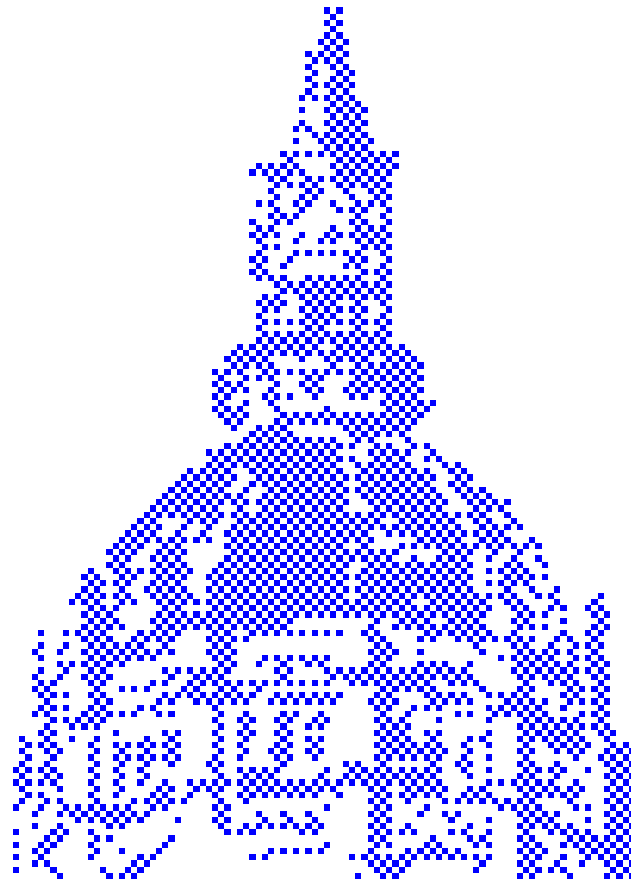




## ACTS AFFECTING EDUCATION



2015-R-0154 (Revised)

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September 18, 2015

## **NOTICE TO READERS**

This report provides highlights of new laws affecting education enacted during the 2015 regular and special legislative sessions.

Not all provisions of the acts are included here. Complete summaries of all 2015 public acts are available on OLR's website as they are completed: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/OLRPASums.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/>.

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## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACHIEVEMENT**

### ***Calculating School and District Performance***

The act creates new measures for the State Department of Education (SDE) to use when calculating school and district performance. Beginning with the 2015-16 school year, it replaces "school performance index" (SPI) and "district performance index" (DPI) with new measures known as the "performance index" (PI) and the "accountability index" (AI).

The act does not identify specific formulas for PI and AI to calculate performance, but it establishes certain parameters. PI is a score determined by using the mastery test data of record assigned to student subgroups, schools, or districts. The act requires that AI use multiple student measures, including PI and high school graduation rates, and allows AI to also take into account other measures including: (1) academic growth over time, (2) attendance and chronic absenteeism, (3) postsecondary education and career readiness, (4) enrollment and graduation from institutions of higher education, (5) civic and art education, and (6) physical fitness.

The act also requires SDE to report to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 to explain and compare the formulas and scores of the SPI, DPI, PI, and AI ([PA 15-5, June Special](#)

[Session](#), §§ 326-333, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Commissioner's Network of Schools***

A new law increases the number of schools that the commissioner may select for the Commissioner's Network of Schools by allowing her to select up to (1) 25 schools for the network in a single school year, rather than 25 total, and (2) five, instead of two, schools from one district in a single school year. By law, the commissioner can select low-performing schools for the network in order to make targeted interventions to improve student performance ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 258, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Education Planning Commission and Strategic Master Plan***

The implementer act establishes a Planning Commission for Education to develop and recommend the implementation of a strategic master plan that states a clear vision and mission for developing a sustainable, equitable, and high-quality public education system for Connecticut. The commission has 29 voting members.

The act requires the commission to issue a preliminary report by April 15, 2016 and the strategic master plan by February 15, 2017. The preliminary report must address the master plan's development and include any legislative and funding recommendations. The

strategic master plan must include (1) specific implementation goals and benchmarks and (2) any legislative and funding recommendations. Both reports must be submitted to the Education and Appropriations committees and the governor ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 263, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***High School Graduation Requirements Delay***

The legislature enacted a new law that delays, by one year, implementation of the scheduled changes to the state's high school graduation requirements that (1) increase the minimum number of credits, from 20 to 25, required for high school graduation; (2) require students to pass state examinations for five specific courses; and (3) complete a senior project in order to graduate. These requirements were set to apply to the 2020 graduating class (the class beginning high school in fall 2016). Under the law, they apply to the 2021 graduating class (the class beginning high school in fall 2017) ([PA 15-237](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***High School Student Assessments and Mastery Exam Committee***

By law, public school students in certain grades must take mastery exams designed to measure grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing, math, and science.

A new law requires SBE, by January 1, 2016, to enter into an agreement with a provider of a nationally recognized college readiness assessment to provide and administer the reading, writing, and mathematics 11th grade exams in Connecticut if certain conditions are met, including federal approval. The law eliminates the option of students taking these exams in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and instead requires they be taken in 11<sup>th</sup>. It also eliminates the option that the science exam be given in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and instead requires students take this exam in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

The law also establishes the Mastery Examination Committee to study various aspects of Connecticut's mastery test system and make the following reports to the Education Committee: (1) an interim report by February 15, 2016 and (2) a final report with recommendations by January 15, 2017 ([PA 15-238](#), effective (1) upon passage for the exam committee, (2) upon passage and applicable on and after the effective date of an agreement between SBE and an 11<sup>th</sup> grade college readiness assessment provider for the mastery exam statute changes, and (3) July 1, 2015 for the provision requiring SBE to enter into an agreement with an 11<sup>th</sup> grade readiness assessment provider).

### ***National Exam as Part of Substitute for Standard Graduation Requirements***

By law, SDE is required to establish a program that allows boards of education to permit 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to substitute certain evidence of academic achievement for existing high school graduation requirements in order to receive a high school diploma. One of three required pieces is a passing score on a national examination that SDE determines. A new law changes this to a nationally recognized exam that SBE approves ([PA 15-215](#), § 7, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Special Master Title Change***

The act changes the title of a person the State Board of Education (SBE) assigns to administer education operations in a low-performing district and work collaboratively with the district's board from "special master" to "district improvement officer" ([PA 15-215](#), §§ 1-3, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Task Force to Study High School Graduation Requirements and Common Core State Standards***

A new act creates a nine-member task force to study (1) the alignment of the upcoming high school graduation requirement changes with the Common Core State Standards and (2) the feasibility of adding training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as a high school graduation requirement.

Another new law requires the same task force to also study the feasibility of substituting a student's participation in interscholastic athletics for the physical education credit in order to satisfy graduation requirements.

By January 1, 2016, the task force must submit its report with findings and recommendations to the Education Committee ([PA 15-237](#), § 2, effective upon passage; [PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 299, effective upon passage).

### **BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)**

#### ***Alliance District Plans and ELL Students***

The implementer act expands the list of things that boards of education may include in their alliance district plans by adding provisions for the enhancement of bilingual education programs or other language acquisition services, including participation in the ELL pilot program (established under section 294 of the same act) ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 296, effective July 1, 2015).

#### ***Extending Bilingual Education Time and Other Supports for Bilingual and ELL Students***

A new law makes a number of changes regarding bilingual education and ELL students. It establishes a process under which a student may

receive an additional 30 months beyond the previous maximum of 30 months (for a maximum total of six school years) in a bilingual education program if (1) the responsible board of education asks SDE for an extension and (2) SDE agrees, using standards the law requires SDE to develop, that an extension is necessary.

Other changes include requiring SDE to:

1. develop state mastery examinations in the most common native languages of students eligible for bilingual education and
2. annually report on the academic progress of students in bilingual education programs ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 286, 287, 290, 293, & 295, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Language Acquisition and In-Service Training***

The act adds second language acquisition, including language development and culturally responsive pedagogy, to the topics that SBE, within available appropriations and utilizing available materials, must assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to provide to teachers as part of their in-service training ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 292, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Language Acquisition Information for Parents***

A new law sets a July 1, 2016 deadline for SDE to give boards of education information on (1) research-based best practices on how to involve eligible students' parents and legal guardians in the language acquisition process and (2) native language accommodations regarding statewide mastery exams ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 291, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Pilot Program for ELL Students***

The act requires SDE to establish an ELL pilot program for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years for (1) three school districts with the highest number of ELL students and (2) the district with the highest percentage of ELL students. Pilot program participants must develop research-based language acquisition plans for ELL students in consultation with SDE, public institutions of higher education, or language acquisition experts.

The act also requires SDE to contract with an independent evaluator from an institution of higher education or a professional evaluator with expertise in language acquisition to evaluate the ELL pilot program. The evaluation must be submitted to SDE and the Education Committee by October 1, 2017 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 287 & 294, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) and Bilingual Educations Study***

The implementer act requires SDE to study the feasibility of using RESCs to help local and regional boards of education that have low enrollments of bilingual eligible students with providing bilingual education, language transition, and other academic support related to bilingual and ELL students. SDE must report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 289, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***RESC Survey and Feasibility Study for Improved ELL Services***

A new law requires each of the state's six RESCs to:

1. conduct a survey, by July 1, 2016, of ELL services and bilingual education programs provided in the RESC's region to identify the need for enhanced or new RESC-provided ELL services and bilingual education programs and
2. study the feasibility of providing and administering new ELL services and bilingual education programs that are at least equal to those the local and regional boards of education currently provide in that region.

Each RESC must submit the feasibility study, by October 1, 2016, to SBE and the Education Committee ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 297 & 298, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Teachers of English as a Second Language***

The new law requires, rather than permits, districts unable to hire enough certified bilingual teachers for a school year to apply to the education commissioner for permission to use certified English as a second language teachers instead ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 288, effective July 1, 2015).

## **CHARTER SCHOOLS**

### ***Charter School Approval, Internal Governance, and Transparency***

The legislature passed a new law that removes SBE's authority to grant charters to charter school applicants, replacing it with the authority to grant "initial certificates" that do not become effective charters until the legislature appropriates funding for the school. The law also requires charter school governing councils, among other things, to have their members submit to background checks, conduct background checks on their employees, and adopt anti-nepotism and conflict of interest policies.

