



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 523**

February Session, 2000

Substitute House Bill No. 5737

*House of Representatives, April 11, 2000*

The Committee on Appropriations reported through REP. DYSON of the 94<sup>th</sup> Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***An Act Concerning Underperforming Schools And School Readiness.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, and  
2 each fiscal year thereafter, the Commissioner of Education shall  
3 provide grants, within available appropriations, to local and regional  
4 boards of education that have one or more schools in need of  
5 improvement on the most recent list prepared pursuant to section 2 of  
6 public act 99-288. Eligible boards of education shall use grant funds for  
7 costs related to the implementation of improvement plans for such  
8 schools, partnership programs between such schools and public  
9 libraries in the school district and actions necessary for such schools to  
10 become accredited by the New England Association of Schools and  
11 Colleges. An eligible board of education shall submit a plan for the  
12 expenditure of grant funds, in accordance with subsection (b) of this  
13 section, to the Department of Education, at such time and in such  
14 manner as the commissioner prescribes.

15 (b) The plan for the expenditure of grant funds shall be approved by  
16 the department and shall include: (1) Methods and school-based  
17 programs identified pursuant to section 2 of this act, that address the  
18 specific subject areas, by grade level, in which students attending the  
19 school were most deficient on the state-wide mastery examinations  
20 pursuant to section 10-14n of the general statutes, as amended, and (2)  
21 partnership programs with public libraries in the school district that  
22 are designed to improve family literacy and parent involvement.

23 (c) Each board of education receiving a grant pursuant to this  
24 section shall set aside an amount equal to twenty per cent of the grant  
25 for partnership programs with public libraries in the school district.

26 (d) Each board of education receiving a grant pursuant to this  
27 section shall set aside an amount equal to five per cent of the grant for  
28 merit bonuses, of up to one thousand dollars each, for teachers who  
29 the board determines have made a significant contribution toward  
30 improving student performance at the school on the list.

31 (e) The Department of Education may retain up to one per cent of  
32 the amount appropriated for purposes of this section for coordination,  
33 program evaluation and administration.

34 (f) No funds received pursuant to this section shall be used to  
35 supplant federal, state or local funding to the local or regional board of  
36 education for such schools.

37 (g) Expenditure reports shall be filed with the Department of  
38 Education as requested by the commissioner. School districts shall  
39 refund (1) any unexpended amounts at the close of the program for  
40 which the grant was awarded, and (2) any amounts not expended in  
41 accordance with the approved grant application.

42 Sec. 2. (NEW) (a) The Department of Education shall identify  
43 methods and programs that have a demonstrated record of success in

44 improving student performance in such areas as reading, mathematics  
45 and writing. The department shall make information on such methods  
46 and programs available to local and regional boards of education to  
47 assist them in utilizing such methods and establishing such programs  
48 to address deficiencies in schools on the list prepared pursuant to  
49 section 2 of public act 99-288. For purposes of this section, "methods"  
50 includes professional development for teachers and administrators,  
51 instructional techniques and the governance and management  
52 structure and systems.

53 (b) The Commissioner of Education shall report, annually, in  
54 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint  
55 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
56 matters relating to education on the implementation of improvement  
57 plans and student achievement at schools on the list prepared  
58 pursuant to section 2 of public act 99-288.

59 Sec. 3. Section 4 of public act 99-288 is repealed and the following is  
60 substituted in lieu thereof:

61 (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, and each fiscal year  
62 thereafter, the Commissioner of Education shall award grants, within  
63 available appropriations, to local and regional boards of education for  
64 priority school districts pursuant to section 10-266p, as amended, for  
65 summer school programs required pursuant to public act 99-288, and  
66 week-end school programs. Eligibility for grants pursuant to this  
67 section shall be determined for a five-year period based on a school  
68 district's designation as a priority school district for the initial year of  
69 application. In order to receive a grant, an eligible board of education  
70 shall submit a plan for the expenditure of grant funds to the  
71 Department of Education, at such time and in such manner as the  
72 commissioner prescribes.

