



General Assembly

January Session, 2011

Raised Bill No. 6432

LCO No. 3824

03824_____ED_

Referred to Committee on Education

Introduced by:
(ED)

AN ACT CONCERNING CLOSING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

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

1 Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2011*) (a) There is established a task force
2 to address the academic achievement gap between racial and
3 socioeconomic groups in Connecticut by considering effective
4 approaches to closing the achievement gap in elementary, middle and
5 high schools. The task force shall develop, in consultation with the
6 Department of Education, the Connecticut State University System, the
7 Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap established
8 pursuant to section 2 of this act, and the joint standing committee of
9 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to
10 education, a master plan to eliminate the academic achievement gap
11 by January 1, 2020.

12 (b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

13 (1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;

14 (2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate;

15 (3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of
16 Representatives;

17 (4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

18 (5) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of
19 Representatives;

20 (6) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate; and

21 (7) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee.

22 (c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivision (1),
23 (2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member
24 of the General Assembly.

25 (d) All appointments to the task force shall be made not later than
26 August 1, 2011, and shall reflect the geographic and cultural diversity
27 of the state and shall have experience in business, education and
28 philanthropic organizations. Any vacancy shall be filled by the
29 appointing authority.

30 (e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president
31 pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the task force
32 from among the members of the task force. Such chairpersons shall
33 schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not
34 later than September 1, 2011.

35 (f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the
36 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education
37 shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

38 (g) Not later than July 1, 2012, the task force shall submit the master
39 plan described in subsection (a) of this section to the joint standing
40 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
41 relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-
42 4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on July 1, 2020.

43 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) (a) There is established an
44 Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap. The council
45 shall consist of: (1) The Lieutenant Governor, or the Lieutenant
46 Governor's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Education, or the
47 commissioner's designee, (3) the Commissioner of Children and
48 Families, or the commissioner's designee, (4) the Commissioner of
49 Social Services, or the commissioner's designee, (5) the Commissioner
50 of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee, (6) the Commissioner
51 of Higher Education, or the commissioner's designee, (7) the
52 Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, or the
53 commissioner's designee, (8) the Commissioner of Administrative
54 Services, or the commissioner's designee, and (9) the Secretary of the
55 Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee. The
56 chairperson of the council shall be the Lieutenant Governor, or the
57 Lieutenant Governor's designee.

58 (b) The Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap shall
59 (1) assist the achievement gap task force, established pursuant to
60 section 1 of this act, in the development of the master plan to eliminate
61 the academic achievement gap in Connecticut, described in section 1 of
62 this act, (2) implement the provisions of such master plan, and, if
63 necessary, make recommendations for legislation relating to such
64 master plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
65 having cognizance of matters relating to education, and (3) submit
66 periodic progress reports on the implementation of such master plan
67 to the achievement gap task force established pursuant to section 1 of
68 this act.

69 (c) The Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap shall
70 be within the Department of Education for administrative purposes
71 only.

72 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) Not later than July 1, 2012, the
73 Department of Education shall develop model curricula in reading and
74 mathematics for use by local and regional boards of education for

75 grades prekindergarten to grade four, inclusive.

76 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) The Department of Education
77 shall annually prepare a list of school districts and individual schools
78 identified as having an achievement gap. The local or regional board of
79 education for any school district or individual school so identified by
80 the department as having an achievement gap shall biannually submit,
81 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
82 statutes, accountability reports to the department, the achievement gap
83 task force established pursuant to section 1 of this act and the joint
84 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
85 matters relating to education. Such accountability reports shall include
86 descriptions of efforts being made to address and eliminate the
87 achievement gap in the school district or individual school. For
88 purposes of this section, "achievement gap" means the existence of a
89 significant disparity in the academic performance of students along
90 racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups, as determined by the
91 department.

92 Sec. 5. Section 10-4q of the general statutes is repealed and the
93 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

94 (a) The State Board of Education shall establish a State Education
95 Resource Center to assist the board in the provision of programs and
96 activities that will promote educational equity and excellence. Such
97 activities, to be provided by the State Education Resource Center or a
98 regional educational service center, may include training and
99 continuing education seminars, publication of technical materials,
100 research and evaluation, and other related activities. The center may
101 support programs and activities concerning early childhood education,
102 the federal No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110, and closing the
103 academic achievement gap between socio-economic subgroups, and
104 other related programs.

105 (b) The Commissioner of Education, with the assistance of the State
106 Education Resource Center, may provide grants to local and regional

107 boards of education for districts identified as in need of improvement
108 under the provisions of section 10-223e. The grants shall be for the
109 creation and acquisition of new curricula, training in the use of the
110 curricula and related supporting textbooks and other materials. Local
111 and regional boards of education may use such grants only for
112 curricula, training and related textbooks and materials that have been
113 authorized by the commissioner. Local and regional boards of
114 education shall apply for grants pursuant to this subsection at such
115 time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes, and the
116 commissioner shall determine the amount of the grant awards.

