (i.e., the performance index score) and high school graduation rates and (2) may include academic growth over time, attendance and chronic absenteeism, postsecondary education and career readiness, enrollment in and graduation from higher education institutions and postsecondary education programs, civics and arts education, and physical fitness (CGS § 10-223e(a)).

## **§ 6 — WHOLESOME SCHOOL MEALS PILOT PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program to award five grants to alliance districts to embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs*

For FYs 24 to 26, the bill requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program that awards five grants to embed a professional chef in five alliance districts. The chef must help school meal programs build food service staff capacity, improve meal quality, increase diner satisfaction, streamline operations, and establish a financially viable school meal program.

The bill requires SDE to partner with an organization that specializes in placing chefs for the pilot program's purposes.

Under the bill, an alliance district may apply for the grant by October 1, 2023, on an application the department sets. SDE must review each application and award five grants. Each grant recipient must receive an annual \$150,000 grant in each year of the pilot.



By January 1, 2027, SDE must report on the school meals pilot program to the Education and Appropriations committees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§ 7 — VIRTUAL REALITY STUDY**

*Requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality in grade 9-12 classroom instruction*

The bill requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality as part of grade nine-12 classroom instruction. The study must include at least the following: (1) a review of best practices for using virtual reality in classroom instruction, (2) appropriate safety measures for its use, and (3) ways that local or regional boards of education may responsibly invest in and purchase virtual reality equipment and programs.

SDE must report its findings and any recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

## **§ 8 — EDUCATOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience*

The bill requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative for FY 24, and each following fiscal year, to enable students enrolled in educator preparation programs, residency programs, or alternate route to certification (ARC) programs to get classroom teaching experience while working towards becoming full-time, certified teachers after successfully completing the programs.

The bill also requires SDE to develop (1) participation guidelines for educator preparation programs, residency programs, and ARC programs included under the initiative; (2) administrative implementation guidelines that are consistent with federal laws and regulations; and (3) compensation levels for students enrolled in any of the three types of programs included under the educator apprenticeship initiative. Under the bill, SDE must seek state Department of Labor certification for the initiative to leverage federal grants and funding.

By law, participants in an apprenticeship are paid (CGS § 31-22m). Currently, teacher residency program participants are paid (CGS § 10-156gg), but the educator preparation and ARC program participants are not.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### ***Residency Programs and Apprenticeship Participation***

Under the bill, the education commissioner may permit a student enrolled in a residency program to participate in the apprenticeship program upon the request of the superintendent for the school district where the student is assigned for the residency program. Upon successfully completing a residency program and with the superintendent's recommendation, the State Board of Education (SBE) must issue an initial educator certificate to the student, and the student is exempted from the statutory teacher subject areas assessment requirements.

### **§§ 9 & 10 — SDE REVIEW OF SCHOOL BOARDS' INCREASING EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLANS**

*Requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in current law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2) implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

Under current law, every local and regional board of education (i.e., school board) must develop and implement a "minority educator recruitment" plan for each school district to give its students opportunities to interact with teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation. The bill changes the plan's name to the "increasing educator diversity" plan and requires each school board to submit its plan to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval.

The bill requires the commissioner to review each increasing educator diversity plan. She may approve it or return the plan to the school board with instructions to revise it, in which case the school board must revise the plan by May 15, 2024, according to the instructions and resubmit the plan for the commissioner's approval.

Beginning with the school year starting July 1, 2024 (i.e., the 2024-25 school year), school boards must implement their commissioner-approved plans and post them on their websites. The boards must also make the plans available on their websites.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§§ 11 & 18 — ASPIRING EDUCATORS DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

*Changes the name of the minority teacher candidate scholarship program to the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program, reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000, and requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program*

Under current law, SDE administers a minority teacher candidate scholarship program that gives an annual scholarship to “minority” students who:

1. graduated from a public high school in a “priority school district” (i.e., generally, districts whose students receive low standardized test scores and have high levels of poverty (CGS § 10-266p(a))) and
2. are enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a four-year higher education institution.

The bill renames the program as the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program. It also makes a conforming change by replacing references to “minority” students with references to “diverse” students. (The terms have the same meaning under current law and the bill.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**Scholarship Grant Changes**

The bill reduces the maximum annual scholarship amount that a student may receive from \$20,000 to \$10,000. It adds the requirement that scholarship recipients be in good standing in their teacher preparation programs.

It also requires the education commissioner to develop scholarship repayment criteria for recipients who are not employed as certified

teachers by a local or regional board of education following graduation from a teacher preparation program. Any amounts repaid to the department must be deposited in the General Fund.

### ***Scholarship Administration Policy***

The bill modifies the scholarship administration policy that the law required SDE to develop by January 1, 2023. By law, the policy must address the payment and distribution of the scholarships. The bill specifies the policy must include payment and distribution through the teacher preparation programs the recipients are enrolled in.

Existing law also requires that the policy address notifying high school students in priority school districts about the scholarship program. The bill adds that this must include the opportunity to apply for the program's scholarship while enrolled in high school and before graduation if the student will be enrolled in a teacher preparation program during the following fall semester at a four-year higher education institution. (The bill does not specify a deadline for SDE to update this policy.)

### ***Reporting Requirement***

The bill requires SDE, starting by January 1, 2024, to annually develop a report that includes annual data on the race and ethnicity of the scholarship recipients and the teacher preparation programs in which they are enrolled. SDE must submit the report to the Education Committee.

### ***Program Staff (§ 18)***

The bill requires the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with SDE, to reclassify at least four existing unfilled positions at SDE to administer the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program and implement recruitment and retention programs for diverse educators. Under the bill, the reclassification is for FY 24, and SDE must use the funds appropriated to its personal services account to fill four reclassified staff positions.

The bill specifies that one reclassified position must require

experience in communications, be placed in the Talent Office, and be responsible for marketing the scholarship program and the recruitment and retention programs.

#### **§§ 12-14 — EDUCATOR DIVERSITY POLICY OVERSIGHT COUNCIL**

*Changes the name of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council to the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council and the term “minority” student to “diverse” student*

The bill renames the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council as the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council. Under existing law, the council is a seven-member body within SDE charged with advising the education commissioner on ways to encourage minority students and professionals from other fields to pursue teaching careers. The bill makes related changes by replacing the term “minority” with “diverse” without changing its underlying meaning (see § 11 above). It also changes “teachers” to “educators.”

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### **§ 15 — ADJUNCT PROFESSOR PERMIT**

*Allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time nontenured college instructors to work part-time for a school district; establishes employment limits and criteria*

Under existing law, SBE may issue adjunct instructor permits allowing a person with specialized training, experience, or expertise in the arts to teach in certain interdistrict arts magnet high schools (CGS § 10-145n). Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, the bill allows SBE to also issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time nontenured college instructors to be employed by a school board and work part-time for a school district.

The bill limits eligibility to instructors who work at either a public or independent higher education institution in Connecticut. It allows permit holders to teach in public high schools for up to 25 classroom instructional hours per week as part of college and career readiness programming, including an early college experience program, advanced placement classes, career and technical education, and International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, dual credit, and

apprenticeship programs.

Under the bill, the adjunct professor permit is valid for three years, and the education commissioner may renew it for good cause upon the request of the superintendent of the employing district.

While working, permit holders must be under the supervision of the superintendent or a principal, administrator, or supervisor designated by the superintendent who must regularly observe, guide, and evaluate the permit holder's performance. Additionally, school boards that employ the permit holders must provide a program to assist them that includes academic and classroom support services.

The bill also requires permit holders to become members of the applicable exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees and be subject to the same bargaining contract unless otherwise agreed to by the employing school board and the union. The bill prohibits permit holders from filling a position that will displace a certified teacher already employed at the school.

Finally, the bill makes these permit holders ineligible for membership in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) solely due to the permit, but if permit holders already have regular SBE-issued teacher's certificates, then they cannot be excluded from the TRS.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§ 16 — ADDING CURSIVE WRITING AND WORLD LANGUAGES TO THE MODEL CURRICULUM**

*Adds cursive writing and world language to the K to eight model curriculum that SDE is currently developing*

The law requires SDE to develop a model kindergarten to grade eight curriculum by January 1, 2024, that school boards may use. The model curriculum must be rigorous, age-appropriate, meet state content standards, follow the state's required program of instruction, and integrate several specific additional topics throughout the curriculum (see *Background*).