Additionally, it also requires charter management organizations to share with their associated charter schools records and files related to school administration, which the law subjects to public disclosure under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([PA 15-239](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Charter School Capital Expenses***

The bond act authorizes up to \$5 million in state bonds for FY 17 for grants to charter schools for school building projects, school building general improvements, and repayment of school building project debt ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 58, effective July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***Funding for Additional Charter School Seats***

The act requires some of the more than \$2 billion a year in education equalization grant funds appropriated in the budget act go towards funding new seats at two charter schools — Common Ground High School (New Haven) and Highville Charter School (Hamden).

For Common Ground High School, the act requires up to \$495,000 each in FY 16 and FY 17 to fund up to 45 seats. For Highville Charter School, the act requires up to \$440,000 each of these years to fund up to 40 seats ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 337, effective July 1, 2015).

## **COURTS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

### ***Drug Possession Near a School or Day Care Center***

A new law reduces the penalty for drug possession near schools or day care centers. Under prior law, there was an enhanced penalty for certain drug possession crimes within 1,500 feet of a (1) licensed day care center with a sign in a conspicuous place or (2) school, for offenders who do not attend the school. The act reduces the enhanced penalty from a two-year mandatory prison sentence to a class A misdemeanor with a required prison and probation sentence. The act requires, as a condition of probation, that the offender perform community service as the court orders ([PA 15-2, June Special Session](#), §§ 1-8 & 19, effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Probate Court Truancy Clinics***

A new law expands the children's probate court truancy clinics that previously were pilot programs limited to the Waterbury and New Haven probate courts. The law instead allows the probate court administrator to establish truancy clinics within probate courts serving towns designated as alliance districts ([PA 15-225](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).

## **CURRICULUM**

### ***Additions to School Curriculum***

The legislature passed a new law that requires public schools to add the following subject areas to their curriculum beginning in the 2016-17 school year:

1. as part of the health and safety curriculum, (a) cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and (b) instruction on the safe use of social media, such as blogs, video blogs, podcasts, instant messaging, and other electronic user-generated content and
2. computer programming instruction ([PA 15-94](#), effective July 1, 2016, except the CPR requirement is effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Financial Literacy Education***

The act adds new topics to any financial literacy instruction plan that SDE, the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), and the UConn Board of Trustees (BOT) develop in consultation with the Banking Department. By law, any such plan these agencies develop must include instruction on the use of credit and debit cards. The act adds instruction in banking, investing, saving, and handling of personal finance.

By law, SBE, within available appropriations and using available

material, must assist and encourage school districts to provide courses in personal financial management. Under the act, these courses must include the financial literacy instruction plan that SDE, BOR, and UConn BOT develop ([PA 15-138](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Labor and Capitalism History***

A new law requires SBE, within available appropriations and using available materials, to assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to include in their curriculum (1) labor history and law, including organized labor; (2) the history and economics of free-market capitalism and entrepreneurialism; and (3) the role of labor and capitalism in developing the American and world economies ([PA 15-17](#), effective July 1, 2015).

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

### ***Analysis of Early Childhood Education Programs***

A new law requires OEC to (1) collect and publicly post data for a trend analysis on regionally accredited bachelor's degree programs in early childhood education or child development and (2) review analysis results when considering for approval bachelors' degrees that lack state or regional accreditation ([PA 15-134](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).



### ***Birth-to-Three Hearing Tests***

A new law establishes an October 1, 2015 deadline for the early childhood commissioner to require, as part of the Birth-to-Three program, that notice of the availability of hearing tests be given to parents and guardians of children receiving program services who are exhibiting delayed speech, language, or hearing development. The required notice may include information on the benefits of, and available financial assistance for, hearing tests for children, as well as available hearing test and treatment resources ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 262 & 521, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Birth-to-Three Program Moves to Office of Early Childhood (OEC)***

The implementer act makes OEC, rather than the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the lead agency for the Birth-to-Three program, which provides early intervention services to families with infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 259-261, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Care 4 Kids***

A new law (1) changes the Care 4 Kids child care subsidy eligibility period from eight months to a period prescribed by federal law and (2) eliminates OEC's duty to report annually to the Human Services and

Appropriations committees with an analysis of any subsidy overpayments made as a result of the eight-month determinations ([PA 15-227](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Early Childhood Cabinet***

The act adds seven new members to the Early Childhood Cabinet for a total of 29 members ([PA 15-227](#), §13, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Early Head Start Program***

A new law gives Early Head Start program responsibilities to the early childhood commissioner and the commissioner's Head Start advisory committee. Early Head Start provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants, toddlers, pregnant women, and their families.

Specifically, the law requires the commissioner to assist nonprofit agencies and local and regional boards of education with increasing the (1) number of children served in programs that are both a Head Start program and Early Head Start grant recipient or delegate and (2) hours for children currently receiving Early Head Start services ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 325, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Even Start***

A new law transfers administration of the Even Start family literacy grant

program from SDE to OEC ([PA 15-227](#), §22, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Funding for Early Childhood Councils***

A new law allows OEC to provide funding, within available appropriations, to local and regional early childhood councils for implementation of early care and education and child development programs ([PA 15-134](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Help Me Grow***

The legislature passed a law that shifts the Help Me Grow program from the Children’s Trust Fund to OEC. Help Me Grow is designed to identify children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems and to connect them to existing community resources ([PA 15-227](#), §23, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***OEC Child Care Oversight Powers***

The legislature passed a new law that gives the OEC commissioner additional powers regarding the oversight of child care providers. They include allowing the commissioner to:

1. waive child care regulation provisions during civil preparedness or public health emergencies;
2. renew expired child care licenses within 30 days of their expiration under certain conditions;
3. resolve disciplinary action against child care providers using voluntary license surrender;
4. investigate and discipline child care providers even if their license expired within 18 months of the investigation’s start ([PA 15-227](#), §§ 7, 8, 16-19 & 21, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***OEC Positions Exempted From Classified State Service***

The act exempts OEC professional and managerial employees from the state employee classified service. By law, positions exempt from the classified service are not subject to civil service exams and other hiring and promotion procedures that apply to classified service positions ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 323 & 465, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Preschool Experience Survey***

The act requires local and regional boards of education to include OEC’s preschool experience survey in its kindergarten registration materials, rather than leave it to the board’s discretion ([PA 15-134](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Preschool Program Accreditation***

The legislature passed a new law requiring the following preschool program operators to obtain National Association for the Education of Young Children program accreditation

beginning in the 2017-18 school year: local or regional boards of education, RESCs, and state or local charter school governing councils ([PA 15-134](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Reduced Early Childhood Reporting Requirements***

The legislature passed a law that reduces some reporting requirements for OEC and local school readiness councils. It:

1. eliminates OEC's duty to (a) send written notices on specific topics to Care 4 Kids recipients and service providers and (b) report to the Human Services and Appropriations committees on Care 4 Kids eligibility redeterminations;
2. requires the OEC commissioner to report annually, rather than semiannually, to the General Assembly on the Nurturing Families Network; and
3. eliminates the requirement that school readiness councils submit biennial reports to SDE on the number and location of readiness spaces, estimated number of unserved children, and estimated cost of providing spaces to all eligible children ([PA 15-227](#), §§ 5, 6 & 15, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Repeal of Children's Trust Fund Law***

The act repeals the laws that (1) create the Children's Trust Fund and authorize related regulations and (2) provide for the legal transition of Trust Fund regulations and orders to OEC. By law, OEC administers the fund's programs ([PA 15-227](#), §27, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Readiness Funding***

A new law revises the formula for calculating competitive school readiness grants. Rather than mandating a specific program grant minimum as under prior law, the law permits a town or a school readiness council to apply for grants determined by the number of program spaces multiplied by \$8,927 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 324, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Readiness Program Eligibility***

A new law makes several changes to the school readiness program, which funds full-day, full-year spaces in accredited programs for children age three to five who are not yet eligible for kindergarten. The law expands seat eligibility by allowing programs to serve children who live outside the school district where the program is located ([PA 15-227](#), §§ 1 & 2, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***School Readiness Staff Qualifications***

A new law (1) extends by two years, from July 1, 2015 to 2017, the deadline by which certain school readiness staff must meet the first phase of stricter staff qualifications already in law and (2) “grandfathers” certain school readiness staff into stricter staff qualifications until June 30, 2025.

The same law requires OEC to develop a plan to help early childhood education providers implement the stricter staff qualifications and report on the plan to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016. Also, OEC must report to the Education Committee, by July 1 annually, on the status of the providers’ compliance with the stricter staff requirements ([PA 15-134](#), §§ 4, 5, & 8, effective upon passage except the provision regarding the status report is effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Smart Start***

The Smart Start program provides grants to school districts to establish or expand public preschool programs. A new law requires OEC to redesign the Smart Start program grants as up-front payments rather than reimbursements ([PA 15-227](#), §12, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Use of Unexpended School Readiness Funds***

A new act increases the amount of unexpended school readiness funds that may be spent on professional development for the staff of early childhood care and education providers. This provision applies only in years when there are unexpended readiness funds because towns or readiness councils did not apply for or receive all the appropriated funding ([PA 15-227](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2015).

## **GRANTS AND FUNDING**

### ***Caps on Education Grants***

The implementer act maintains existing caps on certain state education formula grants to school districts and RESCs for two additional fiscal years, through June 30, 2017. The caps require grants to be proportionately reduced if the state appropriations do not cover the full amounts required by the statutory formulas ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 245-252, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***ECS Grant Funding for FYs 16 and 17***

The budget act authorizes, by town, the education cost sharing (ECS) grant amounts for FY 16 and FY 17. The total FY 16 ECS amount for all towns is \$2,062.4 million, and the total FY 17 ECS amount for all towns is \$2,069.8 million. Of this total, \$10 million in each year of the biennium (FYs 16 and 17) is

provided by revenue through the Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA), which the budget act also authorizes ([PA 15-244](#), §§ 33 & 207, effective July 1, 2015 for the primary ECS authorization and October 1, 2015 for the MRSA funding).

### ***Grants for High-Quality School Models and Common Core State Standards Implementation***

The bond act authorizes up to \$5 million in state bonds for FY 17 for grants for alterations, repairs, technology, equipment, and capital start-up costs to (1) expand the availability of high-quality school models and (2) assist in implementing Common Core State Standards and assessments, in accordance with procedures the education commissioner establishes ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 32(k), effective July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***Grants for Low-Performing Schools***

The bond act authorizes up to \$16 million in state bonds over FYs 16 and 17 for grants to targeted local and regional boards of education for alterations, repairs, technology, and equipment in low-performing schools ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), §§ 13(i) & 32(k), effective July 1, 2015 for FY 16 bond authorizations and July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***Grants for the American School for the Deaf***

A new law authorizes up to \$5 million in state bonds during FY 16 for grants to the American School for the Deaf for alterations, renovations, and improvements to the school's buildings and grounds ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 13(i), effective July 1, 2015 for FY 16 bond authorizations).