73 (b) In order to receive a grant, an eligible board of education shall  
74 submit a plan for the expenditure of grant funds to the Department of

75 Education, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner  
76 prescribes. The plan shall include: (1) Criteria for student participation  
77 in the program, including provision for priority to students who are  
78 determined to be substantially deficient in reading, (2) criteria for  
79 teacher selection that emphasize the skills needed for teaching the  
80 summer program and criteria for establishment of the curriculum for  
81 the summer program, and (3) a system for reporting, by school and  
82 grade, on the number of students who attend the program, for  
83 assessing the performance of such students in the program and for  
84 tracking their performance during the school year. In deciding where  
85 to establish a summer school program, eligible boards of education  
86 shall give preference to elementary and middle schools with the  
87 highest number of students who are substantially deficient in reading.

88 [(b)] (c) Each priority school district shall receive a grant based on  
89 the ratio of the number of resident students, as defined in subdivision  
90 (22) of section 10-262f, as amended, in the district to the total number  
91 of resident students in all priority school districts.

92 [(c)] (d) No funds received pursuant to this section shall be used to  
93 supplant federal, state or local funding to the local or regional board of  
94 education for summer school or week-end school programs.

95 [(d)] (e) Expenditure reports shall be filed with the department as  
96 requested by the commissioner. Local or regional boards of education  
97 shall refund (1) any unexpended amounts at the close of the program  
98 for which the grant is awarded, and (2) any amounts not expended in  
99 accordance with an approved grant application.

100 Sec. 4. Section 10-16p of the general statutes, as amended by section  
101 1 of public act 99-230, is repealed and the following is substituted in  
102 lieu thereof:

103 (a) As used in sections 10-16o to 10-16r, inclusive, section 17b-749a  
104 and section 17b-749c, as amended by this act:

105 (1) "School readiness program" means a nonsectarian program that  
106 (A) meets the standards set by the department pursuant to subsection  
107 (b) of this section and the requirements of section 10-16q, and (B)  
108 provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of not less  
109 than four hundred fifty hours and one hundred eighty days for eligible  
110 children, provided, for the fiscal years ending June 30, 1998, and June  
111 30, 1999, the commissioner may approve programs that provide  
112 learning experiences which are for less than said hours and days;

113 (2) "Eligible children" means children three and four years of age  
114 and children five years of age who are not eligible to enroll in school  
115 pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible to enroll in school and  
116 will attend a school readiness program pursuant to section 9 of [this  
117 act] public act 99-230;

118 (3) "Priority school" means a school in which forty per cent or more  
119 of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or  
120 reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law and regulations,  
121 excluding such a school located in a priority school district pursuant to  
122 section 10-266p, as amended;

123 (4) "Severe need school" means a school in a priority school district  
124 pursuant to section 10-266p, as amended, in which forty per cent or  
125 more of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for  
126 free or reduced price lunches;

127 (5) "Accredited" means accredited by the National Association for  
128 the Education of Young Children, a Head Start on-site program review  
129 instrument or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations,  
130 or otherwise meeting such criteria as may be established by the  
131 commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social  
132 Services;

133 (6) "Approved" means meeting the criteria established by the  
134 commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social

135 Services;

136 (7) "Credentialed" means holding a National Administrator  
137 Credential or otherwise meeting such criteria as may be established by  
138 the commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social  
139 Services;

140 ~~[(7)]~~ (8) "Year-round" means fifty weeks per year;

141 ~~[(8)]~~ (9) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education; and

142 ~~[(9)]~~ (10) "Department" means the Department of Education.