The bill adds cursive writing and world languages beginning in

kindergarten to the list of additional topics that must be included. It also specifies that school boards may choose to use all or parts of the curriculum. State law does not mandate that districts use a specific curriculum.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

***Background — Required Program of Instruction and K to eight Model Curriculum Additional Topics***

By law, the required program of instruction includes, among other subjects, the arts; health and safety, including CPR instruction; language arts, including reading and writing; mathematics; physical education; science; and social studies, including citizenship, geography, government, history, Holocaust and genocide awareness, African American and Black studies, Puerto Rican and Latino studies, Native American studies (effective July 1, 2023), and Asian American and Pacific Islander studies (effective July 1, 2025) (CGS § 10-16b).

The additional topics that the model kindergarten to grade eight curriculum must currently include are: (1) Native American studies; (2) Asian American and Pacific Islander studies; (3) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual orientations and gender identities studies; (4) climate change; (5) personal financial management and financial literacy; (6) the military service and experience of American veterans; (7) civics and citizenship, including instruction in digital citizenship and media literacy; (8) the principles of social-emotional learning; and (9) racism.

**§ 17 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CREDIT FOR CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS**

*Allows school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an approved credit recovery program*

The bill allows local and regional school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an education commissioner-approved credit recovery program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 19 — USE OF CERTAIN OPEN CHOICE FUNDS**

*Changes terminology describing excess Open Choice funds from “nonlapsing” to “additional,” limits the amount of these funds for one earmarked use, and allows any remaining funds to lapse*

The bill makes several changes to excess funding for the Open Choice program (see *Background*). By March 1 each year, existing law requires the education commissioner to determine whether the number of students enrolled in Open Choice is lower than the number that appropriated funds anticipated. If the enrollment is below this number, then she must use the additional funds in specific ways.

First, she must use up to \$500,000 of these funds for supplemental grants for Open Choice receiving districts on a prorated basis for each out-of-district student who is one of at least nine other out-of-district students attending the same school, up to \$1,000 per student.

Then, any remaining unspent Open Choice funds must be used for the following purposes: (1) the second \$500,000 for the State Education Resource Center to provide professional development to certified employees and other school personnel in Open Choice districts receiving students and (2) any remaining funds for wrap-around services for students participating in Open Choice, including tutoring, family support, and experiential learning.

The bill limits the wrap-around earmark for these funds to \$2 million a year. It also eliminates terms and phrasing that describe the program’s excess funds as “nonlapsing” or “not lapsing” and instead refers to the funds as “additional.” By removing the term “nonlapsing,” the bill allows any funds remaining after the specified uses mentioned above to lapse back into the General Fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

***Background — Open Choice***

Open Choice 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. In consultation with regional educational service centers, receiving districts determine whether to participate in the program and how many seats to make available to students (CGS § 10-266aa).

### **§§ 20-23 & 86 — IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS**

*Requires a school board that received a waiver from using one of the recommended reading models to implement the alternative model under the waiver by the 2024-25 school year; allows school boards without a waiver, but that have not adopted a recommended model, to partially implement a recommended model over time; eliminates a provision that allows the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation due to insufficient resources or funding; extends a notification deadline*

The law requires SDE's Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success director to review and approve at least five reading curriculum models or programs for boards by July 1, 2022. The models or programs must be (1) evidence- and scientifically-based and (2) focused on competency in the following reading areas: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name or letter name fluency, and reading comprehension. By law, beginning with the school year that starts July 1, 2023, each school board generally must implement one of five approved reading curriculum models or programs for grades pre-kindergarten to three.

The bill narrows the scope of the reading curriculum models or programs from grades pre-kindergarten to three to kindergarten to three.

#### ***Waiver Implementation***

Under current law, school boards may request a waiver from the SDE commissioner to use an alternative reading curriculum model or program instead of an approved one. The bill specifies that school boards that receive a waiver must implement their alternative models or programs according to their waivers' provisions starting with the school year beginning July 1, 2024 (the 2024-25 school year).

It also eliminates a provision that allows the commissioner to grant more time for implementation to a school board that (1) shows it has insufficient resources or funding for implementation and (2)

demonstrates ongoing efforts to implement a model or program.

***Partial Implementation for School Board Without Waivers***

The bill requires boards that have not been granted a waiver and have not fully implemented one of the SDE-approved reading models or programs by the 2023-24 school year to begin partially implementing one of the models or programs as long as the board fully implements it for the school year starting July 1, 2025 (the 2025-26 school year), and each following year.

***Notice to SDE on Chosen Model or Program***

Beginning July 1, 2023, current law requires each school board to notify the literacy center every two years about which model or program it is implementing. The bill extends this deadline to July 1, 2025.

It correspondingly extends the deadline, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2025, for the literacy center to receive and publicly report on the models and programs that school boards have reported they are implementing.

***Other Provisions***

The bill repeals the law that requires SDE to have a director of reading initiatives (§ 86) and makes conforming and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 24 — REVIEW OF ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE READING MODEL OR PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE’s literacy center to review issues related to implementation of the reading curriculum models and programs*

The bill requires SDE’s literacy center, in consultation with the Reading Leadership Implementation Council, to review issues related to the school boards’ implementation of the comprehensive reading curriculum models or programs. The review must include:

1. an examination of providing technical assistance to boards that have been denied a waiver;
2. an examination of the impact of SDE’s science of reading master

class (see *Background*) that uses all of the components of reading, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and

3. upon completion of the SDE's independent impact evaluation, a determination of how to scale it for use to develop educators who are ready and able to support individual student learning and the science of reading.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### ***Background — Science of Reading Masterclass***

SDE's science of reading masterclass offers professional learning for educators from participating districts. The first masterclass began in 2022 with 11 participating districts and was funded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The masterclass is a statewide professional learning program co-created with the Connecticut Association of School Superintendents to develop local capacity for science of reading and components of comprehensive K to three literacy instruction. Components include phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

### **§ 25 — STATEWIDE MASTERY TEST AUDIT**

*Requires the education commissioner to audit statewide mastery test and local testing requirements and preparation and administration time*

The bill requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2025, and within available appropriations, to audit state and local testing requirements and administration. The commissioner must submit a report on the audit to the Appropriations and Education committees by this date.

The audit must focus on the following:

1. the statewide mastery examination (see *Background*) and local standardized assessments used to monitor student and district academic progress and achievement;
2. the amount of time devoted to student preparation or educator

instruction for the statewide mastery exam and the local assessments, including the amount of time taken away from regular instruction; and

3. recommendations about any limitations on the amount of time that may be devoted to administering these exams and assessments.

Additionally, the bill specifies that the audit must comply with requirements in federal law for grant applications for state assessments and related activities (20 U.S.C. §§ 6361 to 6363) so that the commissioner may apply for a grant to do the audit and related activities under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; see *Background*).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

***Background — Statewide Mastery Exams***

Public school students statewide must take the following SBE-approved mastery exams that measure essential and grade-appropriate skills:

1. for grades three through eight, exams measuring reading, writing, or mathematics skills;
2. for grades five, eight, and 11, exams measuring science skills; and
3. for students in grade 11, a nationally recognized, SBE-approved college readiness assessment (e.g., the SAT) measuring reading, writing and mathematics skills (CGS § 10-14n(a)).

***Background — ESSA***

Among other things, this federal law requires every state to measure performance in reading, math, and science. Each state determines how students are assessed. Every school in each state must inform parents about their standards and their results (P.L. 114-95).

***Background — Related Bill***

HB 6762 (File 535, as amended by House “A,” § 5) has an identical

requirement.

**§§ 26 & 27 — LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

*Creates in DoAg the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse eligible school boards for the purchase of locally or regionally sourced food for school meal programs; establishes reimbursement rates for locally- and regionally-sourced food; outlines the grant process and requires DoAg to develop guidelines; redirects unexpended CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program funds to the new program*

Beginning FY 24 and each year after, the bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), in consultation with SDE, to administer the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse school boards for the purchase of locally sourced or regionally sourced food that may be used in an eligible school meal program.

Under the bill, an eligible school board is entitled to reimbursement payments in (1) accordance with the guidelines the bill requires to be developed and (2) amounts equal to (a) one-half of the board’s expenditures for locally sourced foods, and (b) one-third of the board’s expenditures for regionally sourced foods. An “eligible board of education” means a board of education that is participating in the National School Lunch Program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**Definitions**

Under the bill:

1. “Eligible meal program” means a meal program provided by an eligible school board to its students or a meal provided as part of the board’s participation in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer Option, After School Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program, or the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program that the United States Department of Agriculture administers.
2. “Locally sourced food” means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut that are grown or produced at, or sold by, a local farm and includes, but

is not limited to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed foods. A “local farm” means a farm, farmers’ cooperative, food hub, or wholesale distributor located in Connecticut.