### ***Permanent Cap on PSD Grants***

The implementer act permanently caps the state grants to PSDs that aim to improve educational programs and early reading intervention programs. The cap requires grants to districts to be proportionately reduced if the state budget appropriations do not cover the full amounts required by statute ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 306, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Priority School District (PSD) Grants***

The implementer act sets the amount and distribution of the PSD grant appropriations for FY 16 and 17 into three categories: (1) primary PSD, (2) extended school building hours, and (3) school accountability ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 256, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***PSD Grant Increase for Norwalk***

For FY 15 only, the act increases by \$250,000, from \$2,020,000 to \$2,270,000, the additional statutory

grant provided annually under the PSD grant program for Norwalk (i.e., the municipality with the sixth largest population in the state based on the 2010 Census). Also, the act makes the conforming change that up to \$250,000 of unexpended FY 15 PSD funds do not lapse and are available in FY 16 to Norwalk ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 335 & 336, effective July, 1, 2015).

### ***Rogers International School Operating Grant***

The act waives, for FY 16, the statutory enrollment-based limits on magnet school student operating grants for Rogers International School in Stamford as the school expands into an additional location. Under existing law, as amended by § 307 of this act, SDE (1) may limit the amount of per-pupil operating grants to magnet schools based on the schools' October 1, 2013 enrollment numbers and (2) must approve additional operating grant aid based on a ranked list of enrollment scenarios ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 334, effective July, 1, 2015).

### ***Supplemental Open Choice Transportation Grants***

The act (1) expands eligibility for supplemental transportation grants for the statewide interdistrict public school attendance program ("Open Choice") and (2) authorizes the grants for FYs 15-17. Prior law allowed the education

commissioner to distribute supplemental grants (up to \$3,250 per pupil) only to RESCs to offset Open Choice transportation costs that exceed the per-pupil grant. The act also (1) makes local or regional boards of education eligible for the grant and (2) changes, from September 1 to October 1, the date by when the number of students transported is determined each fiscal year. The Open Choice program allows districts to send some of their students to participating neighboring districts to (1) improve academic achievement and (2) reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 255, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Youth Service Bureau (YSB) Grants***

Under prior law, these grants were limited to the YSBs that (1) were eligible to receive them in FY 07 or (2) applied by June 30, 2012 after the host town approved the local contribution. The act also makes YSBs eligible if they applied for a grant during FY 15 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 257, effective July, 1, 2015).

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### ***Anti-Epileptic Medication Administration***

The act creates a process and requirements for the selection and training of school employees to administer anti-epileptic medications to

students in schools. It requires a school's nurse and medical advisor (if any) to choose and provide general supervision to a "qualified school employee" to administer anti-epileptic medication to a specific student when the school nurse is absent or unavailable, if:

1. the student's parents or guardian give written authorization and
2. a state-licensed physician gives a written order approving the administration of the anti-epileptic medication.

The act defines "qualified school employee" as a principal, teacher, licensed athletic trainer, licensed physical or occupational therapist employed by a school district, coach, or school paraprofessional ([PA 15-215](#), § 22, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Behavior Analyst Licensing Study***

A new law requires the education commissioner, in consultation with the public health commissioner, to study the (1) potential advantages of licensing board-certified behavior analysts, who are credentialed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, and (2) inclusion of board-certified behavior analysts and assistant behavior analysts in school special education planning and placement teams. The report is due to the Education and Public Health committees by January 1, 2016 ([PA 15-242](#), § 32, effective upon passage).

### ***Child Developmental Screenings***

A new law requires a health care provider, when completing the state's (1) early childhood health assessment record form or (2) public school health assessment form for a child age 5 or younger, to indicate on the form whether he or she performed a developmental screening of the child during the related examination. Under the law, a developmental screening uses an American Academy of Pediatrics-recommended method to identify concerns with a child's physical and mental development, including sensory, behavioral, motor, language, social, perceptual, or emotional skills ([PA 15-157](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Notice of School Grounds Pesticide Applications***

By law, schools, other than regional agricultural science and technology centers (i.e., "ag-science centers"), must provide certain information about pesticide applications directly to parents and guardians who register to receive it. Slightly different notice requirements apply based on whether a school has an integrated pest management (IPM) plan. For schools without IPM plans, the act requires this notice to be sent electronically, rather than by mail as prior law required. Existing law, unchanged by the act, requires schools with IPM plans to send the information by any means practicable ([PA 15-5](#),

[June Special Session](#), § 436 & 437, effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Placing Public School Students in Restraints or Seclusion***

A new act extends restraint and seclusion laws, which previously applied predominantly to special education students, to most public school students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

It (1) prohibits teachers, administrators, and other public school employees from using life-threatening physical restraints on any student; (2) limits how long students can be kept in allowable physical restraints or seclusion; and (3) specifies the types of locations in which a student may be secluded.

The act also bars school employees from using physical restraints on students or placing students in seclusion unless the employees have been properly trained. It requires school boards to (1) notify parents and guardians no later than 24 hours after a child has been placed in physical restraint or in seclusion and (2) take certain steps for students placed in physical restraint or seclusion four or more times in 20 school days ([PA 15-141](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Protecting School Children***

A new law increases, from a class A misdemeanor to a class E felony, the penalty for a mandated reporter who

fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect to DCF, if the (1) violation is a subsequent violation; (2) violation is willful, intentional, or due to gross negligence; or (3) mandated reporter had actual knowledge of the abuse, neglect, or sexual assault. By law, a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both; a class E felony is punishable by up to three years in prison, a fine of up to \$3,500, or both.

The act (1) extends the mandated reporter law's protection to high school students age 18 or older who are not enrolled in an adult education program and (2) requires school employees to report to DCF suspected sexual assault of any such student.

It also extends DCF's investigation and notification requirements under existing law in reported child abuse or neglect cases to include cases of reported sexual assault of students by school employees ([PA 15-205](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Protection of Particularly Vulnerable Children***

A new law requires the Child Fatality Review Panel to review current practices, policies, and procedures protecting children up to age three from unexpected death or critical injury and, by October 1, 2016, submit a report to the Education and Children's committees on the effectiveness of such



protection. The report must include recommendations on administrative or legislative action needed to better protect these children.

The act also requires the Office of the Child Advocate to (1) in consultation with the review panel, study the rates and causes of child fatalities and (2) starting by July 1, 2016, report annually on these rates and causes to the Childrens and Education committees, which must hold a joint public forum on the findings within 60 days of receiving the annual report ([PA 15-221](#), effective upon passage).

### ***School-Based Arrest and Suspension and Expulsion Data***

By law, each school board must submit to the education commissioner an annual strategic school profile (SSP) with certain required student, school, and district data. A new law adds to this requirement data on (1) in-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions and (2) school-based arrests. As a separate reporting requirement, SDE must disaggregate this new data by school, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, ELL status, free and reduced price lunch eligibility, offense type, and the number of arrests at each school. SDE must report annually to SBE on the disaggregation of the data and make the report available to the public on SDE's website ([PA 15-168](#), §§ 2-4, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Based Health Centers***

A new law defines a school-based health center (SBHC) and permits the Department of Public Health (DPH) to adopt regulations to establish minimum quality standards for these centers. Under the law, an SBHC, among other things, must (1) be located in or on the grounds of a school facility of a school district, school board, Indian tribe, or tribal organization; (2) be administered by a sponsoring facility (e.g., hospital, health department, or community health center); and (3) provide comprehensive on-site medical and behavioral health services to children and adolescents. Additionally, the law establishes a statutory definition for an "expanded school health site" and extends to these sites certain statutory provisions regarding SBHCs ([PA 15-59](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***School Grounds Lawn Care Pesticides Applications***

Prior law prohibited the use of lawn care pesticides on the grounds of preschools and schools with students in grade eight or lower, absent a health emergency. The implementer act exempts the following products from this definition, thus allowing their application on the grounds of these schools:

1. EPA-registered microbial or biochemical pesticides;

2. horticultural soaps or oils registered with EPA that do not contain any synthetic pesticide or synergist (i.e., enhancer of pesticide properties); and
3. certain pesticides classified by EPA as exempt material, such as pheromones, biological specimen preservatives, and minimum-risk pesticides.

Under the act, a “microbial pesticide” is a pesticide that has a microorganism as the active ingredient, and a “biochemical pesticide” is a naturally occurring substance that controls pests by nontoxic means ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 438, effective upon passage).

### ***School Immunization Exemptions***

Prior law exempted children from school immunization requirements if the child presented a statement from his or her parents or guardians that the immunization would be contrary to the child’s religious beliefs. This new law additionally exempts children who present a statement that the immunization would be contrary to the parents’ or guardians’ religious beliefs. It requires any such statement (1) be officially acknowledged by a notary public, Connecticut-licensed attorney, judge, family support magistrate, court clerk or deputy clerk, town clerk, or justice of the peace and (2) presented

before the child enters seventh grade. By law, the statement must initially be provided before the child is permitted to be enrolled in a public or private school ([PA 15-174](#) as amended by [PA 15-242](#), §§ 68 & 71).

### ***School Nurse Staffing Requirement (VETOED)***

Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, a new act requires each local or regional board of education to maintain a staffing ratio in its school district of at least one school nurse or nurse practitioner for every 750 students. By law, boards of education must appoint at least one school nurse or nurse practitioner for their education districts. The act also allows a board of education to annually request a waiver from the staffing ratio requirement from the education commissioner ([PA 15-125](#), effective July 1, 2016).

### ***School Resource Officers and Boards of Education***

This act requires a local or regional school board that assigns a sworn police officer to a school (i.e., school resource officer) to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local police department that defines the officer’s role and responsibilities. The MOU must address daily interactions among students, school personnel, and police officers. Another act requires the MOU to include a graduated response model for student discipline ([PA 15-](#)

[168](#), § 1, and [PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 342, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Security Grant Program Extension***

A new law extends the sunset date for the school security infrastructure grant program by one year, from June 30, 2015 to June 30, 2016, and another act authorizes up to \$10 million in state bonds in FY 16 for the grants. The program provides grants for developing or improving security infrastructure in schools, based on school security assessments conducted with local law enforcement agencies ([PA 15-5](#), effective upon passage; [PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 67, effective July 1, 2015 for FY 16 bond authorizations).

