

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 11-135—sHB 6498

Education Committee

Appropriations Committee

**AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION DATES FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM, EXCEPTIONS TO THE SCHOOL
GOVERNANCE COUNCIL REQUIREMENT AND THE INCLUSION OF
CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT IN A COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT
AS PART OF THE DEFINITION OF TEACHER TENURE**

SUMMARY: This act delays by two years the implementation of the secondary school reforms enacted in 2010 that (1) increase the minimum number of credits required to graduate from high school from 20 to 25, (2) require students to pass state exams in certain courses and complete a senior project in order to graduate, (3) require school districts to offer students support and alternative ways to meet the new graduation requirements, and (4) require the State Department of Education (SDE) to develop end-of-year exams in various subjects. It:

1. eliminates state grants to help districts implement the new graduation requirements and instead requires SDE to offer technical assistance to districts wishing to start implementing them;
2. requires districts to establish a student success plan for each student starting in grade six; and
3. revises and delays by one year the start of biennial status reports on the implementation of the new graduation requirements.

The act also modifies requirements enacted in 2010 that school districts establish school governance councils for schools whose students do not meet academic performance standards. It:

1. exempts boards of education with low-achieving schools or schools in need of improvement that have only a single grade or that already have substantially similar school governance councils from the requirement to establish school councils according to the existing law and
2. reorganizes and clarifies the sequence and contents of required SDE reports on the implementation and effectiveness of school governance councils.

Finally, the act:

1. preserves teachers' tenure and credited service toward tenure when their employing board enters a cooperative arrangement to provide educational services and their employment is transferred to a committee administering the arrangement;
2. moves up, to July 1, 2012 from July 1, 2013, the deadline for the State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), to adopt guidelines for a model teacher evaluation program (see BACKGROUND);

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

3. establishes a task force to address implementation issues arising from enhanced high school graduation requirements; and
4. makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except for the new deadline for adopting teacher evaluation guidelines and the tenure provisions for teachers working for cooperative arrangements, which are effective July 1, 2011.

§§ 1-4 — SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM PROVISIONS DELAYED AND MODIFIED

§ 1 — High School Graduation Requirements

Starting with the class graduating in 2018, prior law required students to earn 25 credits in specified subjects, pass end-of-year examinations in five subjects, and complete a senior demonstration project to graduate from high school. It required school districts to provide adequate support and remedial services for students, starting with students in the 7th grade in the 2012-13 school year.

The act postpones the effective dates of these requirements by two years. It requires the increased high school graduation requirements to take effect with the class of 2020 instead of the class of 2018 and requires school districts to provide support and remedial services for 7th graders starting in 2014-15 rather than 2012-13.

§ 4 — End-of-Year Exams

The enhanced high school graduation standards require students to pass state-developed or -approved end-of-year exams in algebra I, geometry, biology, American history, and 10th grade English. Prior law required SDE to develop or approve these exams over two years starting by July 1, 2012 and finishing by July 1, 2014. The act postpones this process to July 1, 2014 to July 1, 2016.

§ 2 — Student Success Plans

Instead of requiring school districts, starting in the 2012-13 school year, to collect information on students' career and academic choices every year beginning in grade six and continuing through grade 12, the act requires districts to create an annual student success plan for each student, starting in grade six. The plans must include the student's career and academic choices in 6th through 12th grades.

§ 3 — Technical Assistance and Reporting

For FY 13 through FY 18, prior law required the SDE to provide grants, within available appropriations, to help school districts implement the new high school graduation standards and student support services. The act instead requires SDE, within available appropriations, to provide technical assistance in FY 12 and FY 13 to boards of education that begin to implement the new standards and services.

In addition, instead of requiring all districts seeking grants to submit biennial

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

status reports to SDE on secondary school reform starting by November 1, 2012, the act requires such reports only from districts that receive the technical assistance. It delays the first report to November 1, 2013 and eliminates the requirement that a district explain in each report why it needs funds for the next biennium to implement the new standards and supports.

It also postpones the start of biennial implementation reports from SDE to the Education Committee from February 1, 2013 to February 1, 2014.

§§ 5, 6, & 11 — SCHOOL GOVERNANCE COUNCILS

Exemptions

Prior law required boards of education that have jurisdiction over schools designated as low-achieving, and allowed boards with jurisdiction over schools designated as “in need of improvement,” to establish a school governance council for each such school. The act exempts the schools from the school governance council statutes if they:

1. have only one grade or
2. adopted a school governance council model on or before July 1, 2011 that
 - (a) is similar to the statutory model; (b) consists of parents, teachers from each grade level or subject area, administrators, and paraprofessionals; and
 - (c) is being administered at the school at the time it is designated a low-achieving school or a school in need of improvement (see BACKGROUND).