143 (b) The Department of Education shall be the lead agency for school  
144 readiness. School readiness program providers eligible for funding  
145 from the Department of Education shall include local and regional  
146 boards of education, regional educational service centers, family  
147 resource centers and providers of child day care centers, as defined in  
148 section 19a-77, Head Start programs, preschool programs and other  
149 programs that meet such standards established by the Commissioner  
150 of Education. The department shall establish standards for school  
151 readiness programs. The standards may include, but need not be  
152 limited to, guidelines for staff-child interactions, curriculum content,  
153 lesson plans, parent involvement, staff qualifications, ~~[and training]~~  
154 including a minimum percentage requirement for staff in each  
155 classroom to have nine college credits or more in early childhood  
156 education and that all staff receive at least fifteen hours of in-service  
157 training annually, and administration, including a requirement that  
158 the directors and administrators be credentialed. The department shall  
159 develop age-appropriate developmental skills and goals for children  
160 attending such programs. The commissioner, in consultation with the  
161 Commissioners of Higher Education and Social Services and other  
162 appropriate entities, shall develop a continuing education training  
163 program for the staff of school readiness programs.

164 (c) The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the  
165 Commissioner of Social Services, shall establish a grant program to  
166 provide spaces in accredited or approved school readiness programs  
167 for eligible children who reside in priority school districts pursuant to  
168 section 10-266p, as amended. Under the program, the grant shall be  
169 provided, in accordance with this section, to the town in which such  
170 priority school district is located. Eligibility shall be determined for a  
171 five-year period based on an applicant's designation as a priority  
172 school district for the initial year of application. Grant awards shall be  
173 made annually contingent upon available funding and a satisfactory  
174 annual evaluation. The chief elected official of such town and the  
175 superintendent of schools for such priority school district shall submit  
176 a plan for the expenditure of grant funds and responses to the local  
177 request for proposal process to the Departments of Education and  
178 Social Services. The departments shall jointly review such plans and  
179 shall each approve the portion of such plan within its jurisdiction for  
180 funding. The plan shall: (1) Be developed in consultation with the local  
181 school readiness council established pursuant to section 10-16r, as  
182 amended; (2) be based on a needs and resource assessment; (3) provide  
183 for the issuance of requests for proposals for providers of accredited or  
184 approved school readiness programs, provided, after the initial  
185 requests for proposals, facilities that have been approved to operate a  
186 child care program financed through the Connecticut Health and  
187 Education Facilities Authority and [who] have received a commitment  
188 for debt service from the Department of Social Services pursuant to  
189 section 17b-749i, as amended, are exempt from the requirement for  
190 issuance of annual requests for proposals; and (4) identify the need for  
191 funding pursuant to section 17b-749a in order to extend the hours and  
192 days of operation of school readiness programs in order to provide  
193 child day care services for children attending such programs.

194 (d) The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the  
195 Commissioner of Social Services, shall establish a competitive grant  
196 program to provide spaces in accredited or approved school readiness

197 programs for eligible children who reside in an area served by a  
198 priority school. A town in which such a school is located or a regional  
199 school readiness council, pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-16r,  
200 as amended, for a region in which such a school is located may apply  
201 for such a grant in an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand  
202 dollars per priority school. Eligibility shall be determined for a five-  
203 year period based on an applicant's designation as having a priority  
204 school for the initial year of application. Grant awards shall be made  
205 annually contingent upon available funding and a satisfactory annual  
206 evaluation. The chief elected official of such town and the  
207 superintendent of schools of the school district or the regional school  
208 readiness council shall submit a plan, as described in subsection (c) of  
209 this section, for the expenditure of such grant funds to the Department  
210 of Education. In awarding grants pursuant to this subsection, the  
211 commissioner shall give preference to applications submitted by  
212 regional school readiness councils and may, within available  
213 appropriations, provide a larger grant to towns with two or more  
214 severe need schools in such district. A town or regional school  
215 readiness council awarded a grant pursuant to this subsection shall use  
216 the funds to purchase spaces for such children from providers of  
217 accredited or approved school readiness programs.

218 (e) (1) Ninety-three per cent of the amount appropriated for  
219 purposes of this section shall be used for the grant program pursuant  
220 to subsection (c) of this section. Priority school districts shall receive  
221 grants based on their proportional share of the sum of the products  
222 obtained by multiplying the number of enrolled kindergarten students  
223 in each priority school district for the year prior to the year the grant is  
224 to be paid, by the ratio of the average percentage of free and reduced  
225 price meals for all severe need schools in such district to the minimum  
226 percentage requirement for severe need school eligibility.