### ***Statewide Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness Program***

The act extends, from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016, the deadline by when the Department of Children and Families (DCF), together with SDE and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. or a similar organization, must identify or develop a statewide sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention program for use by regional and local school boards. It also extends, from October 1, 2015 to October 1, 2016, the date by which school boards must implement the program ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 415, effective upon passage).

### ***Task Force to Study Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Schools***

A new law creates an 11-member task force to examine a range of issues related to life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Health and Education committees by January 1, 2016 ([SA 15-17](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Trauma-Informed Practices Training***

SBE, within available appropriations, must assist and encourage local and regional school boards to provide in-service training on optional topics (e.g., mental health first aid training). A new law requires SBE to assist and encourage school boards to also include in their in-service training trauma-informed practices for the school setting, so that school employees can more adequately respond to students with mental, emotional, or behavioral health needs ([PA 15-232](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Unsubstantiated Allegations of Abuse or Neglect by School Employees (VETOED)***

This act requires (1) DCF to notify certain education officials when it cannot substantiate a report that a school employee abused or neglected a child and (2) education officials to

remove references to the report and DCF investigation from the employee's personnel records and any other records relating to him or her. It prohibits using such an unsubstantiated report against the employee for any employment-related purpose ([PA 15-112](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Vision, Hearing, and Postural Screenings***

A new law decreases the number of mandatory vision, hearing, and postural screenings for public school students. It also requires, in a case where a student does not receive a screening, the superintendent to provide the parents with a statement explaining why the screening did not take place ([PA 15-215](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2015).

## **INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOLS**

### ***East Hartford Magnet School Tuition Cap***

The implementer act places a cap on the amount of tuition the East Hartford school district must pay to magnet schools if more than 7% of the district's student population attends magnet schools. For any students over the 7% threshold, the district is not responsible for the first \$4,400 of tuition. The cap applies to FYs 16 and 17. Under the act, SDE, within available appropriations, is financially responsible for any loss of tuition to the magnet school.

A separate section of the implementer reserves up to \$220,818 of SDE's magnet schools appropriation for FYs 16 and 17 to defray magnet school tuition costs charged to East Hartford ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 307 & 343, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Magnet Enrollment Compliance Plan for Noncompliant Schools***

The act permits a magnet school that is not compliant with racial enrollment requirements and is not assisting the state in meeting the *Sheff* integration goals to continue to be eligible for magnet school operating grants if (1) the school submits a compliance plan to the commissioner and (2) the commissioner approves the plan. Magnet schools are, by law, designed to create racial integration, and a school's student body must be composed of at least 25%, but no more than 75%, racial minorities ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 307 & 322, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Magnet Preschool Tuition***

The implementer act requires, beginning with the 2015-16 school year and for each following year, a RESC operating a preschool magnet school program to charge tuition of up to \$4,053 to the parent or guardian of an enrolled student. It prohibits, however, a RESC from charging tuition if the child's family income is at or below 75% of the state median income. It requires SDE, within available appropriations, to

be financially responsible for any tuition that is unpaid due to a family being at or below 75% of the state median income ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Magnet School Enrollment Notification***

A new law requires the parents or guardian of a student who (1) enrolls in a magnet school or (2) is on a waiting list for a magnet school to notify the student's home school district of the upcoming enrollment or waiting list status. This must be done within two weeks after the enrollment lottery for the magnet school (which is usually held in March or April) ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307 and [PA 15-215](#), § 9, both effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Prioritization for Additional Magnet School Seats***

Prior law permitted SDE to limit magnet school grant payments to an amount based on the school's October 1, 2013 enrollment. It permitted funding for additional students based on certain criteria, such as the school adding grades. The act extends the criteria for FYs 16 and 17 with minor modifications ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Statewide Plan for Interdistrict Magnet Schools***

An act sets a new deadline of October 1, 2016, rather than January 1,

2011, by which the education commissioner must develop and submit to the Education Committee a comprehensive statewide plan for interdistrict magnet schools. Another act also requires the plan to be submitted to the Appropriations Committee. By law, and unchanged by the act, the commissioner cannot accept applications to establish new magnet schools outside the *Sheff* region (i.e., the 22-town greater Hartford region) until this plan is developed ([PA 15-177](#), effective July 1, 2015; [PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

## **LIBRARIES**

### ***Capital Improvement Grants to Libraries***

The bond act authorizes up to \$15.6 million in state bonds over FYs 16 and 17 for grants to public libraries for construction, renovation, energy conservation, handicapped accessibility, and high-speed connections to the Connecticut Education Network ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), §§ 13(j), 32(l) effective July 1, 2015 for FY 16 bond authorizations and July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

## **REGIONALIZATION**

### ***New Regional School Districts***

The act makes changes in three areas of education law for newly formed regional school districts.

First, the MBR does not apply to member towns of a regional school district during the first full fiscal year after the regional school district is established, as long as it is established during FYs 16 or 17. The act specifies the MBR applies again for each fiscal year following the first full one after the district is established. The MBR law requires towns to maintain the level of education appropriations in their education budget from one year to the next with limited ability to reduce appropriated amounts due to circumstances such as decreased enrollment.

Second, the act also allows net expenses attributed to each participating town in the regional school district to be determined according to an agreement among the towns that SBE approves and oversees. Under prior law, net expenses could only be determined according to the number of students from each town.

Finally, the act allows tenured teachers to be considered continuously employed with no break in service when their employing school district joins a regional school district and makes related changes for untenured teachers ([PA 15-215](#), §§ 19-21, effective July 1, 2015).

## **SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION**

### ***Construction Project Checklist and Design Clearinghouse***

The act requires DAS to (1) develop a standard checklist for school construction projects that includes testing for two common carcinogens and (2) establish a school building project clearinghouse to publicly share DAS-approved school project designs, plans, and specifications ([PA 15-3, June Special Session](#), §§ 2 & 3, July 1, 2015).

### ***Eligible Reimbursement Costs for the Morgan School in Clinton***

The act exempts the Morgan School building project in Clinton from various statutory and regulatory requirements to allow it to qualify for an additional state school construction reimbursement. The reimbursement applies to costs associated with construction-related professional service fees relating to site acquisition for the Morgan School project, provided the costs do not exceed \$1.7 million ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 344, effective upon passage).

### ***School Building Improvement Grants***

Existing law established a grant program for general school building improvements that are not normally reimbursable by state school construction grants. The bond act expands the law to cover alliance

districts (i.e., the 30 lowest academic performing districts in the state, which include priority school districts) rather than just the priority school districts (i.e., the 15 districts whose students receive low standardized test scores and have high levels of poverty). It also authorizes \$50 million in bonds each year for FY 16 and FY 17 to fund the program.

The act also expands an already detailed list of reimbursable improvements by adding (1) technology systems; (2) floors; (3) cafeteria equipment; (4) water supplies and drainage related to restroom upgrades; (5) energy-efficient lighting system and control upgrades; (6) entryway, driveway, parking, play area, and athletic field upgrades; (7) equipment upgrades; (8) roof repairs, including energy efficient fixtures and systems, and environmental enhancements; and (9) security equipment upgrades ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), §§ 13(b), 32(b) & 59, effective (1) July 1, 2015 for program changes and FY 16 bond authorizations and (2) July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***School Projects Authorized and Reauthorized***

The legislature (1) authorized \$180.7 million in grant commitments for 18 new school construction projects, (2) reauthorized and changed grant commitments for nine previously authorized projects with significant

changes in cost and scope for an additional \$298.2 million in grant commitments, and (3) exempted specified school construction projects from various statutory and regulatory requirements to allow them to qualify for state grants (resulting in at least \$303 million in additional costs to the state; some project data was not available to make a final estimate) ([PA 15-3, June Special Session](#), §§ 1, 10-59, 61-62, effective upon passage; § 60, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Safety Infrastructure Council***

A new law expands the School Safety Infrastructure Council membership from 10 to 11 by adding a member who must be a licensed architect appointed by the governor. The council is charged with developing and updating school safety infrastructure standards for all school construction projects ([PA 15-3, June Special Session](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Securing Local Share of a School Construction Project***

The school construction act allows the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to place a project on the school construction priority list (i.e., the eligibility list for the school construction bill) before local approval of the local cost share, provided the applying town schedules a referendum to approve the local share with the referendum results

to be submitted to DAS before November 15 of the year of application ([PA 15-3, June Special Session](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2015).

## **SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND BOARDS OF EDUCATION**

### ***Alternative Education Programs***

A new act (1) defines “alternative education” as a school or program operated by a local or regional board of education offered to students in a nontraditional setting that addresses their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs and (2) clarifies the statutes by consistently using this term. It also assigns several new duties to SDE regarding alternative education, including requiring SDE to develop guidelines for alternative education.

Furthermore, if a board of education chooses to provide alternative education, the act requires it to comply with state laws on the number and length of school days in an academic year and all other federal and state laws for public schools ([PA 15-133](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Chronic Absenteeism***

A new law requires local and regional boards of education to monitor and address absenteeism rates in schools. Among other things, it requires boards to:

1. establish attendance review teams for their school district or

individual schools when chronic absenteeism rates reach a certain percentage and

2. annually report to the education commissioner the number of truant and chronically absent students for each school and the entire district ([PA 15-225](#), §§ 2 & 4, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Innovation Waivers for School Districts***

The implementer act creates a process by which local and regional boards of education may obtain waivers from statutes in Title 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes or related regulations in exchange for demonstrating innovative ideas in place of the requirements (i.e., “innovation waivers”). However, it prohibits waiving any federal law requirements and certain state statutes.

It creates a process where a waiver request must first be approved by the education commissioner, then SBE, and finally the request goes to the General Assembly for the last approval. Waivers are valid for up to two years, and no more than 20 waivers or one-time waiver renewals may be in effect simultaneously ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 301, effective July 1, 2015).



### ***Library Internet Access Policy***

The act authorizes boards of education to prescribe rules for Internet access and content at school media library centers. By law, boards of education must make rules for the control of school library media centers under their jurisdiction ([PA 15-215](#), § 17, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) Renewed and Modified***

The act (1) extends, for FYs 16 and 17, the MBR for local education spending and (2) provides towns a greater ability to lower their MBR. Under prior law, the MBR prohibited a town from appropriating less in its budget for education than it did in the previous year unless, and with limits, the town (1) could demonstrate a (a) decrease in school enrollment or (b) savings through increased efficiencies or (2) closed a school. If a town received an increase in state education cost sharing aid, its MBR would increase over the previous year by the amount of the aid increase.