Council Powers

Statutory councils are empowered to, among other things, advise the principal on the school budget before it is submitted to the superintendent, interview candidates to fill principal vacancies, and vote to recommend that the school be reconstituted according to models specified in the law. The act gives the similar councils described above some of the same statutory powers and responsibilities, including the power to review and advise on the school’s improvement plans and implementation reports; receive appropriate training and instruction from the local or regional board of education; and, if they are councils for low-achieving schools, vote to reconstitute the school during the third year after being established.

Reports on School Governance Council Implementation and Effectiveness

By law, SDE must monitor and report to the Education Committee on the activities and effectiveness of the councils. The act reorganizes the sequence and content of the required reports and specifies that they must be submitted biennially. The report sequence under prior law and the act is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reporting Requirements and Deadlines

<i>Report Content</i>	<i>Due Dates</i>	
	<i>Prior Law (one-time)</i>	<i>The Act (biennial starting)</i>

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Number of school governance councils established. (This was also part of a required report due January 1, 2011, which the act repeals, see below.)	January 1, 2012	December 1, 2011
Evaluation of effectiveness of councils established before January 15, 2011, including a recommendation whether to change the possible reconstitution models. (The act changes this to an evaluation of the establishment and effectiveness of all councils and eliminates the recommendation.)	October 1, 2014	December 1, 2013
The number of councils recommending or initiating school reconstitution; the reconstitution models chosen; and a recommendation whether to continue allowing councils to recommend school reconstitutions. (The latter recommendation was also required as part of the above report, but the act eliminates it from that report. The act also eliminates requirements that this report include (1) a recommendation on changing the possible reconstitution models, (2) a comparison of the models adopted, and (3) levels of school progress in adopting the models.)	January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2013	December 1, 2015
Monitor and evaluate reconstituted schools according to various measures	No specified reporting date	December 1, 2017

The act also eliminates a separate requirement that SDE report on (1) a comparison of the councils that have initiated reconstitutions with those that have not and (2) whether there is increased parental involvement at schools with governance councils. Prior law required the department to start this reporting by July 1, 2011.

§ 10 — TEACHER TENURE UNDER COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

The act allows teachers working for cooperative arrangements recognized in statute (see BACKGROUND) to combine their service with a participating board of education and the cooperative arrangement for the purpose of earning and maintaining tenure. It requires nontenured teachers working under cooperative arrangements to count their credited service toward tenure with a board of education if their employment is transferred to a committee administering a cooperative arrangement and the board is part of the committee. It also allows a teacher who already has tenure in a district to continue it without a break if the district participates in such a cooperative arrangement and the teacher is employed by the arrangement’s administering committee.

§ 8 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ISSUES TASK FORCE

The act establishes a task force to examine issues arising from the enhanced high school graduation requirements and mandatory courses taking effect with the Class of 2020. The group must address, at least, special programming needs, requirement waivers, and appropriate placements for courses under the required subject areas. It must report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2013. The task force terminates on that date or the date it submits its report, whichever is later.

The task force members must include the education commissioner or his or her designee; two appropriate people appointed by the education commissioner, including teachers; and one member each designated by the (1) Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, (2) Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), (3) Connecticut Association of Schools, (4) Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, (5) Connecticut Education Association; and (6) American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut.

Members must be appointed by August 7, 2011. The CAPSS representative is the task force chairperson and he or she must schedule the first meeting by September 6, 2011. The Education Committee’s administrative staff serves as the task force’s administrative staff. Appointing authorities fill any vacancies.

BACKGROUND

Model Teacher Evaluation Program Guidelines

The law requires local and regional boards of education to develop and implement new teacher evaluation programs consistent with model program guidelines adopted by the SBE in consultation with the PEAC. The model guidelines must include (1) ways to assess students’ academic growth; (2) consideration of state-tracked “control factors” that may influence teacher performance, including student characteristics, attendance, and mobility; and (3) minimum requirements for evaluation instruments and procedures.

Schools in Need of Improvement and Low-Achieving Schools

Under the state education accountability law, schools are designated in “need of improvement” if their students as a whole or one of the identified subgroups of their students (minority students, students with disabilities, or students with limited English) fail, for two years in row, to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward proficiency in specified academic subjects, as determined under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. A school is considered “low-achieving” if it has been designated as “in need of improvement” and requires corrective action under the federal law. Such schools are those whose students have failed to make AYP for at least five years in a row. These schools are subject to intensified SBE supervision (CGS § 10-223e).

Cooperative Arrangements

The cooperative arrangement law allows two or more boards of education to

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

agree, in writing, to establish contracts to cooperatively provide school accommodation services, programs, or activities; special education services; or health care services to carry out the duties required by law. This authority includes the ability to employ teachers and other staff to carry out the programs and services (CGS § 10-158a).

OLR Tracking: JSL:JO:CR:ts