



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 5737

February Session, 2000

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