The act affords towns greater ability to lower their MBR by:

1. increasing the per-student reduction allowed for decreased enrollment,
2. raising the overall cap on how much a town can reduce its MBR, and

3. removing the limit on the number of ways a town can qualify for an MBR reduction.

For reductions based on declining enrollment, the act creates a two-tiered mechanism that depends upon the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) under the federal school lunch law.

The act repeals the MBR for school districts that have DPI scores in the top 10% of all districts. It also prohibits a current or former alliance district from reducing its MBR. Under prior law, the education commissioner could approve an MBR reduction for an alliance district town if it could demonstrate that it increased its local contribution for education for that fiscal year. Alliance districts are the 30 school districts with the lowest DPI in the state ([PA 15-99](#), effective July 1, 2015 and [PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 511, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Preschool through Grade Two Suspension and Expulsion***

A new law prohibits local and regional boards of education, magnet schools, and charter schools from imposing out-of-school suspensions or expulsions on students enrolled in preschool programs or in grades kindergarten through two, with these exceptions:

1. permitting out-of-school suspensions for such students

whose conduct is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers others,

2. requiring expulsions for preschool students who bring a firearm to school, and
3. requiring expulsions for kindergarten through grade two students who possess firearms or certain other weapons or sell or distribute controlled substances.

Additionally, the new law requires existing school-based primary mental health programs administered by local and regional boards of education to include a component for systematic early detection and screening to identify children experiencing behavioral or disciplinary problems ([PA 15-96](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***SNAP Notification to Parents of Students***

A new law requires SDE, through local and regional school districts, to provide information to public school students' parents and guardians about how to qualify for the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).

Under the act, by October 1, 2015, SDE, in consultation with the Department of Social Services (DSS), must provide local and regional boards of education with information about, at a minimum, how to qualify for the program and where to obtain

applications. For the school year commencing July 1, 2015 and each following school year, each board of education must provide a notice with the SNAP information to students' parents or guardians ([PA 15-215](#), § 13, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Winchester School District Receiver***

A new law requires the education commissioner, by August 1, 2015, to appoint a receiver for the Winchester school district to be responsible for all aspects of school district governance and management and preparing the budget. All contracts and agreements, including collective bargaining agreements, made in the name of the Winchester Board of Education will be assigned to the receiver.

The act requires the education commissioner to enter into a repayment agreement with the town of Winchester or the Winchester school district for any overpayments of special education aid. Winchester may be granted a waiver for the repayments if it applies and meet certain conditions ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 302-305, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Workplace Protections for Interns***

The legislature passed a new law that prohibits an employer from discriminating against or sexually harassing interns, thus giving interns

protections similar to those of paid employees. The law applies to the state and all its political subdivisions, including boards of education, as well as private employers.

It defines an “intern” as a person working for an employer (1) who the employer does not pay and has not committed to hiring, (2) where the internship is designed to supplement training that may enhance the intern's employability, and (3) where the work performed does not displace any employee of the employer. The law makes a violation of its provisions a “discriminatory practice” under the jurisdiction of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ([PA 15-56](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***SHEFF V. O’NEILL – 2015 STIPULATION***

#### ***Grant Payments and Payment Schedule for Magnet Schools Operated by Independent Colleges or Universities***

Under prior law, a magnet school that uses a trimester school calendar and is operated by an independent college or university is eligible for the same per-student state magnet school grant, \$10,443, as other *Sheff* magnets. (The Goodwin College Senior Academy magnet school appears to be the only one.) The act changes this by applying the new grant method described above

regarding schools with less than 50% of the incoming students from Hartford.

Under prior law, a student must be enrolled for at least two of three trimesters to receive the grant. The act changes this from a trimester to a semester schedule. Also under the act, the school will be awarded grants for students enrolled at least half time, as follows:

1. students enrolled for at least two semesters a year make the school eligible for a grant equal to 65% of the grant for a *Sheff* magnet or
2. students enrolled for at least one semester a year make the school eligible for a grant equal to 32.5% of the grant for a *Sheff* magnet.

The act also changes the payment schedule from the state to the school from three payments per year to two ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

#### ***Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts & Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science***

The act establishes specific per-student grant levels for two half-time magnet school academies administered by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).

For the Greater Hartford Academy of Arts, the per-pupil grant is 65% of \$7,900 (the standard RESC magnet grant when less than 55% of the students are from a single town). This means the grant will be \$5,135 per student, and it applies to FY 16 and each following fiscal year.

For the Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science, the act phases out per-student magnet school grants over a three-year period. It provides a \$6,787 per student grant as follows:

1. FY 16, students in grades 10 to 12, inclusive;
2. FY 17, students in grades 11 and 12; and
3. FY18, students in grade 12 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Renzulli Academy Grant and Enrollment Policy***

The act ends the annual grant, within available appropriations, of up to \$250,000 to the Hartford school district for the Renzulli Gifted and Talented Academy. It also repeals the provision allowing students from outside of Hartford to apply for admission at Renzulli. ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***School Construction Reimbursement Grants for Three Hartford Schools***

The act provides for a higher school construction state reimbursement, 95% instead of 80% for new construction, for three Hartford magnet schools: (1) Montessori Magnet at Moylan School, (2) Hartford Prekindergarten Magnet School, and (3) Betances STEM Magnet School.

The higher reimbursement rate can take place if either (1) CREC constructs the schools on behalf of and under a written agreement with Hartford or (2) Hartford constructs the schools on its own without a partnership with CREC. In either scenario, Hartford is responsible for the local share of the cost and any project costs that are ineligible for state reimbursement ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 313, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Sheff Magnet School Grants***

The act changes the per-student grant for non-host *Sheff* interdistrict magnet schools (those operated by RESCs, colleges, and other entities approved by the education commissioner) for FYs 16 and 17 and each following year. Under prior law, if the school enrolls less than 60% of its students from Hartford, it receives a per-student grant of \$10,443.

The act creates a second funding tier with a lower per-student grant when a

school fails to attract at least 50% of its student body from Hartford. The new grant is:

1. \$7,900 for half of the total number of non-Hartford students enrolled at the school over 50% of the total enrollment and
2. \$10,443 for all the remaining non-Hartford students at the school.

The act renews the magnet school operating grant for FYs 16 and 17 for *Sheff* region host magnet schools at \$13,054 for each student from outside the host district (i.e., Hartford or another town responsible for hosting a magnet school) ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 307, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Sheff Settlement***

The implementer act makes a number of minor and conforming changes to conform the education statutes to the new *Sheff v. O'Neill* stipulation and court order. *Sheff* is the landmark school desegregation case in which the state Supreme Court ruled that Hartford school children did not have an equal educational opportunity because of racial and economic segregation. Settlement agreements following the *Sheff* decision rely on voluntary desegregation methods with the 22 towns in the greater Hartford region (i.e., the *Sheff* region) to reduce isolation for Hartford resident minority

students ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 307-320, effective July 1, 2015).

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

#### ***Assistive Technology (AT) Equipment Sharing Program Study***

The act requires the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to conduct a study about AT equipment sharing programs that examines: (1) the effectiveness of existing AT equipment sharing programs in Connecticut and (2) ways to create a plan to make these programs available to those lacking access to them. SERC must submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 271, effective July 1, 2015).

#### ***Audits of Special Education Private Providers***

The act requires the Auditors of Public Accounts (“the auditors”) to examine the records and accounts of certain private providers of special education services. The auditors must act as an agent of the local or regional board of education while conducting an audit to examine a private provider’s records and accounts if the provider: (1) has entered into an agreement with a local or regional board of education or (2) receives any state or local funds to provide special education and related

services, in connection with any grant made by any state agency under state law or any public or special act. A compliance audit must examine whether the private provider expended these funds for allowable costs in accordance with (1) state and federal law and (2) the IEP program or individual services plan for each child receiving services from the provider.

The auditors must report their findings to (1) the board of education that contracted with the private provider or completed an IEP or individual services plan for a student, (2) the education commissioner, and (3) the Education Committee ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 278-281, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Coordinating and Disseminating Information on State Transition Services***

The act requires SBE, in collaboration with BRS, DDS, and the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, to (1) coordinate the provision of transition resources and services to children requiring special education services, (2) create and disseminate a fact sheet that describes the state agencies that provide transition resources and services, and (3) annually collect information about transition resources and services provided by other state agencies.

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, SBE must annually distribute the above information to each local or regional board of education for annual distribution to the parent of a child requesting special education services in grades six to 12 at a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting for the child ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 266, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Digital IEP Software***

A new law requires SDE to (1) purchase IEP form software that can create, submit, and share digital copies of students' IEPs and related documents and (2) provide the software at no cost to local and regional boards of education and the technical high school system.

By October 1, 2015, SDE must issue a request for proposals (RFP) that meets certain criteria to eligible software companies for the purchase of the software. If the RFP responses do not satisfy the RFP requirements or the cost exceeds the amount appropriated for the purchase, SDE is not required to buy the software. Instead, SDE must study the feasibility of creating and administering its own digital IEP form software. If SDE chooses to purchase a program from among the RFP responses, it must distribute the associated software at no cost to the state's local and regional boards of education and the technical high schools over a two-year period.

Boards of education and technical high school system schools must use the SDE-provided software, unless the board or system is bound by an agreement with a software company that predates SDE's provision of the software. In that event, the board or system must use the SDE-provided software after the prior agreement expires ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 269 & 270, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Feasibility Study on Medicaid Fund Report***

A new law requires DSS to study the feasibility of compiling an annual report on Medicaid funds received for special education services that would include (1) the total amount of federal funds received through the Medicaid School Based Child Health Program for special education and related services and (2) a description of how these funds are being spent, including which programs receive the funds from DSS.

The act requires DSS to submit the study to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 265, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Individualized Education Program (IEP) Advisory Council and New IEP Form***

The act establishes a 13-member IEP Advisory Council to help the education commissioner develop a new

IEP form that is easier for practitioners to use and for parents and students to understand by January 1, 2017. SDE must provide administrative support to this council.

The act requires the newly designed form to include a brief description of the state parent training and information center established under IDEA as well as the center's contact information ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 267 & 268, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Interagency MOUs for Special Education Transition Services***

The act requires SDE to enter into MOUs with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), OEC, DDS, DCF, DSS, and Department of Correction about providing special education, health care, and transition services for children as they grow older and move from one type of program to another.