227 (2) Six and five-tenths per cent of the amount appropriated for  
228 purposes of this section shall be used for the competitive grant

229 program pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

230 (3) The Department of Education may retain up to five-tenths of one  
231 per cent of the amount appropriated for purposes of this section for  
232 coordination, program evaluation and administration.

233 (4) If a town that is eligible for a grant pursuant to subsection (c) of  
234 this section does not submit, by January first, a plan which is  
235 subsequently approved for the expenditure of the entire amount of  
236 funds for which such town is eligible, the department may use up to  
237 ten per cent of any amounts such town has not earmarked for  
238 expenditure to provide supplemental grants to other towns that are  
239 eligible for grants pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

240 (f) Any school readiness program that receives funds pursuant to  
241 this section shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national  
242 origin, gender, religion or disability. For purposes of this section, a  
243 nonsectarian program means any public or private school readiness  
244 program that is not violative of the Establishment Clause of the  
245 Constitution of the State of Connecticut or the Establishment Clause of  
246 the Constitution of the United States of America.

247 (g) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, no funds received by  
248 a town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section shall be used to  
249 supplant federal, state or local funding received by such town for early  
250 childhood education, provided (1) a town may use up to five per cent  
251 but no more than fifty thousand dollars of the amount received  
252 pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section for coordination,  
253 program evaluation and administration, and (2) if a town provides  
254 twenty-five thousand dollars in local funding for early childhood  
255 education coordination, program evaluation and administration, such  
256 town may use up to ten per cent but no more than seventy-five  
257 thousand dollars of such amount for coordination, program evaluation  
258 and administration. Each town that receives a grant pursuant to said  
259 subsection (c) or (d) shall designate a person to be responsible for such

260 coordination, program evaluation and administration and to act as a  
261 liaison between the town and the Departments of Education and Social  
262 Services. Each school readiness program that receives funds pursuant  
263 to this section shall provide information to the department or the  
264 school readiness council, as requested, that is necessary for purposes of  
265 any school readiness program evaluation.

266 (h) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 1998, June 30, 1999, [and]  
267 June 30, 2000, and June 30, 2001, grants pursuant to this section may be  
268 used, with the approval of the commissioner, to prepare a facility or  
269 staff for operating a school readiness program and shall be adjusted  
270 based on the number of days of operation of a school readiness  
271 program if a shorter term of operation is approved by the  
272 commissioner.

273 (i) A town may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible  
274 children who reside in such town at an accredited or approved school  
275 readiness program located in another town. A regional school  
276 readiness council may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible  
277 children who reside in the region covered by the council at an  
278 accredited or approved school readiness program located outside such  
279 region.

280 (j) Children enrolled in school readiness programs funded pursuant  
281 to this section shall not be counted as resident students for purposes of  
282 subdivision (22) of section 10-262f, as amended.

283 Sec. 5. Subsection (c) of section 17b-749 of the general statutes, as  
284 amended by section 7 of public act 99-166 and section 5 of public act  
285 99-252, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof:

286 (c) The commissioner shall establish eligibility and program  
287 standards including, but not limited to: (1) A priority intake and  
288 eligibility system with preference given to serving teen parents,  
289 low-income working families, adoptive families of children who were