3. “Regionally sourced food” means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, or Maine that are grown or produced at, or sold by, a regional farm and includes, but is not limited to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed foods. “Regional farm” means a farm, farmers’ cooperative, food hub or wholesale distributor located one of the six states mentioned above.

### ***Program Reimbursement Grant Process***

Under existing law, DoAg must receive reimbursement payment requests from eligible school boards similarly to how the department receives applications under the existing law for school meal programs.

Each eligible school board must keep its expenditure records for all locally sourced and regionally sourced food, as well as documentation confirming the food’s origin as DoAg requires. Boards must also submit these records, as well as the documentation, when DoAg requires it for review.

In order to be eligible for reimbursement, the locally or regionally sourced food must comply with the existing school meal nutrition standards.

### ***Guidelines***

The bill requires DoAg to develop guidelines that:

1. establish a maximum reimbursement amount based on total student enrollment for each eligible school board,
2. help eligible school boards participate in the program, and

3. promote geographic, social, economic, and racial equity, which may include a preference for socially disadvantaged farmers, as defined in federal law.

### ***Program Survey***

The bill requires DoAg to develop a survey to be distributed annually to any school board that gets reimbursement payments under the program. The survey must be designed to collect information to help the department implement and improve the program.

### ***Supplemental Grants***

The bill allows DoAg, within available appropriations, to give supplemental grants to eligible school boards in addition to the reimbursement payments. The supplemental grant funds may be used for buying kitchen equipment, engaging with school nutrition or farm-to-school consultants, or training relating to the processing, preparation, and serving of locally and regionally sourced food. When awarding supplemental grants, DoAg must give priority to an eligible school board for a town designated as an alliance district.

### ***Related Provisions***

Under the bill, beginning with FY 24, the reimbursement payments must be reduced proportionately if the total amount for reimbursement payments calculated in that year exceeds the amount appropriated for reimbursements for that year. Additionally, any unexpended funds appropriated for the reimbursement grants do not lapse at the end of the fiscal year; they instead remain available for expenditure during the next fiscal year.

DoAg may accept gifts, grants and donations, including in-kind donations, for the administration of the local food for schools incentive program and to implement the bill's requirements.

### ***Reporting Requirement***

Beginning by January 1, 2025, DoAg must annually submit a report on the local food for schools program to the Education Committee. The report must include an accounting of the funds appropriated to and

received by the department for the program, descriptions of the reimbursement payments made, and an evaluation of the program.

***Remaining Funds From the CT Grown for CT Kids Program (§ 27)***

Beginning with FY 24, the bill also requires that any unexpended funds from the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program be used to administer the local food for schools incentive program created under the bill. The CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program helps school boards develop farm-to-school programs to increase the availability of local foods in child nutrition programs and encourages educators to use hands-on educational techniques to teach students about nutrition and farm-to-school connections.

**§§ 28 & 33 — AEROSPACE AND AVIATION TRAINING**

*Allows school boards to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students; requires creation of a working group to study the feasibility of an aviation and aerospace high school*

The bill allows a board of education to partner with local employers in the aviation or aerospace industry to develop and offer an apprenticeship training program for students within its school district.

Under the bill, the apprenticeship training program must give students (1) on-site training where they learn immediate job skills and earn course credits, (2) information on the CT Aero Tech School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians' educational programs, and (3) help completing the school's admissions application.

The bill requires a school board that offers this apprenticeship program to start annually reporting to the Education Committee within 60 days after the first student cohort completes the program. The report must include the number of students who (1) participated in and completed the program and (2) enrolled in the CT Aero Tech School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians after doing so.

**§ 29 — MODEL PARAEducATOR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

*Requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to develop a model paraeducator training program for high school students*



The bill requires the SDE commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to (1) develop a model program for paraeducator training for students in grades nine to 12 that would qualify them to work as paraeducators after graduating from high school and (2) distribute the program to each board of education.

The bill allows school boards to adopt the program. After doing so, they must annually report to the Education Committee, beginning within one year after adoption, on the number of students who (1) participated and completed the program by grade and (2) found employment as a paraeducator after graduation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 30 — DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON SCHOOL OPTIONS**

*Requires school boards to annually distribute information on vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education school options to middle school students*

Under current law, each local and regional school board must require its school counselors to give information to middle and high school students and their parents on the availability of (1) vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education and training at technical education and career schools and (2) agricultural science and technology education at regional agricultural science and technology education centers

The bill also requires each school board to annually distribute this information to middle school students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 31 — HIGH SCHOOL PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM**

*Requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education that include DOL-registered pre-apprenticeship programs in their high school curriculum*

The bill requires SDE to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program by January 1, 2024, within available appropriations. Under the program, the department must award grants to any local or regional board of education that incorporates a pre-apprenticeship program in its

curriculum for grades nine to 12, as long as the program is registered with the Department of Labor (DOL) and meets any related criteria SDE establishes. Under the bill, SDE must award grants of at least \$1,000 for each student who completes the program.

The bill requires SDE, starting by January 1, 2025, to annually report to the Education Committee on the grant program, including the amount of grants awarded and types of pre-apprenticeship programs students completed during the prior year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§§ 32 & 33 — EXPANSION OF DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS**

*Requires SDE, in partnership with boards of education and public higher education institutions, to expand opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for high school students, including courses required for health care occupations*

The bill requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to expand dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities for students in grades nine to 12 in various subject areas, including courses required to pursue health care occupations. The department must do this (1) within available funding limits and (2) in partnership with local and regional boards of education and public and independent higher education institutions.

Under the bill, SDE must include the following in the expanded opportunities:

1. new resources, such as an online inventory of dual credit and dual enrollment programs, and model agreements to promote information sharing between boards of education and higher education institutions;
2. support for curriculum development and teacher and faculty professional development to create new career pathways for in-demand industries, such as health care; and
3. tuition assistance for students who enroll in dual credit and dual enrollment programs.

The bill requires SDE to report to the Education Committee on its

efforts to expand dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities by January 1, 2024.

***Aerospace Advanced Manufacturing High School Working Group (§ 33)***

The bill requires the Connecticut Technical Education Career System executive director to convene a working group to determine the feasibility, cost, and plan to develop an aerospace advanced manufacturing high school.

Under the bill, the executive director must serve as the working group's chairperson and appoint its members, which must at least include representatives of (1) the Governor's Workforce Council, (2) the Department of Economic and Community Development, and (3) business and community organizations related to the aerospace industry.

The bill requires the executive director to report the working group's conclusions and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except that the provision convening the aerospace advanced manufacturing high school working group takes effect upon passage.

**§§ 34 & 35 — SCHOOL NURSES AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS**

*Exempts school nurses and nurse practitioners from the work experience requirement in state regulations; requires employing boards of education to provide 15 hours of professional development biennially to school nurses and nurse practitioners beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

***Appointment Qualifications (§ 34)***

Under current law, all school nurses and nurse practitioners who local or regional boards of education appoint must meet qualifications set in state regulations, which SBE adopted in consultation with the Department of Public Health (DPH; see Conn. Agencies Regs. § 10-212-2). The bill creates an exception to the work experience requirement in state regulation, specifically by exempting appointed or contracted school nurses or nurse practitioners from having at least one year of full-time work experience as a registered nurse in the five years immediately

before their appointment or employment in the position.

***Professional Development (§§ 34 & 35)***

Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, the bill requires each school nurse or nurse practitioner appointed by or under contract with a board of education to complete at least 15 hours of professional development programs or activities biennially. The employing board must annually approve and provide these programs or activities, which must include training and instruction in implementing individualized education programs (IEPs) and 504 plans (see *Background*). Additionally, for any new school nurse or nurse practitioner, the board must provide the programs or training within 30 days after the person is appointed by or enters into a contract with the board.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

***Background — IEPs and 504 Plans***

An IEP is a written statement detailing the student’s academic achievement level, goals for future achievement, and specialized educational services needed to reach the goals. Federal law requires school boards to develop IEPs for students eligible to receive special education and related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.).

Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in public schools (29 U.S.C. § 794). Students who receive school accommodations under this law have them memorialized in a written plan, commonly known as a “504 plan.”