It also allows the above agencies, other than SDE, to enter into MOUs with each other as necessary for the same purpose ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 282, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Longitudinal Student Data Study***

The legislature passed a law that requires SERC to study the collection, assimilation, and reporting of longitudinal student data related to special education outcomes. The study must examine the feasibility of using the Preschool through 20 Workforce

Information Network to create an annual report containing data on students who received special education and have exited the public school system, including data related to subsequent employment and participation in state programs. SERC must submit study findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 283, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Parental Rights in PPT Meetings***

The act (1) clarifies that parents and guardians have the right to participate in all portions of a PPT meeting at which a child's IEP is developed, reviewed, or revised and (2) specifies that parents and guardians have the right to have the student's assigned school paraprofessional, if the student has one, be present and participate in all portions of the PPT meeting ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 277, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Report on Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Funds to the State***

Beginning in FY 16, the implementer act requires SDE to annually report to the Education Committee on the amount of federal funds the state received under IDEA, the federal special education law. The report must include (1) the total amount of (a) federal IDEA funds received, (b) the IDEA funds paid by SDE to local or regional boards of education, and (c) the IDEA funds paid

by SDE to each individual local or regional board of education and (2) a description of how the federal funds are spent, including which programs receive the funds from the department ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 264, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Reporting Special Education Expenditure Data (VETOED)***

The act requires each local and regional board of education, beginning July 15, 2016, to annually report its special education expenditures for the prior fiscal year to SDE. It also requires SDE, annually by October 1, to submit to the Education Committee a report using the disaggregated data submitted by boards that details local and regional board of education special education expenditures for the prior fiscal year ([PA 15-145](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***RESC Special Education Funding Working Group***

The act establishes a 14-member RESC special education funding working group to:

1. study the funding provided to and expenditures of RESCs for providing special education services, including the sources of these funds and the ways in which RESCs use them to provide the services, and
2. make recommendations on how RESCs can access additional



special education funding and use it more efficiently to expand special education services, such as transportation, training, and therapeutic services.

By July 1, 2016, the working group must report to the Education and Appropriation committees on its findings and recommendations ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 274, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***RESCs and Regional Special Education Services***

The implementer act requires each of the state's six RESCs to:

1. develop their own regional model for providing special education transportation, training, and therapeutic services;
2. conduct a special education need survey in their respective regions to identify the need for enhanced or new services; and
3. study the feasibility of providing and administering new special education services and programs that are of equal or greater quality than those currently provided by local or regional boards of education or private providers in their respective regions.

By October 1, 2016, each RESC must submit its (1) regional model to

SBE and the Education Committee and (2) feasibility study to SBE and the Education and Appropriation committees ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 275, 284 & 285, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Special Education Learning and Training Calendar***

The implementer act requires SERC to create a calendar of legitimate special education learning and training opportunities for the public that it receives from advocacy groups, boards of education, RESCs, or other providers. It also requires SDE to post a link to the calendar in a conspicuous location on the department's website ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 273, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Special Education Services Information***

A new law requires SDE to distribute, upon request, information about special education programs and services offered by the state, local and regional boards of education, RESCs, and other providers to organizations representing or providing services to parents and guardians of children requiring special education services, unless state or federal law prohibits them from doing so ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 272, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Students with Dyslexia***

The legislature passed an act making several changes to state education law regarding dyslexia, a reading disability. The act (1) requires SDE to designate an employee to help parents and boards of education detect, and intervene on behalf of, students with dyslexia and (2) specifies that kindergarten through grade three reading assessments, which SDE was previously charged with developing or approving, must also help identify students at risk for dyslexia. The act extends the deadline, from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2016, to make the assessments available to school districts. It also requires teacher preparation programs to include a specific amount of dyslexia education and training and adds dyslexia to the list of required teacher in-service training topics ([PA 15-97](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Transportation for Special Needs Students***

A new law requires each local and regional board of education to review the transportation arrangements for their special needs students, both in and out of district, and make appropriate changes to ensure the students' safe transportation. The changes may involve placing school bus monitors or cameras on the vehicles used to transport the students ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 226, effective upon passage).

### ***Special Education Bill of Rights***

A new law requires SBE, by July 1, 2015, to draft a bill of rights guaranteeing protection for children receiving special education services and their parents. It requires SDE, starting with the 2015-16 school year, to annually distribute the bill of rights to local and regional boards of education. The bill of rights must be provided at PPT meetings for special education students in grades six through 12 to the (1) student's parents or guardians; (2) surrogate parent, if one has been appointed; and (3) student, if he or she is emancipated or over age 18.

By law, when a student is identified as requiring special education, and at each PPT meeting, school boards must provide the above-listed individuals with information on (1) state and federal special education laws, (2) their rights under these laws, and (3) relevant information and resources on IEPs created by SDE. The act requires this to include information on transition resources and services for high school students. It also requires SBE to ensure that school boards provide all such information to these individuals ([PA 15-209](#), effective July 1, 2015).

**STATE BOARD AND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

***Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan***

The act requires SDE, along with the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap, to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by January 1, 2016 for local and regional school boards to use ([PA 15-225](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2015).

***Community Service Student Recognition Award***

A new law requires SBE to grant a community service recognition award to any student who satisfactorily completes at least 50 hours of community service and meets statutory criteria to earn one-half credit toward graduation ([PA 15-237](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).

***Federal Education Law Waiver Procedures***

Starting July 1, 2015, the act requires the education commissioner to comply with new procedures before submitting an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver application to the federal government, including notifying the Education Committee if she is considering applying for a federal ESEA waiver when

developing the agency budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The act requires her to submit any ESEA waiver application to the Education Committee before submitting it to the federal government. Within 30 days of receiving the application, the committee must hold a public hearing on the application and subsequently inform the commissioner of its recommendations.

Furthermore, the act requires the commissioner to submit the following materials to the federal government along with the waiver application: (1) any written comments received during the 15-day public comment period the act requires and (2) the committee's recommendations and any additional written comments received during its public hearing ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 300, effective July 1, 2015).

***Qualifications for the Commissioner of Education (VETOED)***

This act requires the state education commissioner to be a qualified person holding a master's or higher degree in an education-related field with at least the following experience in a school or district in Connecticut or another state: (1) five years as a teacher and (2) three years as an administrator. By law, the selection process requires SBE to recommend a commissioner candidate to the governor, who then nominates

the person and forwards the nomination to the General Assembly for confirmation ([PA 15-176](#), effective upon passage).

### ***SDE Director of Reading Initiatives***

The act creates a director of reading initiatives position in SDE to, among other things, administer (1) the intensive reading instruction program for students in grades kindergarten through three at low-achieving elementary schools and (2) the coordinated statewide reading plan for students in grades kindergarten through three ([PA 15-137](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Surrogate Parent Program***

The act establishes a surrogate parent program administered by the education commissioner in consultation with the DCF commissioner. The commissioner must appoint a surrogate parent, within available appropriations, for any foster child selected by DCF who resides in DCF's Region 3 (i.e., the Eastern Connecticut service region, principally comprised of the Middletown, Norwich, and Willimantic areas). A surrogate parent is a person appointed by the SDE commissioner as a child's advocate in the educational decision-making process in place of the child's parents or guardian.

The act also requires the DCF and SDE commissioners, starting January 1,

2016, to annually report on the surrogate parent program to the Children's and Education committees ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 243-244, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Student Data Security***

A new law establishes protocols to protect confidential information (CI), including student data, which an entity obtains from a state contracting agency under a written agreement to provide goods or services to the state. Under the act, if an agreement requires a state contracting agency such as SDE to share CI with a contractor, the contractor must, at its own expense, take certain steps to prevent data breaches. Among other things, a contractor must:

1. implement and maintain a data security program to protect CI;
2. limit CI access to authorized employees and agents for authorized purposes under confidential agreements;
3. use certain technology, such as firewalls and intrusion detection software, to maintain all data obtained from state contracting agencies; and
4. report actual or suspected data breaches to the attorney general and state contracting agency.

With respect to information a state

contractor possesses, the act includes as part of the definition of CI “personally identifiable information” as defined in federal education regulations. Regarding a contractor’s breach of education records with personally identifiable information, the act authorizes SDE to impose a five-year ban on the contractor’s access to such information.

The act also amends existing law’s security breach notification requirements applicable to any person who conducts business in Connecticut. It generally requires the person to (1) notify impacted state residents of a breach within 90 days after discovering it and (2) offer at least one year of free identity theft prevention and mitigation services ([PA 15-142](#), effective July 1, 2015, except the existing law’s breach notification requirements are effective October 1, 2015).

## **TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND OTHER SCHOOL EMPLOYEES**

### ***Annual Teacher Demographics Report***

The act requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE), by July 1, 2015, to begin annually submitting a report on teacher candidate demographics in teacher preparation programs offered at colleges and universities in the state to the Education Committee and SBE. The report must include teacher candidate enrollment by subgroups (e.g., race, ethnicity, and gender) with respect to

the recruitment, preparation, and retention of quality minority teachers ([PA 15-108](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Appointments to the Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards***

A new law extends, from two to four years, the terms of all appointments to the Advisory Council for School Administrators that occur on or after June 30, 2015 (the section’s effective date) ([PA 15-215](#), § 6, effective upon passage).

### ***Bilingual Teacher Certification***

The act makes several changes to bilingual teacher certification, making it easier for applicants to (1) renew a temporary certificate or (2) obtain a bilingual teacher certificate.

Under the act, the SBE can extend a one-year temporary certificate in the bilingual education endorsement area an additional two years if the applicant is employed by a local or regional board of education and teaching in a bilingual education program. It also allows applicants for bilingual teacher certification to qualify for certification without passing an oral competency test for English but requires them to demonstrate oral and written competency in the language of instruction. The act requires showing oral competency in the non-English

language by an appropriate method specified by SDE.

