



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 126

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Substitute House Bill No. 7215

House of Representatives, March 25, 2019

The Committee on Children reported through REP. LINEHAN of the 103rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL CLIMATES.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a
2 social and emotional learning and school climate advisory council. The
3 council shall (1) monitor school climate improvement efforts in the
4 state, (2) identify best practices for promoting positive school climates,
5 (3) identify and pursue resources to educate local and regional boards
6 of education on issues relating to fostering positive school climates and
7 social and emotional learning in schools, and (4) perform any other
8 research concerning social and emotional learning and fostering
9 positive school climates that the council deems appropriate.

10 (b) The council shall consist of the following members: (1) The
11 Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, (2) the
12 executive director of the Commission on Women, Children and
13 Seniors, or the executive director's designee, (3) a representative
14 designated by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, (4)
15 a representative designated by the Connecticut Association of Public

16 School Superintendents, (5) a representative designated by the
17 Connecticut Association of Schools, (6) a representative designated by
18 the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, (7) a representative
19 designated by the Connecticut Education Association, and (8) a
20 representative designated by the Connecticut Association of School
21 Administrators.

22 (c) All appointments to the council shall be made not later than
23 thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be
24 filled by the appointing authority.

25 (d) The chairperson of the council shall be elected from among the
26 members. The first meeting of the council shall be held not later than
27 sixty days after the effective date of this section.

28 (e) The administrative staff of the Commission on Women, Children
29 and Seniors shall serve as administrative staff of the council.

30 (f) Not later than January 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, the
31 council shall submit a report on its findings and any recommendations
32 to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having
33 cognizance of matters relating to children and education, in accordance
34 with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

35 Sec. 2. Section 10-222d of the general statutes is repealed and the
36 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2019*):

37 (a) As used in this section [.] and sections [10-222g to] 10-222h, as
38 amended by this act, 10-222i, [inclusive, and section] 10-222k, as
39 amended by this act, and section 1 of this act:

40 (1) "Aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing" means an act
41 that (A) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual or damage
42 to such individual's property, (B) places an individual in reasonable
43 fear of harm to self or damage to such individual's property, (C)
44 creates a hostile environment at school for an individual, or (D)
45 infringes on the rights and opportunities of an individual at school;

46 [(1)] (2) "Bullying" means [(A) the repeated use by one or more
47 students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as
48 cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending
49 school in the same school district, or (B) a physical act or gesture by
50 one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending
51 school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional
52 harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places
53 such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of
54 damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at
55 school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at
56 school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the
57 orderly operation of a school] a determination that aggressive behavior
58 or intentional harm-doing was (A) direct or indirect, (B) severe,
59 persistent or pervasive, and (C) characterized by an imbalance of
60 power. "Bullying" shall include, but need not be limited to, [a written,
61 oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture] aggressive
62 behavior or intentional harm-doing based on any actual or perceived
63 differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry,
64 national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or
65 expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical
66 appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability,
67 or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived
68 to have one or more of such characteristics;

69 (3) "Imbalance of power" means a disparity (A) between individuals
70 with respect to social status or relative physical size, or (B) created
71 because aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing was directed at
72 an individual by a group;

73 [(2)] (4) "Cyberbullying" means [any act of] bullying through the use
74 of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile
75 telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic
76 communications;

77 [(3)] (5) "Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional
78 or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that

79 occurs between two students who are currently in or who have
80 recently been in a dating relationship;

81 [(4)] (6) "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other
82 portable electronic equipment capable of providing data
83 communication between two or more individuals, including, but not
84 limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital
85 assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a
86 video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital
87 images are taken or transmitted;

88 [(5)] (7) "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs,
89 signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature
90 transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic,
91 photoelectronic or photo-optical system;

92 [(6) "Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying
93 among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the
94 conditions of the school climate;]

95 [(7)] (8) "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity
96 or program that is not school related, or through the use of an
97 electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned,
98 leased or used by a local or regional board of education;