***Background — Related Bill***

sSB 1097 (File 253), reported favorably by the Education Committee, requires SBE to adopt regulations by July 1, 2024, that require, among other things, each school nurse to biennially complete at least 15 hours of school board-approved professional development programs or activities.

**§ 36 — COMMISSION TO STUDY EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

*Creates a new commission to study various educational issues including funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools and related accountability measures*

The bill creates the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission to study various educational issues including (1) funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools and (2) accountability measures for alliance districts (educational reform districts and legacy alliance districts, under the bill) charter schools, and magnet schools.

It must also study the adequacy of financial reporting by (1) school boards, including the reporting associated with participation in the Open Choice program; (2) the governing councils of state and local charter schools and charter management organizations; and (3) operators of interdistrict magnet school programs. Additionally, it must include the financial impact of interdistrict magnet school programs, charter schools, and the Open Choice program on school boards, including education cost sharing (ECS) grant amounts, transportation costs, special education services and other general educational costs for children who live in the school district but do not attend a school under the school board's jurisdiction.

The bill specifies four portions of the study. The first part examines school district, charter school, and magnet school funding entitlements and must include, at a minimum:

1. the compensation, benefits, retention, and recruitment of teachers, paraprofessionals, and social workers;
2. restrictions on the use of, and reporting requirements for, any additional funds received under the bill, both ECS funds, and the new grants;
3. optimal class sizes, and
4. the inclusion of special education as a need factor in the ECS grant formula.

The second portion of the study focuses on alliance districts and must at least include (1) an analysis of how school boards develop alliance district plans and how they are reviewed and approved by the education commissioner and (2) recommendations for narrowing the focus of or replacing the plans. The study must also consider the following:

1. whether to eliminate SDE's authority to withhold a portion of an alliance district's ECS grant for failing to comply with specified requirements,
2. the feasibility of creating independent financial audits of the expenditures under the entire budget of an alliance district's school board,
3. the feasibility of requiring alliance district school boards to hold hearings on interventions and annually evaluate any new programming established in the school district,
4. setting guidelines for the hiring of nonclassroom personnel, and
5. interventions that SDE may take in regard to an alliance district's operations.

For charter schools, the study at least include:

1. the feasibility of a full grade expansion of existing charters, including grade expansion;
2. an examination of the impact of moratoriums on any new charter school approval, as well as new magnet school program approval; and
3. a consideration of the duration of a charter's validity and SBE's standards used to determine whether to renew a charter.

The portion of the study regarding interdistrict magnet schools must include oversight policies for interdistrict magnet school programs operated by regional education service centers relating to tuition

increases, enrollment, and funding caps.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### ***Commission Membership***

Under the bill, the speaker of the House, the Senate president pro tempore, the education commissioner, and the Office of Policy and Management secretary, or their respective designees, are commission members. The table below shows the 16 additional members, their appointing authority, and any required organizational affiliations.

**Table: Commission to Study Education Funding Membership and Appointing Authority**

<b><i>Appointing Authority (Appointments)</i></b>	<b><i>Member Organization or Position</i></b>
House speaker (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents representative</li> <li>• Regional Educational Service Centers (RESA) Alliance representative</li> </ul>
Senate president pro tempore (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Equity for Kids representative</li> <li>• Center for Children’s Advocacy representative</li> </ul>
House majority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut School Counselor Association representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Education Association representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Voices for Children</li> </ul>
Senate majority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut representative</li> <li>• ConnCAN representative</li> <li>• School and State Finance Project representative</li> </ul>
House minority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Association of School Administrators representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Association of School Business Officials representative</li> <li>• Local or regional board of education member for an alliance district, selected in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education</li> </ul>
Senate minority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Charter School Association representative</li> <li>• Executive director of an agricultural science and technology education center</li> <li>• Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special</li> </ul>

<b>Appointing Authority (Appointments)</b>	<b>Member Organization or Position</b>
	Education representative

### ***Organizational Matters and Report Deadline***

Appointing authorities must make all initial commission appointments within 30 days after the bill’s passage and fill any vacancies. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore, or their designees, serve as the chairpersons. They must schedule and hold the commission’s first meeting within 60 days after the bill’s passage. The Education Committee’s administrative staff must serve as the commission’s administrative staff.

The commission must submit the portion of its study on funding for local and regional boards of education, charter schools, and magnet schools, with findings and recommendations, to the Education and Appropriations committees by February 1, 2024. It must submit the remaining portion of the study to the Education Committee by January 15, 2025. It terminates when it submits the last report or July 1, 2025, whichever is later.

### **§ 37 — APRIL ENROLLMENT REPORT**

*Requires local and regional boards of education, magnet school operators, and charter school governing councils to annually report enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE*

The bill requires each local and regional board of education, interdistrict magnet school operator, and state or local charter school governing council to submit to SDE the number of students enrolled in their schools as of April 1. These school operators must submit this information by May 20 each year.

The bill also imposes an additional reporting requirement on any local or regional board of education that (1) is a sending district or receiving district under the statewide interdistrict public school attendance program or (2) operates an interdistrict magnet school program or an agricultural science and technology educator center. These boards must annually submit to SDE the number of students participating in the applicable program as of April 1. The data must be



reported separately for in-district and out-of-district students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### **§§ 38-40 — RENAMING AND REVISING THE ALLIANCE DISTRICTS**

*Renames the alliance districts the educational reform districts and reduces the number of these designated districts to 20; makes conforming changes in ECS and tiered PILOT grants law*

Beginning in FY 25, the bill renames the alliance districts as “educational reform districts” and revises the alliance district program. The bill reduces the number of districts with this designation from 36 to 20. It also defines a “legacy alliance district” as a school district for a town that was designated as an alliance district for FYs 13-24. This means the legacy alliance districts include all the educational reform districts and the 16 other districts that are no longer designated alliance districts.

Under current law, an alliance district is a school district that is among the towns with the 33 lowest AI scores as calculated by SDE or was previously designated as an alliance district from FYs 13-22. Additionally, current law requires the education commissioner to designate 36 alliance districts for the five-year period from FYs 23-27.

The bill requires the education commissioner to designate as educational reform districts the districts among the towns with the 20 lowest AI scores for a two-year period beginning with FY 25. It also repeals the current definition of “educational reform district,” which is an alliance district that is among the 10 lowest AI scores in the state.

Under current law, the state comptroller withholds from an alliance district town any increase in ECS funds that exceeds the amount the town received in FY 12 (the year the program began). But, for districts designated as alliance districts for the first time for FY 23, the comptroller must withhold ECS funds over the FY 22 amount. The comptroller transfers the money to the education commissioner to withhold until she approves the district’s alliance district application and plan to improve academic performance.

Under the bill, beginning with FY 25, the amount that must be withheld for the 20 educational reform districts is the amount of ECS funds they are entitled to that exceeds the amount the town received in FY 12.

Existing law requires the alliance districts to spend their alliance funds (1) according to the plan submitted with the application; (2) on the minority candidate certification, retention, and residency program; (3) on ECS spending requirements; and (4) for any other items allowed under SDE guidelines. The bill refers to the plan specifically as an “improvement plan.”

The bill requires each participating school board to submit the improvement plan to SDE. (Existing law requires all alliance district applications to include the plan and districts must submit applications to receive their alliance grants. So, in practice, this is already done.)

The bill also allows a school district that has not been designated an educational reform district, but is among the 50 towns with the lowest AI scores, to request technical assistance or other interventions from SDE in order to provide student academic support services.

***Conforming Changes for ECS and PILOT Funds (§§ 39 & 40)***

The bill makes conforming changes by making the same name change to two laws that reference alliance districts (and otherwise keeps the provisions unchanged):

1. the ECS funding provision that requires a town designated as a legacy alliance district or an educational reform district to have a minimum base aid ratio of 10%, guaranteeing a minimum amount of aid, and
2. tiered payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) grants for a town designated as a legacy alliance district or an educational reform district.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

**§ 41 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT HOLDBACK FOR MINORITY TEACHER PROGRAM FUNDING**

*Requires SDE to calculate alliance districts' funding holdback for minority teacher residency candidates using a new formula for FY 24; limits this holdback to FY 24 only*

Existing law requires each alliance district to partner with an operator of a minority teacher residency program to enroll minority candidates and place them in the district for a 10-month residency (see sections 38-40, above, for the bill renaming the alliance districts as “educational reform districts”). Under current law, SDE withholds from each alliance district 10% of an increase in alliance aid for grant payments to cover costs associated with these candidates’ (1) enrollment in a residency program, (2) teacher certification process, (3) hiring after successful program completion, or (4) retention as certified employees (CGS § 10-156gg(a)-(c)).