117 (c) Within available appropriations, the Department of Education
118 shall establish a Connecticut School Reform Resource Center within
119 the State Education Resource Center established pursuant to
120 subsection (a) of this section or by contract through a regional
121 educational service center. The center shall operate year-round and
122 focus on serving the needs of all public schools. The center shall (1)
123 publish and distribute reports on the most effective practices for
124 improving student achievement by successful schools, (2) provide a
125 program of professional development activities for school leaders,
126 including curriculum coordinators, principals, superintendents and
127 board of education members, (3) provide information on successful
128 models for evaluating student performance and managing student
129 data, and (4) provide other programs and materials to assist in the
130 improvement of public schools.

131 (d) The Department of Education shall establish a Connecticut
132 School Cultural Resource Center within the State Education Resource
133 Center established pursuant to subsection (a) of this section or by
134 contract through a regional educational service center. The center shall
135 operate year-round and shall serve all public schools. The center shall
136 (1) develop culturally-relevant methods for educating students whose
137 primary language is not English, (2) develop strategies for assisting
138 such students who are in danger of failing, and (3) provide a program
139 of professional development activities for teachers to educate such

140 students that includes research-based child development and reading
141 instruction tools and practices.

142 Sec. 6. Section 10-15 of the general statutes is repealed and the
143 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

144 Public schools including kindergartens shall be maintained in each
145 town for at least one hundred eighty days of actual school sessions
146 during each year. When public school sessions are cancelled for
147 reasons of inclement weather or otherwise, the rescheduled sessions
148 shall not be held on Saturday or Sunday. Public schools may conduct
149 weekend education programs to provide supplemental and remedial
150 services to students. A local or regional board of education for a school
151 that has been designated as a low achieving school pursuant to
152 subdivision (1) of subsection (c) of section 10-223e may increase the
153 number of actual school sessions during each year, and may increase
154 the number of hours of actual school work per school session in order
155 to improve student performance and remove the school from the list of
156 schools designated as a low achieving school maintained by the State
157 Board of Education. The State Board of Education (1) may authorize
158 the shortening of any school year for a school district, a school or a
159 portion of a school on account of an unavoidable emergency, and (2)
160 may authorize implementation of scheduling of school sessions to
161 permit full year use of facilities which may not offer each child one
162 hundred eighty days of school sessions within a given school year, but
163 which assures an opportunity for each child to average a minimum of
164 one hundred eighty days of school sessions per year during thirteen
165 years of educational opportunity in the elementary and secondary
166 schools. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section and section 10-
167 16, the State Board of Education may, upon application by a local or
168 regional board of education, approve for any single school year, in
169 whole or in part, a plan to implement alternative scheduling of school
170 sessions which assures at least four hundred fifty hours of actual
171 school work for nursery schools and half-day kindergartens and at
172 least nine hundred hours of actual school work for full-day

173 kindergartens and grades one to twelve, inclusive.

174 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) The Department of Education
 175 shall establish an educator certification reciprocity program. Such
 176 reciprocity program shall permit the department to (1) enter into
 177 reciprocity agreements with other states that have equivalent educator
 178 certification standards, and (2) issue an educator certificate pursuant to
 179 chapter 166 of the general statutes to an educator who is certified by a
 180 state in which the department has entered into such a reciprocity
 181 agreement.

182 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) Not later than July 1, 2013, the
 183 local and regional boards of education for school districts identified as
 184 priority school districts, pursuant to section 10-266p of the general
 185 statutes, shall (1) make school readiness spaces available to all eligible
 186 children who reside in the priority school district, and (2) provide full-
 187 day kindergarten to all children who reside in the priority school
 188 district.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	10-4q
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	10-15
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2011</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To reestablish the achievement gap task force and require the task force to develop a master plan to eliminate the academic achievement gap in Connecticut by 2020; to create the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap to assist the achievement gap task force in developing and implementing the master plan; to require the Department of Education to develop model curricula in reading and

mathematics for grades prekindergarten to grade four, inclusive; to require school districts that have an achievement gap to submit biannual accountability reports on the district's efforts to eliminate the achievement gap; to establish the Connecticut School Cultural Resource Center within the State Education Resource Center to develop ways to help English language learners succeed in school; to allow school districts to increase the school day and school year if such school district has a school that has been identified as low achieving; to require the Department of Education to establish an educator reciprocity program to make it easier for certified out-of-state educators to receive certification in Connecticut; and to phase in mandatory school readiness and full-day kindergarten in priority school districts.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]