290 adopted from the Department of Children and Families and who are  
291 granted a waiver of income standards under subdivision (2) of  
292 subsection (b), and working families who are at risk of welfare  
293 dependency; (2) health and safety standards for child care providers  
294 not required to be licensed; (3) a reimbursement system for child care  
295 services which account for differences in the age of the child, number  
296 of children in the family, the geographic region and type of care  
297 provided by licensed and unlicensed caregivers, the cost and type of  
298 services provided by licensed and unlicensed caregivers, successful  
299 completion of fifteen hours of annual in-service training or  
300 credentialing of child care directors and administrators, and program  
301 accreditation; (4) supplemental payment for special needs of the child  
302 and extended nontraditional hours; (5) an annual rate review process  
303 which assures that reimbursement rates are maintained at levels which  
304 permit equal access to a variety of child care settings; (6) a sliding  
305 reimbursement scale for participating families; (7) an administrative  
306 appeals process; (8) an administrative hearing process to adjudicate  
307 cases of alleged fraud and abuse and to impose sanctions and recover  
308 overpayments; and (9) a waiting list for the child care subsidy program  
309 that reflects the priority and eligibility system set forth in subdivision  
310 (1) of subsection (c) of this section, which is reviewed periodically,  
311 with the inclusion of this information in the annual report required to  
312 be issued annually by the Department of Social Services to the  
313 Governor and the General Assembly in accordance with subdivision  
314 (10) of section 17b-733. Such action will include, but not be limited to,  
315 family income, age of child, region of state and length of time on such  
316 waiting list.

317       Sec. 6. Subsection (c) of section 17b-749c of the general statutes, as  
318 amended by section 7 of public act 99-230, is repealed and the  
319 following is substituted in lieu thereof:

320       (c) The grants shall be used to:

321 (1) Help providers who are not accredited by the National  
322 Association for the Education of Young Children to obtain such  
323 accreditation;

324 (2) Help directors and administrators who are not credentialed to  
325 become credentialed;

326 [(2)] (3) Provide comprehensive services, such as enhanced access to  
327 health care, nutrition, family support services, parent education,  
328 literacy and parental involvement, and community and home outreach  
329 programs;

330 [(3)] (4) Purchase educational equipment;

331 [(4)] (5) Provide scholarships for training to obtain a child  
332 development associate certificate;

333 [(5)] (6) Provide training for persons who are mentor teachers, as  
334 defined in federal regulations for the Head Start program, and provide  
335 a family service coordinator or a family service worker as such  
336 positions are defined in such federal regulations;

337 [(6)] (7) Repair fire, health and safety problems in existing facilities  
338 and conduct minor remodeling to comply with the Americans with  
339 Disabilities Act;

340 [(7)] (8) Create a supportive network with family day care homes;

341 [(8)] (9) Provide for educational consultation and staff development;

342 [(9)] (10) Provide for program quality assurance personnel; [and]

343 [(10)] (11) Provide technical assistance services to enable providers  
344 to develop child care facilities pursuant to sections 17b-749g, 17b-749h  
345 and 17b-749i, as amended; and

346 (12) Establish a single point of entry system.

347       Sec. 7. The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the  
348 Commissioner of Social Services, shall require school readiness  
349 councils in priority school districts pursuant to section 10-266p of the  
350 general statutes, as amended, and school districts with a severe need  
351 school as defined in section 10-16p of the general statutes, as amended  
352 by this act, and invite school readiness councils in transitional school  
353 districts pursuant to section 10-263c of the general statutes, as  
354 amended, to submit an operating and capital school readiness needs  
355 assessment that provides an estimate of the number of three and four  
356 year old children in such districts not enrolled in a school readiness  
357 program whose parents would likely enroll them if a school readiness  
358 program were available and a proposed three-year plan to address any  
359 gap in the number of available spaces and the demand for such spaces.  
360 On or before January 1, 2001, the Commissioner of Education shall  
361 report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the  
362 General Assembly on such needs assessments and recommend actions  
363 to address unmet needs.

364       Sec. 8. (NEW) (a) The Department of Education shall develop and  
365 implement a state-wide public school information system. The system  
366 shall be designed for the purpose of establishing a standardized  
367 electronic data collection and reporting protocol that will facilitate  
368 compliance with state and federal reporting requirements, improve  
369 school to school and district to district information exchanges, and  
370 maintain the confidentiality of individual student and staff data. The  
371 initial design shall focus on student information, provided the system  
372 shall be created to allow for future compatibility with financial, facility  
373 and staff data. The system shall provide for the tracking of the  
374 performance of individual students on each of the state-wide mastery  
375 examinations under section 10-14n of the general statutes, in order to  
376 allow the department to compare the progress of the same cohort of  
377 students who take each examination and to better analyze school  
378 performance for purposes of section 2 of public act 99-288.