Starting with FY 23, current law requires the education commissioner to calculate alliance districts’ withheld amount as follows: 10% of any increase in funds that the district receives for that fiscal year that exceeds the amount of funds it received in FY 20. The bill instead (1) limits this withholding requirement to FY 24 only and (2) for FY 24, requires the commissioner to calculate the withheld amount as 10% of any increase in funds the alliance district received in FY 21 over the amount of funds it received in FY 20.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

***Background — Alliance Districts***

By law, alliance districts are the 36 school districts that have the lowest achievement, as rated by the state’s accountability index (CGS § 10-262u(b)(3)). Calculated by SDE, the accountability index ranks school districts by combining various measures of student performance, primarily standardized assessment scores, into a single score (CGS § 10-223e).

**§ 42 — INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP**

*Expands charge of, and extends deadline for, the school indoor air quality working group*

PA 22-118 created a 23-member working group on school indoor air

quality to study and make recommendations on various related issues, such as (1) optimal temperature ranges to ensure healthy air and promote student learning, (2) emergency air quality conditions that warrant temporary school closures, and (3) best practices for properly maintaining school heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) systems. For the latter, the bill specifies that its recommendations must also include the frequency and scope of the maintenance.

The bill also requires the working group to study and recommend (1) a needs-based system for equitably distributing funds under the HVAC system grant program for schools and (2) ways to make accessible and searchable the reports and results of the uniform inspections and evaluations of the indoor air quality and HVAC systems.

The bill extends, from January 4, 2023, to July 1, 2024, the deadline by which it must report to the Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

#### **§§ 43 & 44 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROGRAM**

*Requires more frequent indoor air quality inspections; requires the inspection reports to be submitted to DAS on a form the agency creates*

The bill requires school districts to do more frequent inspections and evaluations of public school indoor air quality and to submit the inspection results to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which must post them on its website. Under current law, these inspections must be done every three years for any school constructed, extended, renovated, or replaced on or after January 1, 2003. The bill instead requires they be done annually beginning January 1, 2024.

It also gives school districts more time to do a less frequent HVAC inspection that must be done by a certified technician, certified industrial hygienist, or a mechanical engineer. Current law requires these inspections to be done before January 1, 2024, and every five years after that. The bill moves the deadline to January 1, 2025, and creates a waiver process for certain situations.

### ***Annual Air Quality Inspection or Evaluation***

Current law requires school districts to do uniform indoor air quality inspections and evaluations every three years for any school built or renovated on or after January 1, 2003, and allows them to do so using the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Indoor Air Quality Tools for School Program (see *Background*). The bill instead makes the inspections annual and requires, rather than allows, the inspections to use this EPA program.

Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, the inspection or evaluation must include the following, among other things: HVAC systems; radon levels; potential for exposure to microbiological airborne particles, including fungi, mold, and bacteria; chemical compounds of concern to indoor air quality, including volatile organic compounds; pest infestation, including insects and rodents; the degree of pesticide usage; plumbing, including water distribution and drainage systems, and indoor air quality maintenance training for staff.

By law, the inspection results must be made public at a school board meeting and posted online.

### ***HVAC Inspection by Certified Technician or Hygienist or Mechanical Engineer***

The bill extends, from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2025, the deadline by which school districts must start having five-year HVAC inspections done by a certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technician, industrial hygienist certified by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene or the Board for Global EHS Credentialing, or a mechanical engineer.

By law, a "certified testing, adjusting and balancing technician" is (1) a technician certified to do testing, adjusting, and balancing of HVAC systems by the Associated Air Balance Council, the National Environmental Balancing Bureau, or the Testing, Adjusting and Balancing Bureau (TABB) or (2) someone training under the supervision of a (a) TABB-certified technician or (b) person certified to do ventilation assessments of HVAC systems through a certification body accredited

by the American National Standards Institute.

**Waiver**

The bill creates a process for DAS to grant waivers of the January 1, 2025, inspection and evaluation deadline. The waivers are valid for a year.

Upon a school board’s request, DAS may waive the deadline if it finds that:

1. there are not enough certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technicians; certified industrial hygienists; or mechanical engineers to do the inspection and evaluation or
2. the board scheduled the inspection and evaluation for a date after January 1, 2025.

The bill also allows school boards that had an inspection done in a different format that DAS deems equivalent to use the inspection in place of the uniform inspection and evaluation required under the law.

**School Indoor Air Quality and HVAC Reporting Forms (§ 43)**

The bill requires DAS to develop standard school building indoor air quality reporting forms to be used by boards of education when conducting either the annual air quality inspection or five-year HVAC inspection. DAS must make the forms available on its website and it may consult with representatives from the indoor air quality and HVAC industry to develop them.

The bill additionally requires that school boards submit the report and results for both inspections to DAS using these standard forms.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**Background — Tools for Schools**

The EPA’s Tools for Schools program helps schools identify and address indoor air quality issues, including using its action kit, which has guidance for existing school staff to do practical inspections and take other steps at little or no cost.

**§ 45 — OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE COMFORT RANGE GUIDELINES**

*Requires DPH to develop temperature comfort range guidelines for school buildings*

The bill requires DPH, by July 1, 2024, to develop guidelines for an optimal temperature comfort range of 65 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit in school buildings and facilities but allows gymnasiums and natatoriums to have a larger range.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 46 — PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANT**

*Requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts*

The bill requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts. Under the bill a “pathways in technology early college high school program” is an instructional program in which students in grades nine to 12, inclusive, complete high school and college-level coursework while also engaging in industry-guided workforce development.

Starting with FY 2024, SDE must annually issue a request for proposals to alliance district school boards to (1) enhance an existing pathways in technology early college high school program or (2) establish a new public-private partnership (i.e., a relationship between an alliance district board of education, a community college, and a private entity to create a pathways in technology early college high school program).

The department must review the proposals and award a grant to two school boards for the costs associated with establishing a new public-private partnership or enhancing a pathway in technology early college high school program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 47 — SCHOOL CLIMATE DEFINITION**

*Defines “school climate” and related terms*

**School Climate**

The bill replaces the definition of “school climate” in current law with a new definition. Under the bill, “school climate” means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the “school community,” defined as (1) people, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations invested in the school system’s welfare and vitality; (2) students and their families; (3) board of education members; and (4) school volunteers and employees.

“School climate” under the bill is also based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life, reflecting the school community’s norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures, which is similar to its definition under current law (which the bill repeals) (CGS § 10-222d(a)(9)).

### ***Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Teen Dating Violence***

***Bullying.*** The bill also replaces the definition of “bullying” in current law, defining it in the bill as unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to 12, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The “school environment” under the bill is a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program, including other activities, functions, or programs occurring (1) on or off school grounds; (2) at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a local or regional board of education; or (3) outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program if the bullying negatively impact the school environment.

Under current law, “bullying” is a direct or indirect act that is severe, persistent, or pervasive, which does any of the following: (1) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual, (2) places an individual in reasonable fear of emotional harm, or (3) infringes on an individual’s rights or opportunities at school. Current law also specifies that bullying includes a written, oral, or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical,



developmental or sensory disability; or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics (CGS § 10-222d(1)).

**Cyberbullying and Teen Dating Violence.** The bill also groups “cyberbullying” and “teen dating violence” within the definition of “bullying.” It maintains the same general definition for “cyberbullying” as under current law: any act of bullying using the internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephones or other mobile electronic devices (e.g., text messaging device, pager, laptop computer), or any other electronic communication (i.e., transfers of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence transmitted by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical system).

The bill also maintains the same definition for “teen dating violence” as current law: any act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing, and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

### ***Challenging Behavior***

The bill defines “challenging behavior” as behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

### ***Restorative Practices***

Under the bill, “restorative practices” refers to evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on the following:

1. building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community;
2. holding the student accountable for challenging behavior; and
3. ensuring the student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

### ***Other Defined Terms***

This section of the bill also defines other related terms as described in

the sections below where they appear.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§§ 47 & 48 — SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS AND MODEL POLICY**

*Requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to (1) develop school climate standards based on national guidelines and (2) create a uniform bullying complaint form; requires SDE and boards of education to post the form on their websites and in their handbooks*

***National Standards***

The bill requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to convene a subcommittee to:

1. develop Connecticut school climate standards based on nationally recognized school climate research and best practices by February 1, 2024;
2. create a uniform bullying complaint form for SDE and local and regional boards of education to include on their websites and student handbooks; and
3. provide guidance to local and regional boards on implementing the Connecticut school climate policy.