Under prior law, successful applicants were required to meet certification requirements in both (1) elementary or secondary (i.e., subject area expertise in the area they will teach) education. This act instead requires the applicant to meet the appropriate coursework requirements in (1) either elementary or secondary (subject area expertise) education and (2) bilingual education. The act allows SBE to issue an endorsement in bilingual education when these criteria are met and the applicant passes SBE-approved examination requirements for bilingual education ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 338 & 339, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Certification for Administrators***

The legislature enacted a new law that adds more criteria SDE must consider when approving proposed administrator ARC programs submitted by universities, boards of education, or administrator training organizations to SDE. By law, SDE can only approve programs that accept applicants who have a minimum of 40 months' teaching experience. The new law allows programs to accept applicants that have less than 10 months of teaching experience in a public school while holding a professional certification, as long as they meet other specific

requirements ([PA 15-215](#), § 12, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Certified Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Instructor Shortage Hiring***

By law, a local or regional board of education may employ a person certified by the United States armed forces to be a JROTC instructor or assistant instructor to teach in a JROTC program at a public school even if he or she does not have Connecticut teacher certification. Under the act, if a board of education cannot find a JROTC-certified teacher, it may employ a person enrolled in an armed forces JROTC instructor program to teach the JROTC program at a public school ([PA 15-215](#), § 18, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Expanding Eligible Alliance District Activities to Include Minority Teacher Recruitment***

Under the alliance district law, each alliance district must submit a plan for SDE approval describing how it plans to use alliance aid to improve the district's performance. The act adds strategies for attracting and recruiting minority teachers and administrators to the list of possible alliance district aid uses ([PA 15-108](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Indemnity for Teacher Mentors and Reviewers***

The act extends the legal indemnity currently given to teachers,

administrators, school board members, and others to teacher mentors and teacher reviewers employed by (1) local or regional boards of education, (2) the governing council of a charter school, (3) SBE, (4) BOR, (5) BOT, and (6) state agencies ([PA 15-215](#), § 5, effective upon passage).

### ***Initial Educator Certificate Regulations***

The act requires state regulations to permit initial certification applicants with an elementary school endorsement to substitute a satisfactory evaluation on an SBE-approved subject-area assessment in place of the previous requirement to complete a U.S. history survey course ([PA 15-108](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***International Teacher Permit***

The law allows SBE to issue an international teacher's permit in teacher shortage areas when the applicant meets certain criteria. It is a one-year permit with the option of a one-time, one-year renewal. The local or regional board of education requesting SBE to issue the permit must attest to a supervision plan for the teacher, who, among other things, must hold a proper visa and a bachelor's degree or the equivalent.

The act permits bilingual education program applicants to substitute for the bachelor's degree requirement (1) completion of SBE-prescribed

coursework or (2) training to achieve proficiency deemed equivalent to a bachelor's degree ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 340, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Interstate Agreements and Teacher Certification***

The act requires, rather than permits, SDE to establish or join interstate agreements to facilitate certification of qualified out-of-state teachers.

It also requires SBE to issue an initial Connecticut teacher certification to an out-of-state teacher if the applicant (1) meets all the conditions of the interstate agreement and (2) taught and held an appropriate certification in another state or U.S. territory or possession, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The act eliminates the requirement that these applicants must fulfill the SBE-approved teacher testing requirements and instead requires them to fulfill any appropriate post-preparation assessment the commissioner requires. By law, the applicants must at least hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university, but the act waives the requirement of having a subject-area major as defined by SBE ([PA 15-108](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and Study***

A new law creates an 11-member minority teacher recruitment task force to study and develop strategies to increase and improve the recruitment, preparation, and retention of minority teachers in Connecticut public schools. Under the act, "minority" means individuals whose race is other than white or whose ethnicity is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as Hispanic or Latino.

The task force must submit its report with findings and recommendations, by February 1, 2016, to the Education Committee ([PA 15-108](#), § 5, effective upon passage).

## ***Municipal Aid for New Educators***

The act expands the municipal aid for new educators program to include the 30 alliance districts, instead of the 10 education reform districts. It also eliminates the five student limit and allows alliance districts to extend job offers to students graduating from out-of-state programs. Under the aid program, SDE, within available appropriations, offers grants to districts to extend job offers to students graduating from teacher preparation programs who are in the top 10% of their class ([PA 15-108](#), § 7, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Professional Certification and Out-of-State Teachers***

The act requires SBE to issue a professional certification to a teacher who has taught in another state or U.S. territory for two, rather than three, years in the previous 10 and meets other existing requirements (i.e., is nationally board certified and holds a master's degree in an endorsement area related to the applicant's certification endorsement area). Furthermore, under the act, applicants are exempt from the mandatory Connecticut beginning teacher program if they (1) taught under an appropriate certificate in another state for two, rather than three, years within the previous 10 and (2) show effectiveness as a teacher as SBE determines, which can include a record of improving student achievement.

For in-state private school teachers, the act also reduces the professional certification experience requirement from three years to two, within the previous 10, for exemption from the beginning teacher program, as long as they show effectiveness as a teacher as SBE determines ([PA 15-108](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Report on Teacher Preparation Quality***

A new law requires SDE, beginning July 1, 2015, to annually report on the quality of in-state teacher preparation programs to the Education and Higher



Education and Employment Advancement committees. The report must include, among other things, (1) measures for assessing graduates' classroom teaching performance; (2) the graduates' retention rates as teachers; and (3) survey results from graduates and their employers regarding the teacher preparation programs ([PA 15-243](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

### ***Retired Teacher Health Insurance Premium Account***

A new law removes the annual \$150,000 cap on health care benefit consultant costs that may be paid from the Retired Teachers' Health Insurance Premium account ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 97 & 98, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Superintendent Reports on Teacher Evaluations***

The act extends, from June 30 to September 15, the deadline by which school district superintendents must annually report to the education commissioner about the implementation status of their respective teacher evaluation and support programs, including evaluation frequency and the number of unevaluated teachers ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 341, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Teacher Certification Requirements***

A new law expands special education coursework requirements for teacher certification beginning July 1, 2016. To obtain an initial educator certificate on and after that date, a person must complete one or more courses in special education about classroom techniques in reading, differentiated instruction, social-emotional learning, cultural competencies, and AT. Any person issued an initial certificate before July 1, 2016 does not have to comply with these new requirements ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 276, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Teacher Preparation Program Efficacy***

The act delays, from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016, the requirement that all teacher preparation programs in the state place their students in four semesters of field work or clinical or student teaching classroom experience. The act also requires that the students gain this experience at a school (1) in a school district in one of the five highest school district reference groups (DRG) (i.e., nine district groups based on factors such as family income and parental occupation and education) and (2) in a district in one of the four lowest DRGs ([PA 15-243](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Temporary Teacher Certificates for Teacher Shortage Areas***

Under prior law, SBE must grant a 90-day temporary teacher certificate to an applicant at the employing board of education's request, if he or she, among other things, completes an Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program. The act expands the law to grant 90-day temporary certifications to applicants in teacher shortage areas who meet the same criteria. ARC programs allow participants to attain teacher certification without completing a regular teacher preparation program ([PA 15-108](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Training in Cultural Competency***

The act adds a cultural competency component to the required topics in both teacher preparation programs and in-service training. The teacher preparation requirement applies to teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities, and the in-service training requirement must be met by local and regional boards of education.

The teacher preparation and in-service training must both include instruction on awareness of student background and experience in order to develop skills, knowledge, and behaviors that enable teachers and students to build positive relationships and work effectively in cross-cultural

situations ([PA 15-108](#), §§ 9 & 10, effective July 1, 2015).

## ***Union Representatives on Local Professional Development and Evaluation Committees***

A new law specifies that the union representation on a school district's professional development and evaluation committee must include at least one representative chosen by and from each of the teachers' and administrators' unions ([PA 15-215](#), § 11, effective July 1, 2015).

## **TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS, AG-SCIENCE CENTERS, & VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

### ***Ag-Science Center Grants***

The act makes operating grants for ag-science centers, which prior law set at \$3,200 per pupil, to be within available appropriations. It also requires the grants to be used exclusively for the statutory purposes (i.e., expanding or improving an existing facility or replacing or improving the facility's equipment).

For FYs 16 and 17, the act allows a board of education that operates an ag-science center to spend any grant increase for its ag-science program even if doing so exceeds the total budgeted amount for education for these fiscal years approved by its municipality or regional school district

([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 253 & 254, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Ag-Science Internship Immunity***

A new law makes ag-science center internship sponsors immune from civil liability for student interns' personal injuries, unless the injuries are caused by providers' gross, reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct. The law applies to sponsors that are individuals, as well as businesses, clubs, and other organizations that contract with the ag-science centers to provide internships ([PA 15-215](#), § 10, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS)***

The legislature enacted a new law that reassigns several duties related to the CTHSS from SBE to the CTHSS board. The act requires the CTHSS board, rather than SBE, to adopt by January 1, 2020 and every five years afterward, a long-range plan addressing the priorities and goals of the CTHSS, including existing and potential future trade programs. Upon adopting the plan, the CTHSS board must file it directly with the Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; and Appropriations committees.

The law also requires the CTHSS board, rather than SBE, to maintain a rolling capital improvement and equipment plan for the CTHSS and requires the plan to be a three-year,

rather than five-year, one. The board must also directly submit the plan to the Education; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; and Appropriations committees ([PA 15-215](#), §§ 14 & 15, and [PA 15-189](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Technical High School Capital Funds***

The bond act authorizes up to \$12 million in state bonds in FY 17 to provide funding for capital improvements including alterations and improvements to buildings and grounds, new and replacement equipment, tools, supplies, and vehicles, and technology upgrades ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 21(m), effective July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***Use of Ag-Science Center Equipment***

The act specifies that the state-funded facilities or equipment of any ag-science center must be used exclusively by the center. These centers are hosted by local school districts but serve many districts that make up a region ([PA 15-215](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2015).

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

### ***BOR Capital Funds***

The bond act authorizes up to \$176.4 million in state bonds over FYs 16 and 17 to provide funding for a variety of capital improvements, including research or laboratory

equipment, upgraded information technology systems, manufacturing and emerging technology programs, code compliance and infrastructure improvements, and for several specific community college alteration and renovations projects ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), §§ 2(n), 21(n) effective July 1, 2015 for FY 16 bond authorizations and July 1, 2016 for FY 17 bond authorizations).

### ***BOR Membership Qualifications***

BOR, which has 21 members, serves as the governing body for the Connecticut State University System (CSUS), the community-technical colleges, and Charter Oak State College. The act removes the prohibition on the board's 15 voting members being employed by, or elected officials of, a public agency as defined by FOIA. It instead prohibits them from being public officials or state employees as defined by the Code of Ethics. Generally, this means that municipal elected officials and employees, and judges, may serve as members ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 490, effective upon passage).