379 (b) The system database of student information shall not be  
380 considered a public record for the purposes of section 1-210 of the  
381 general statutes.

382 (c) The department shall initiate a pilot system project not later than  
383 the 2001-2002 school year with full implementation in the school year  
384 following successful implementation of the pilot. All school districts  
385 shall participate in the system, provided the department provides for  
386 technical assistance and training of school staff in the use of the  
387 system.

388 Sec. 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2000.

**ED Committee Vote:** Yea 30 Nay 0 JFS C/R APP

**APP Committee Vote:** Yea 50 Nay 0 JFS

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

---

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:** Cost

**Affected Agencies:** Department of Education

**Municipal Impact:** Revenue Gain

**Explanation**

**State and Municipal Impact:**

This bill establishes a grant program for under-performing schools for which funds totaling \$1.6 million have been provided in the House version of the FY 01 budget. No funds have been provided for this purpose in the Senate version. A total of 28 schools have been identified as eligible for this grant. An additional \$1.6 million is forthcoming for this same purpose from the federal government.

The bill requires the State Department of Education to develop and implement a state-wide public school information system which is to be fully operational in the year following a successful pilot which is to occur in FY 02. The State Department of Education can begin planning for this project in FY 01 with its currently available appropriation but may require additional funds for the FY 02 pilot.

The bill also makes various non-fiscal programmatic changes to the school accountability grant program and the school readiness program.

---

**OLR Bill Analysis**

sHB 5737

**AN ACT CONCERNING UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL READINESS.**

**SUMMARY:**

This bill:

1. establishes a grant program for schools listed by the education commissioner as needing improvement under PA 99-288;
2. requires districts eligible for the grants to submit spending plans for the commissioner's approval;
3. requires districts to earmark 20% of their grants for library partnership programs and 5% for merit bonuses to teachers;
4. requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to set up a statewide public school information system;
5. requires SDE to identify programs that have been successful in improving student achievement;
6. imposes additional measures to enhance quality of staff in school readiness and state-subsidized child daycare programs; and
7. requires school readiness councils in certain districts to submit school readiness need assessments to the education commissioner.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2000

**GRANTS FOR SCHOOLS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT**

***Grant Purposes***

Within appropriations, the bill requires the education commissioner to provide grants to school districts that have one or more schools on the commissioner's most recent list of schools needing improvement. Districts must use the grants to pay for (1) the cost of implementing required school improvement plans for those schools, (2) partnerships between the schools needing improvement and public libraries in the school district, and (3) actions needed for the schools to be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

### ***District Plans***

Each eligible board of education must submit a spending plan as the education commissioner specifies. The plan must include:

1. methods and school-based programs the education commissioner identifies that address subjects, by grade level, in which students are most deficient on state mastery tests and
2. partnerships with public libraries designed to improve family literacy and parental involvement.

The education commissioner must approve the plan.

### ***Set-Asides***

The bill requires each board to set aside 20% of its grant for the library partnership programs and 5% for merit bonuses of up to \$1,000 each to teachers whom the board determines made a significant contribution towards improving student performance at a listed school.

SDE may use up to 1% of the overall grant appropriation for coordination, program evaluation, and administration.

### ***Other Grant Requirements***

The bill bars boards of education from using grant funds to supplant other state, federal, or local funding to the listed schools.

Districts must file spending reports with SDE as the education commissioner requests. Any unspent money and any money not spent in accordance with the district's grant application must be repaid.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM**

The bill requires the education commissioner to implement a standardized electronic data collection and reporting system that (1) makes it easier to comply with state and federal reporting requirements, (2) improves the exchange of information among schools and school districts, and (3) maintains the confidentiality of individual student and staff data. The initial system design must focus on student information but must also incorporate future compatibility with financial, facility, and staff data.