Under the bill, the “Connecticut school climate policy” is a policy developed, updated, and approved by a Connecticut association representing boards of education. The policy must be adopted by the Collaborative and provide a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that (1) serves to implement the Connecticut school climate standards and (2) includes a continuous cycle of planning and preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§ 49 — CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CLIMATE POLICY**

*Phases in the requirement for boards of education to adopt and implement a new Connecticut school climate policy over the next three school years*

Over the next two school years (2023-24 and 2024-25), the bill allows

local and regional boards of education to adopt and implement the new Connecticut school climate policy described above (§ 48). Under the bill, districts that choose to do this are no longer required to implement provisions in current law requiring school boards to do the following:

1. implement a safe school climate plan and administer school climate assessments (CGS § 10-222d);
2. use bullying and teen dating violence prevention and intervention strategies (CGS § 10-222g); and
3. appoint a district safe school climate coordinator, safe school climate specialists, and safe school climate committees (CGS § 10-222k).

By the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires, rather than allows, all boards of education to adopt and implement the Connecticut school climate policy since the bill repeals the above statutes in current law (see §§ 87 below).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### **§§ 50-52 & 70 — SCHOOL CLIMATE PERSONNEL**

*Requires each school district to have a school climate coordinator and each school to have a school climate specialist and a school climate committee*

Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires district- and school-level administrators and staff to assume roles related to addressing school climate.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### ***District School Climate Coordinator (§§ 50 & 70)***

Under the bill, each school district's superintendent, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, must serve as the district's school climate coordinator. This differs slightly from current law, which requires the superintendent to appoint a "district safe school climate coordinator" from among existing school district staff (CGS § 10-222k(a)). Under the bill, the school climate coordinator's duties include the following, which are also very similar to current law:

1. giving all schools district-level leadership and support for implementing their school climate improvement plans;
2. collaborating with each school's school climate specialist (see below) to develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, including alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment;
3. communicate the developed strategies to the school community, including publishing them in the district student handbook;
4. collecting and maintaining data about school climate improvement, including data related to school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth, types of bullying complaints submitted by school community members, types of challenging behavior addressed using the restorative practices response policy (see § 74 below), and the implementation of restorative practices; and
5. meeting semiannually with each school's school climate specialist to (a) identify strategies to improve school climate, including by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices; (b) propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan; and (c) help complete the school climate survey.

The bill also requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services commissioner to give mental health first aid training to any person appointed to serve as a school climate coordinator beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

***School Climate Specialist (§ 51)***

Under the bill, each school's principal, or a professional certified school employee trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices and who is designated as the school climate specialist by the principal, must serve as the school climate specialist for the school. This

is nearly identical to current law, which allows the principal to appoint a non-administrator as well (CGS § 10-222k(b)). The specialist's duties include the following:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including reports of alleged bullying and harassment;
2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee (see § 52 below); and
4. leading the school climate improvement plan's implementation (see § 54 below).

By repealing the safe school climate specialist's duties in current law, the bill eliminates the investigatory aspect of the position as it relates to bullying allegations.

***School Climate Committee (§ 52)***

The bill requires each school to have a school climate committee, beginning with the 2025-26 school year, with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse members who are representative of various roles in the school community and appointed by the school climate specialist. The specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator, must annually review and approve the committee's membership, which must consist of the following people:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the certified employees' union;
3. a group of students (of an unspecified number) that is demographically representative of the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. enrolled students' families; and

5. other members of the school community whom the school climate specialist wishes to appoint.

By repealing current law's requirements for the committee's membership, the bill removes the requirement that the school's medical and mental health personnel serve on the committee (CGS § 10-222k(c)(1)(B)). It also repeals the requirement that only high school students can serve on committees and only for a high school committee (CGS § 10-222k(c)(1)(C)).

The bill tasks school climate committees with the following responsibilities:

1. helping with the annual school climate survey's development, scheduling, and administration;
2. using school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate;
3. creating or proposing revisions to the school climate improvement plan (see § 54 below);
4. helping with the school climate improvement plan's implementation;
5. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including restorative practices in the school community;
6. annually notifying the school community of the uniform bullying complaint form (or a similar form) used by the school; and
7. engaging the school community in the school climate improvement plan's implementation at semiannual meetings during the school year.

By repealing the current law governing the committee, the bill removes the following duties:

1. receiving copies of completed reports after bullying

investigations (CGS § 10-222k(c)(2)) and

2. implementing the provisions of the school security and safety plan (CGS § 10-222m) that govern the collection, evaluation, and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying (CGS § 10-222k(c)(2)).

### **§ 53 — SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY**

*Requires each school climate committee to annually administer a school climate survey*

The bill requires the school climate committee in each public school to biennially administer a school climate survey beginning in the 2025-26 school year to students, school employees and families of students, as long as students' parents or guardians receive prior written notice that the survey is being administered and its content. Parents and guardians must have a reasonable opportunity to opt students out of the survey.

Under the bill, this survey must be a research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, their families, and school employees in the predominant languages of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan (see § 59 below). (The bill does not explicitly state whether the school climate committee must select a survey made by an outside entity or whether it must make its own research-based, validated survey. Current law, repealed by the bill, requires SDE to distribute department-approved school climate assessment instruments to all public schools (CGS § 10-222h).)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### **§§ 54 & 71 — SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

*Requires the creation of a school climate improvement plan in each school that aligns with the Connecticut school climate standards and includes protocols and supports to enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior*

Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires each school's school climate specialist, in collaboration with the district's school

climate coordinator, to develop a school climate improvement plan and update it as needed. The bill repeals the requirement for schools to develop a “safe school climate plan” (CGS § 10-222d; see §§ 86-87 below).

Under the bill, a school climate improvement plan is a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee in collaboration with the school climate specialist using school climate survey data and other relevant information. In developing the plan, the committee and the specialist must engage and involve all school community members in a series of (1) overlapping systemic improvements; (2) schoolwide instructional practices; and (3) relational practices that prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, including alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

### ***Protocols and Supports***

The bill requires the plan to align with the Connecticut school climate standards (see § 53 above) and include protocols and supports to enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior. The protocols and supports must, at a minimum, specify the following:

1. the contact information of the administrator the school climate specialist designates to be notified by school employees of any incidents of challenging behavior, and the contact information of any other administrator or school employee to be notified of these incidents in the designated administrator’s absence;
2. the process by which the designated administrator will assess the facts, severity, and intentionality of an incident of challenging behavior;
3. each designated location to which a student may be sent when they are temporarily removed from a classroom, and the supports they receive there, including (a) intervention from a trained school employee, (b) therapeutic resources, (c) available mental health supports, (d) instructional materials, and (e) technology or other resources to address the student’s temporary



needs;

4. ways to address challenging behavior, enhance resiliency, increase the use of de-escalation strategies and improve social and emotional skills, which may include, but are not limited to training, therapeutic mental health supports, restorative practices, or trauma-informed instructional strategies;
5. safeguards established to ensure that any supports, services, or interventions given to any student who receives special education or accommodation for a disability comply with a student's individualized education program under special education law or an accommodation plan under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
6. a prohibition on the discrimination or retaliation against anyone who reports or assists in the investigation of a challenging behavior incident.

***Tiered responses.*** The bill requires the protocols and supports to include tiered responses to challenging behavior incidents, based on level of impact or frequency of occurrence, that:

1. require temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students to reduce likelihood of injury,
2. indicate credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others, or
3. result in an injury that requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, or less severe injuries caused by the same person on more than one occasion, verified by the school nurse or other medical professional.

These tiered responses must include at least the following:

1. for a single incident, the school principal must notify the parents or guardians of each student involved in a way that complies with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20

- U.S.C. § 1232g et seq.) (FERPA);
2. for each following incident, the school principal must invite the parents or guardians of each student involved to a meeting (in-person at the school or virtual) to discuss any specific supports or interventions, including restorative practices; and
  3. for multiple incidents, or a single incident that causes severe harm, the school principal must give notice to the parents or guardians of each student involved in the incident of other resources for supports and interventions, including the 211 Infoline program; Behavioral Health Partnership services or programs; or other resources for professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

**Reporting requirement.** Under the bill, the protocols and supports must also require the superintendent to, at least annually, report the number of incidents that occurred the previous year to the school board. This report must also include the grade level of each student involved and the supports, services, or interventions given in response to address the needs of students and school employees. The report must be made in a way that does not result in the disclosure of identifiable student data in keeping with FERPA.