### ***BOR Student Advisory Committee Member Terms***

The legislature passed a law that staggers the terms of student advisory committee members for BOR. Under prior law, this committee consisted of one student from each institution in CSUS (four total), one from each

regional community-technical college (CTC) (12 total), and one member from Charter Oak State College. Each member served two years.

The act requires six of the CTC and two of the CSUS members to serve only one year for the term beginning July 1, 2015 and then to serve two years for any succeeding terms beginning July 1, 2016. The remaining nine student members continue to serve two-year terms ([PA 15-248](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) 2020 Program***

Existing law required the (1) CSUS board of trustees (i.e., BOR) to enter into a MOU with the Office of Policy and Management secretary and the treasurer regarding the bond issuance for the CSCU 2020 program and (2) bond commission to approve the MOU. The bond act deems the MOU dated July 8, 2008, and approved by the bond commission on August 8, 2008, to incorporate changes a 2014 public act made to the program.

Among other things, PA 14-98 (§§ 50-57) (1) authorized \$103.5 million in new bonding under the CSUS 2020 infrastructure program (renamed by the act as the CSCU 2020 program); (2) expanded the program to include the regional community-technical colleges and Charter Oak State College; and (3)

extended it by one year to FY 19 ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 62, effective upon passage).

### ***Faculty Attending Board of Regents Executive Sessions***

A new law allows the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the BOR faculty advisory committee, who serve as nonvoting, ex-officio members of BOR, to attend BOR executive sessions at the BOR chairperson's invitation. Prior law excluded them from all executive sessions ([PA 15-228](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***In-State College Tuition Eligibility***

The legislature enacted a law that makes it easier for students who are relatively new to Connecticut to qualify for in-state tuition at one of the state's public colleges or universities. This law reduces, from four years to two, the number of years of high school education that students must complete in Connecticut to receive in-state tuition benefits.

The law also extends in-state tuition eligibility to nonimmigrant aliens who, as specified in federal law, (1) are human trafficking victims or (2) have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of certain criminal activity ([PA 15-82](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Legislative Approval for Closure of College Campuses (VETOED)***

The act prohibits BOR from doing the following without the General Assembly's approval:

1. closing, authorizing the closure of, or proceeding with any closure of any campus of Middlesex Community College or any other campus of any other public higher education institution under BOR's jurisdiction or
2. suspending, authorizing the suspension of, or proceeding with any suspension of any manufacturing program offered by Middlesex Community College or any other manufacturing program offered by any other public higher education institution under BOR's jurisdiction ([PA 15-2](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective upon passage).

### ***Offering Research Cats and Dogs to Animal Rescue Organizations***

This act requires public and private higher education institutions, under certain circumstances, to offer for adoption any cat or dog on which they have conducted research or testing to an animal adoption or rescue organization. An adoption offer must only occur when the (1) research or testing is complete, (2) destruction of the animal is not required, and (3) animal is no longer needed by the

institution ([PA 15-201](#), effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Outcomes-Based Financing Task Force***

A special act establishes a 20-member task force to develop a strategic outcomes-based plan for financing higher education that is aligned with the goals and benchmarks recommended by the Planning Commission for Higher Education. The task force must submit its findings and recommendations to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2016 ([SA 15-20](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Pilot Earn-and-Learn Program Task Force***

A new law creates a task force to develop, for implementation no later than July 1, 2016, a pilot earn-and-learn program at a community-technical college, a state university, and an independent institution of higher education. The pilot program must, among other things, provide opportunities for students of institutions of higher education to engage in applied, work-based learning while earning money to pay for higher education. The task force must submit its report with recommendations to the Higher Education and Workforce Advancement Committee by January 1, 2016 ([SA 15-9](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Planning Commission for Higher Education***

The act requires the state, BOR, and UConn BOT to align their higher education policies with the goals of the Planning Commission for Higher Education's strategic master plan for higher education. These goals aim to:

1. increase the state's adult population education levels,
2. develop a globally competitive workforce and economy in the state, and
3. ensure higher education affordability.

It also requires the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) to use these goals when developing accountability measures for public institutions of higher education. HECC must use the measures to assess the progress of each institution toward meeting strategic master plan goals ([PA 15-75](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Private Occupational School Student Protection Account***

The act reduces, from 0.5% to 0.4%, the percentage of tuition revenues that private occupational schools must pay into the private occupational school student protection account. By law, the account is used to make tuition refunds to students unable to complete a course at a private

occupational school because the school becomes insolvent or ceases operating. It is funded by (1) quarterly assessments on private occupational schools' tuition revenue received from Connecticut students and (2) other fees related to the schools' operations ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 430, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Professional Doctoral Degree Programs***

A new law reassigns the authority and responsibility for operating certain doctoral programs between the CSUS Board of Trustees and the UConn BOT. (Since 2012, BOR serves as the Board of Trustees for CSUS.) It grants (1) special responsibility to the CSUS Board of Trustees to operate professional doctoral degree programs and (2) exclusive responsibility to UConn BOT to operate programs leading to research doctoral, doctor of medicine, doctor of dental medicine, and juris doctor degrees.

The law removes the exclusive responsibility to operate post-baccalaureate professional degree programs from UConn BOT ([PA 15-37](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Program Approval for Independent Institutions of Higher Education (VETOED)***

This act exempts certain nonprofit private colleges and universities from OHE's approval process for new or

revised academic programs. It exempts institutions that (1) are eligible to participate in federal student aid programs and (2) have been located in Connecticut and accredited as degree-granting institutions for at least 10 years by a regional accrediting association recognized by the U.S. education secretary. The act specifies that teacher education programs remain subject to SBE's regulatory authority.

The act requires exempt institutions to annually file with OHE a list and brief description of any new programs introduced and existing programs discontinued in the preceding academic year ([PA 15-111](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Refinancing Student Loans***

The legislature enacted a law that allows the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) to issue loans to certain borrowers to refinance certain public or private student loans, including CHESLA loans. The act (1) requires that refinancing loans not exceed the outstanding aggregate principal amount of the original loan and (2) allows CHESLA to establish guidelines, criteria, and procedures for issuing refinancing loans.

By law, CHESLA may issue tax-exempt bonds backed by the authority's revenues. The act additionally allows CHESLA to issue taxable revenue bonds, including bonds that are eligible for

federal tax credits, exemptions, or payments.

The law also (1) revises the membership criteria of CHESLA's board of directors, and (2) requires the board chairperson to report, by February 1, 2016, to the Banking and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees on the authority's progress toward (a) targeting lending to individuals with a demonstrated financial need and (b) effectively serving the highest number of such individuals ([PA 15-200](#), effective July 1, 2015, except the provision requiring the report to the legislature is effective upon passage).

### ***Residential Property Used or Intended for College Student Housing***

The act generally subjects to property tax any "residential real property" held by or on behalf of a private, nonprofit higher education institution that is intended for or used as student housing. Under the act, "residential real property" is any house or building, or portion thereof, rented, leased, or hired out to be occupied as a home or residence for one or more students. The act excludes dormitories, which it defines as buildings maintained by a private, nonprofit higher education institution, containing living or sleeping facilities, with at least 20 beds, intended for or used as student housing.

The act's requirement supersedes any property tax statute or special act that provides a property tax exemption for property owned by or on behalf of such institutions, except for the statutory provision for college property owned by seven specific educational institutions ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), § 241, effective upon passage and applicable to assessment years beginning on and after October 1, 2015).

### ***Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) at Higher Education Institutions***

A new law allows SAFEs to treat sexual assault victims who are patients in a state-licensed health care facility operated by a higher education institution. The law requires SAFE services to be:

1. aligned with the policies and accreditation standards of the respective health care facility and
2. pursuant to a written agreement between the health care facility and (a) DPH and (b) the Office of Victim Services, about the facility's participation in the SAFE program ([PA 15-16](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***Student Loan Bill of Rights***

A new law requires the banking commissioner, within available appropriations, to create the position of



student loan borrower ombudsman to provide timely assistance to student loan borrowers.

The act also establishes licensure requirements and standards of conduct for student loan servicers. It exempts banks, credit unions, and some of their subsidiaries from the servicer licensure requirements. The commissioner (1) must adopt regulations implementing the servicer provisions and (2) may conduct investigations and examinations and take enforcement action against violators.

It also establishes a separate non-lapsing account in the Banking Fund, called the student loan ombudsman account, to be funded by student loan servicers' licensing and investigation fees and any other money required by law. The act requires the commissioner to use the account funds for the ombudsman position and the education course.

The commissioner must report annually, starting by January 1, 2016, to the Banking and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees on, among other things, the implementation of the ombudsman position and the licensing and oversight of student loan servicers ([PA 15-162](#), effective July 1, 2016, except the provisions on the ombudsman position and the definitions are effective October 1, 2015).

### ***Student Membership on the UConn BOT (VETOED)***

The act increases the number of student-elected UConn BOT members from two to four, thereby increasing the number of board members from 21 to 23. Under prior law, one undergraduate and one graduate student trustee serve staggered two-year terms on the board. The act requires UConn students to elect two additional student trustees, one undergraduate and one graduate, by July 1, 2016 ([PA 15-78](#), effective upon passage).

### ***UConn and BOR Financial Aid Reporting***

A new law requires UConn and BOR to annually, beginning November 1, 2015, report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the institutional financial aid awarded to undergraduates in the previous academic year ([PA 15-231](#), effective July 1, 2015).

### ***UConn and BOR Financial Aid Reporting (VETOED)***

The legislature passed an act that requires UConn and BOR, by November 1, 2015 and annually thereafter, to report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the institutional financial aid awarded to undergraduate students during the previous academic year ([PA 15-2](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***UConn Graduate Student Health Care***

A new law permits the UConn BOT to provide health care coverage for UConn graduate assistants, graduate fellows, postdoctoral trainees, and certain graduate students through the partnership plan, the state-administered health insurance plan for non-state public or nonprofit employers. The university, however, must pay all related premiums and expenses. The act prohibits UConn from charging premiums and expenses to the state General Fund ([PA 15-5, June Special Session](#), §§ 416 & 417, effective July 1, 2015).

### ***UConn Health Center Electronic Medical Records System***

A new law allows UConn, by a vote of its BOT, to revise, delete, or add a particular project or projects in its UConn 2000 infrastructure program to finance the implementation of an electronic medical records system at the UConn Health Center. Any such revisions, deletions, or additions must be (1) within statutorily authorized funding amounts and (2) included in UConn's annual reports to the Finance, Commerce, and Higher Education committees ([PA 15-1, June Special Session](#), § 231, effective July 1, 2015).

JM:bs