The bill requires SDE to begin a pilot system by the 2001-02 school year and to implement the system fully in the school year following the pilot's successful implementation. It requires all school districts to participate in the system, as long as SDE provides technical assistance and trains school staff to use it.

The bill exempts the student information database from the Freedom of Information Act.

### **IDENTIFYING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS**

The bill requires SDE to identify methods and programs, including professional development for teachers and administrators, instructional techniques, and governance and management structures and systems, that have been shown to be successful in improving student performance in such areas as math, reading, and writing. SDE must make information about the programs available to local school districts to help them address deficiencies in listed schools.

The commissioner must report annually to the Education Committee on the implementation of improvement plans and on student achievement at listed schools.

### **PLANS FOR SUMMER AND WEEKEND GRANTS**

The bill requires priority districts receiving grants for summer and weekend programs for students in the fourth and sixth grades to

include the following in the spending plans they must submit to the education commissioner:

1. criteria for students to participate, including provisions to give priority to students who are substantially deficient in reading;
2. criteria for selecting teachers that emphasize the skills needed for the program;
3. criteria for establishing program curricula; and
4. a system for reporting, by school and grade, how many students attend and for assessing student performance in the program and tracking their performance during the school year.

In deciding where to establish a summer school program, the bill requires a school district to give preference to elementary and middle schools with the most students substantially deficient in reading.

## **SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS**

### ***Standards***

The bill requires the education commissioner's school readiness program standards to require:

1. a minimum percentage of staff in each classroom to have at least nine college credits in early childhood education;
2. all staff to receive at least 15 hours of in-service training per year; and
3. program directors and administrators to be "credentialed," that is, either hold a National Administrator Credential or meet other criteria established by the commissioner in consultation with the commissioner of social services.

### ***Grants***

The bill allows the education commissioner to award larger school

readiness grants to towns with two or more severe-need schools in their school district. It extends for another year (through June 30, 2001) permission for towns to use school readiness grants to prepare a facility or staff for operating a school readiness program. But it requires the education commissioner to approve use of a grant for such start-up costs.

### ***Quality Enhancement Grants***

The bill allows state school readiness quality enhancement grants to be used to help daycare directors and administrators become credentialed and to establish a single-point-of-entry system. The law already allows grants to be used for 10 other things, including helping providers become accredited and training staff and mentor teachers.

### ***Needs Assessment and Report***

The bill requires school readiness councils in priority districts and in districts with severe-need schools, and allows councils in transitional districts, to submit capital and operating school readiness needs assessments to the education commissioner. The assessments must (1) estimate the numbers of three- and four-year-olds in the districts who are not enrolled in school readiness programs whose parents would likely enroll them if programs were available and (2) include a three-year plan to address any gap between the number of spaces available and the demand.

The education commissioner must report to the General Assembly by January 1, 2001 on the needs assessments and recommendations to address the unmet needs.

### **STATE-SUBSIDIZED DAY CARE**

In the department's day-care reimbursement system, the bill requires the commissioner of social services to account for differences in cost based on successful completion of 15 hours of annual in-service training or child-care directors and administrators who are credentialed. Current law requires the commissioner to account for differences in a child's age, the number of children in the recipient's

family, the geographic region, the type of care provided by licensed and unlicensed caregivers, and program accreditation.

**BACKGROUND**

***Schools Needing Improvement***

PA 99-288 law requires the education commissioner to publish an annual list of elementary and middle schools needing improvement based on student performance and performance trends on statewide mastery tests. The act requires local boards with jurisdiction over those schools to develop and implement improvement plans for them. In 1999, the commissioner identified 28 schools in six districts that need improvement.

The districts with one or more schools on the 1999 list are Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, and Windham.

***Severe-Need Schools***

Severe-need schools are schools in priority school districts where 40% or more of the school lunches served are to students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches under federal law. Students with family incomes under 130% of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free lunches and students with family incomes under 185% of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for reduced price lunches.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference  
Yea 30 Nay 0

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute  
Yea 50 Nay 0