**Meeting between school administrator and employees.** The bill requires the protocols and supports to also include a requirement for a meeting between an administrator and the school employee who witnessed the incident within two days of the incident. The meeting must determine the supports and interventions required to address the students' and school employees' needs, as long as the supports and interventions for any student who receives special education are determined by the student's planning and placement team and the notice of the incident is submitted to the team within two days after the incident.

The protocols and supports must also include a process by which a teacher can request a behavior intervention meeting for students exhibiting disruptive behavior (CGS § 10-236c).

The bill also requires the plan to be based on the results of the school climate survey, any school climate committee recommendations, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator consider relevant. The plan must be submitted to the school climate coordinator by December 31 each year for review and approval. Once approved, the plan must be made available to the school community in written or electronic form and be used in the prevention of, identification of, and response to challenging behavior. (The bill does not give a deadline for the climate coordinator to act on the submitted plan and does not indicate what happens if the plan is not approved.)

By repealing the current law requiring “safe school climate plans” and replacing them with “school climate improvement plans,” the bill removes the following elements of the schoolwide climate plan that current law explicitly requires:

1. enabling students to anonymously report, and parents or guardians to report in writing, acts of bullying to school employees;
2. requiring school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to (a) orally notify the safe school climate specialist or another school administrator, if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable, no later than one school day after witnessing or receiving a report of bullying and (b) file a written report no later than two school days after making the oral report;
3. requiring the safe school climate specialist to (a) investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying; (b) ensure that the investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports; and (c) ensure that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed the bullying, along with the parents or guardians of the student against whom it was directed, receive prompt notice that the investigation has begun;
4. requiring the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports and specifying that no disciplinary action can

- be taken only on the basis of an anonymous report;
5. including language in student codes of conduct about bullying;
  6. requiring each school to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying, along with the parents or guardians of students against whom the bullying was directed, no later than 48 hours after the investigation ends, (a) about the investigation's results and (b) verbally and by email if their email addresses are known, that the parents or guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies available to them under state law, which allows them to file a complaint with SBE against the school board for failure or inability to implement the educational interests of the state (CGS §§ 10-4a & 10-4b);
  7. requiring that (a) each school invite the parents or guardians of a student against whom the bullying was directed to a meeting to tell them what the school is doing to ensure the student's safety and the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying and (b) this invitation include a description of the response of school employees to these acts and any consequences that may result if more bullying takes place;
  8. requiring that (a) each school invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent more bullying and (b) this invitation include a description of the response of school employees to these acts and any consequences that may result if more bullying takes place;
  9. establishing a procedure for each school to (a) document and maintain records on reports and investigations of bullying in the school and to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school and (b) make this list available for public inspection and annually report this number to SDE;
  10. directing the development of case-by-case interventions for

addressing repeated incidents of bullying against a single person or repeated bullying done by the same person that may include both counseling and discipline;

11. prohibiting discrimination and retaliation against anyone who reports or helps in the investigation of bullying;
12. directing the development of student safety support plans for students against whom bullying was directed that address safety measures the school will take to protect these students against more bullying;
13. requiring the principal of a school, or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when the principal, or the principal's designee, believes that any bullying is criminal conduct; and
14. requiring, at the beginning of each school year, schools to give all school employees a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§ 55 — TRAINING RESOURCES**

*Requires each local and regional board of education to provide training and resources for school employees on school climate, social and emotional learning, and restorative practices; repeals a law requiring the statewide safe school climate resource network*

Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the bill requires each local and regional board of education to provide training and resources to school employees on (1) "school climate" and culture (see above); (2) social and emotional learning; and (3) evidence- and research-based interventions, including "restorative practices" (see above).

The bill defines "social and emotional learning" as the process by which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Under the bill, "emotional intelligence" means the ability to do the following:

1. perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others;
2. use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication;
3. understand and identify emotions; and
4. manage emotions in oneself and others.

The bill allows the resources and training to be made available at each school under the board’s jurisdiction and to include technical assistance for implementing the school climate improvement plan. The school climate coordinator must select and approve the training providers, and any school employee may participate in the training. The bill defines “school employee” as any of the following people:

1. a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator, or coach employed by a local or regional board of education, or
2. anyone else who, under contract with a board of education, (a) does duties that bring them in regular contact with students and (b) provides services to, or on behalf of, students enrolled in a public school.

The bill repeals from current law the statewide safe school climate resource network, which SDE must establish in consultation with the State Education Resource Center to make available to all schools information, training opportunities, and resource materials to improve the school climate and diminish bullying and teen dating violence (CGS § 10-222i).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§§ 56-69 — TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING CHANGES**

*Makes technical and conforming changes*

The bill makes technical and conforming changes in the education

laws relating to statutes the bill repeals and new school climate personnel the bill creates.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

## **§§ 72 & 73 — SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**

*Requires the MOU between a school board that assigns an SRO to its schools and the SRO's local law enforcement agency specify the SRO's duties and procedures; requires school boards to post the MOUs on their website and in the SRO's assigned school; and requires each SRO to submit a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts*

By law, each local and regional board of education that assigns a school resource officer (SRO; i.e., sworn police officer) to its schools must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SRO's local law enforcement agency. The MOU must address the SRO's role and responsibility in the school, including the officer's interactions with students and staff, as well as training requirements.

This bill adds the requirement that, as of July 1, 2023, these MOUs specify the SRO's duties and procedures for restraining students, using firearms, making school-based arrests, and reporting on investigations and behavioral interventions. Additionally, it requires school boards to post their MOU on their website and in the school where the SRO is assigned, as well as maintain the MOU in a central location in the school district.

The bill additionally requires each SRO to submit to his agency's police chief a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts within five days of doing so. Under the bill, "investigation or behavioral intervention" is a circumstance in which an SRO is conducting (1) a fact-finding inquiry concerning student behavior or school safety, including emergency circumstances, or (2) an intervention to resolve violent or nonviolent student behavior or conflicts. The report must include at least the following:

1. the date, time, and location of the investigation or behavioral intervention;
2. the SRO's name and badge number;

3. the race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability status for each student involved in the investigation or behavioral intervention;
4. the reason for and nature and disposition of the investigation or behavioral intervention; and
5. whether any student involved in the investigation or behavioral intervention was (a) searched; (b) informed of their constitutional rights; (c) issued a citation or a summons; (d) arrested; or (e) detained, including the amount of time of the detainment.

Police chiefs must submit SROs' reports to their school districts' superintendents at least monthly. Superintendents must submit them to their school districts' local or regional board of education.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### **§ 74 — RESTORATIVE PRACTICES RESPONSE POLICY**

*Requires school boards to adopt a restorative practices response policy*

Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires each local and regional board of education to adopt a restorative practices response policy to be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior or nonviolent student conflict that does not constitute a crime. The bill prohibits the policy from including the involvement of an SRO or other law enforcement official unless the challenging behavior or conflict escalates to violence or constitutes a crime.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### **§ 75 — SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES WORKING GROUP**

*Requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group, under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, to study current school discipline practices and report the study's results to the Education Committee*

The bill requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative to study current school discipline practices, including those that lead to students becoming "justice-involved" (i.e., involved with the juvenile justice system due to being accused of a delinquent or criminal act).



Under the bill, the working group's members must be appointed by the commissioner and representative of students, educators, community members, child welfare and development experts, mental health care providers, and restorative practices experts.

By July 1, 2024, the bill requires the working group to submit a report to the Education Committee on the study's results and any recommendations for school discipline reform.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## **§§ 76-82 — RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CONCERNING EDUCATION**

*Makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion*

The bill makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion. Specifically, it requires the following:

1. school districts with high rates of in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion to (a) develop strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions and (b) submit these strategies to SDE (§§ 76-77);
2. SDE to report to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC; see *Background*) on expulsions and related alternative education program placements (§ 81); and
3. SDE to provide, and allows school boards to use, recommended assessments for screening students who exhibit mental health distress or who have been identified as at risk for suicide (§§ 79-80).

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2024, except the provisions governing (1) expulsion and alternative education reporting take effect upon passage and (2) student mental health assessments take effect on July 1, 2023.

### **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

#### ***Response and Improvement Plans***

By law, local and regional boards of education must annually submit certain data on each of their schools to SDE in their strategic school profile report. Among this data is the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (CGS § 10-220(c)(3)).

Beginning on July 1, 2024, the bill requires districts with a rate of suspensions and expulsions that is high or disproportionate, as determined by the education commissioner, to (1) develop strategies to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions, and (2) submit these strategies to SDE in the form and manner the commissioner prescribes. Also, beginning July 1, 2024, the bill requires SDE, within available appropriations, to provide support, on-site monitoring, and oversight of schools implementing these strategies.

By law, SDE must annually examine the suspension and expulsion data submitted as part of the strategic school profile report, disaggregate the data, and submit a report to SBE. The bill requires this report to be posted on SDE's website and include the above strategies and the results from them.

***Addressing Suicide Risks (§§ 79-80)***

Under the bill, by January 1, 2024, SDE must give local and regional boards of education a list of recommended assessments for determining the suicide risk of students who (1) exhibit mental health distress, (2) have been identified as at risk of suicide, or (3) are considered to be at an increased risk of suicide based on certain risk factors. The risk factors must be based on the state-wide strategic suicide prevention plan developed by the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board, and must include at least youth who are:

1. bereaved by suicide;
2. disabled or have chronic health conditions, such as mental health or substance use disorders;
3. involved in the juvenile justice system;
4. experiencing homelessness or placed in an out-of-home setting,

such as foster care; or

5. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

The list may include the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (see *Background*).

Relatedly, the bill allows boards to use an assessment from the SDE-provided list to screen identified students beginning July 1, 2023.

The bill requires students who are assessed based on the risk factors based on the suicide prevention plan developed by the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board to receive heightened consideration during their mental health assessment.

### ***Student Outcomes Reporting (§ 81)***

The bill requires SDE, by January 1, 2025, to report to JJPOC on the educational experiences and outcomes of students who are expelled and placed in alternative education, and how these opportunities compare to the standards adopted by SBE.

Under the bill, the report must include at least the following:

1. the number of students who were expelled and placed in alternative education during the previous school year;
2. the types of alternative educational opportunities in which the students were placed; and
3. any student engagement and outcome measures.

### ***Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative Advisement on Suspensions and Expulsions (§ 82)***

The bill requires SDE's Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative to advise the SDE commissioner and SBE on strategies to reduce the overall and disproportionate use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.

Beginning by October 1, 2023, the bill makes the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative responsible for the following duties concerning

grades preschool through two:

1. developing guidance to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in these grades;
2. giving evidence-based and developmentally appropriate definitions and examples of conduct that is violent or sexual in nature that may allow an out-of-school suspension for students in these grades (CGS § 10-233c(g)); and
3. recommending developmentally appropriate interventions for students in these grades as an alternative to out-of-school suspension.

**Background — JJPOC**

State law charges JJPOC with evaluating policies related to the juvenile justice system and the expansion of juvenile jurisdiction to include 16- and 17-year-olds. Its members include legislators, judicial branch leaders, state agency heads, and child and victim advocates, among others (CGS § 46b-121n).

**Background — Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale is a short questionnaire that can be administered quickly in the field by responders with no formal mental health training, and it is relevant in a wide range of settings and for people of all ages.

**§§ 83 & 84 — GRANTS FOR THE HIRING OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, COUNSELORS, NURSES, LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, AND SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS**

*Pushes out by one year the dates by which SDE must administer the school mental health therapist grant program; removes the requirement that grant recipients in both programs refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE; adjusts education commissioner reporting dates*

Current law requires SDE, for FYs 23 to 25, to administer a program to provide grants for local and regional boards of education to (1) hire

and retain more school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, nurses, and licensed marriage and family therapists and (2) hire school mental health specialists (PA 22-80, §§ 4-5 as amended by PA 22-116, § 7 and PA 22-47, § 13 as amended by PA 22-116, § 10). Both public acts require grant recipients to refund to the department any unspent grant amount at the end of the fiscal year when it was awarded.

***Grant to Hire School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Counselors, Nurses, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (§ 83)***

For the grant program to hire school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, nurses, and licensed marriage and family therapists, the bill removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts. By law and unchanged by the bill, recipients must refund amounts not spent according to the plan in the approved grant application.

***Grant to Hire School Mental Health Specialists (§ 84)***

For the grant program to hire school mental health therapists, the bill pushes out by one year the dates for which SDE must administer the program from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26. It correspondingly pushes out by one year the requirements in each of these fiscal years that the commissioner must follow when determining grant award amounts.

The bill also makes corresponding changes to reporting deadlines for the education commissioner. Under the bill, the commissioner must report to the Children's and Education committees on each grant recipient's utilization rate and the grant program's return on investment by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026. Additionally, the commissioner must develop recommendations by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026, on (1) whether the grant program should be extended and funded for FY 27 and beyond and (2) the grant award amount under the program.

Additionally, the bill removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts. By law and unchanged by the bill, recipients must refund amounts not spent according to the plan in the approved grant application.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 85 — GRANT FOR DELIVERY OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

*Pushes out by one year the dates by which SDE must administer a grant program to provide student mental health services to certain youth camp and summer program operators; removes the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE*

Current law requires SDE to administer a program to provide grants in FYs 23 to 25 to local and regional boards of education, youth camp operators, and other summer program operators for delivery of student mental health services. Grant recipients must refund to the department any unspent grant amounts at the end of the fiscal year when it was awarded (PA 22-47, § 14).

The bill (1) pushes out by one year the dates by which SDE must administer the grant program from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26 and (2) removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts. It correspondingly pushes out by one year the requirements in each of these fiscal years that the commissioner must follow when determining grant award amounts.

The bill also makes corresponding changes to the dates by which the education commissioner must report to the Children's and Education committees on each grant recipient's utilization rate (by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026). Additionally, the commissioner must develop recommendations by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026, on (1) whether the grant program should be extended and funded for FY 27 and beyond and (2) the grant award amount under the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§§ 86 & 87 — REPEALER**

*Repeals laws containing school climate-related requirements for school boards and SDE that conflict with the bill's provisions*

Current law requires local and regional boards of education to follow various provisions for creating a safe school climate and preventing and investigating bullying, cyberbullying, and teen dating violence. The bill creates new provisions and repeals laws with the following

requirements for boards of education:

1. implementing a safe school climate plan and submitting it to SDE for approval and administering school climate assessments (CGS § 10-222d);
2. using bullying and teen dating violence prevention and intervention strategies (CGS § 10-222g); and
3. appointing a district safe school climate coordinator, safe school climate specialists, and safe school climate committees for the schools in their respective districts (CGS § 10-222k).

It also repeals laws containing the following requirements for SDE:

1. analyzing district efforts to prevent and respond to bullying in schools and annually reporting on this analysis to the Education and Children's committees (CGS § 10-222h),
2. disseminating grade-level-appropriate school climate assessments to all public schools (CGS § 10-222h),
3. establishing and maintaining the statewide safe school climate resource network (CGS § 10-222i), and
4. reviewing safe school climate plans submitted by boards of education for approval or rejection (CGS § 10-222p).

It also eliminates the position of Director of Reading Initiatives within SDE (CGS § 10-3c).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, except the provision eliminating the Director of Reading Initiatives position takes effect upon passage.

***Background — Related Bills***

sHB 5003 (File 575), favorably reported out by the Education Committee, (1) revises the alliance district program by lowering the number designated from 36 to 20 and renames them educational reform districts, and (2) creates the same education funding and accountability

commission.

sSB 1199 (File 728), favorably reported out by the Education and Appropriations committees, has the following identical or similar provisions: (1) educator apprenticeship program, (2) school district increasing educator diversity plan review, (3) aspiring educators diversity scholarship program changes, (4) educator diversity oversight council name change, (5) adjunct professor permit, (6) cursive and world languages added to model curriculum, (7) credit recovery program credit permitted to be used for high school graduation, and (8) annual remaining Open Choice funds use modification.

sSB 1094, favorably reported out by the Education Committee, contains the same reading curriculum model and program requirement, waiver, and permitting of gradual implementation for districts not in compliance and without a waiver.

sHB 6842, favorably reported out by the Education Committee, contains the same provisions regarding the local food for schools incentive program.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 28 Nay 16 (03/24/2023)