99 [(8)] (9) "School employee" means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher,
100 school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor,
101 school counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school
102 paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of
103 education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school, [;
104 or] (B) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her
105 duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to
106 or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or
107 high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of
108 education, [; and] or (C) a volunteer who, in the performance of such
109 volunteer's duties, has regular contact with students and provides
110 services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary,

111 middle or high school;

112 [(9)] (10) "School climate" means the quality and character of school
113 life [with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within
114 the school community between and among students and adults.] based
115 on patterns of students', parents' and school employees' experiences of
116 school life, including, but not limited to, norms, goals, values,
117 interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and
118 organizational structures;

119 (11) "Positive school climate" means a school climate that (A)
120 promotes norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings
121 of social, emotional and physical safety, (B) causes students, families of
122 students and school employees to feel engaged and respected and to
123 work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision, (C)
124 encourages educators to model and nurture attitudes that emphasize
125 the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and (D) allows for
126 each person to contribute to the operation of the school and care of the
127 physical environment of the school;

128 (12) "Emotional intelligence" means the ability to (A) perceive or
129 recognize emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate
130 cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem
131 solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and label
132 emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others; and

133 (13) "Social and emotional learning" means the process through
134 which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through
135 competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, social
136 awareness, relationship skills and reasonable decision-making.

137 (b) Each local and regional board of education shall develop and
138 implement a safe school climate [plan to address the existence of
139 bullying and teen dating violence in its schools] policy. Such [plan]
140 policy shall:

141 (1) [Enable] Promote prevention of and intervention in aggressive

142 behavior or intentional harm-doing and the fostering of a positive
143 school climate through the utilization of model school climate
144 standards, such as the National School Climate Standards published
145 by the National School Climate Center;

146 (2) Include prevention strategies for bullying and teen dating
147 violence in schools, which may include, but need not be limited to, (A)
148 adoption of evidence-based, data-driven systems for assessing,
149 implementing and continuously improving culturally competent,
150 restorative, social and emotional learning in consultation with or on
151 the recommendation of the Department of Education, (B) school rules
152 and policies that prohibit bullying and teen dating violence and that
153 establish appropriate interventions for those involved in such acts, (C)
154 adequate school employee supervision of outdoor areas, hallways,
155 lunchrooms, bathrooms, school buses and other areas where bullying
156 or teen dating violence is likely to occur, (D) culturally competent
157 school-wide training that focuses on restorative practices and social
158 and emotional learning competencies and evidence-based tools to
159 develop such competencies, (E) student and peer-led training,
160 education and support, and (F) promotion of parent or guardian
161 partnership and engagement in fostering a positive school climate
162 through individual or team participation in meetings and trainings;

163 (3) Include intervention protocols to address bullying and teen
164 dating violence in schools by (A) enabling students to anonymously
165 report [acts of bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing
166 to school employees and require students and the parents or guardians
167 of students to be notified at the beginning of each school year of the
168 process by which students may make such reports, [(2) enable] (B)
169 enabling the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of
170 [suspected bullying, (3) require] aggressive behavior or intentional
171 harm-doing, (C) requiring school employees who witness [acts of
172 bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing or receive
173 reports of [bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing to
174 orally notify the safe school climate specialist, described in section 10-
175 222k, as amended by this act, or another school administrator if the

176 safe school climate specialist is unavailable, not later than one school
177 day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of
178 [bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing, and to file a
179 written report not later than two school days after making such oral
180 report, [(4) require] (D) requiring the safe school climate specialist to
181 investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of [bullying]
182 aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and ensure that such
183 investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written
184 reports made under this section and that the parents or guardians of
185 [the] a student alleged to have [committed an act or acts of bullying]
186 engaged in aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and the
187 parents or guardians of the student against whom such [alleged act or
188 acts were] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing was directed
189 receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced, [(5)
190 require] (E) requiring the safe school climate specialist or such
191 specialist's designee to review any anonymous reports, except that no
192 disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous
193 report, [(6) include a prevention and intervention strategy, as defined
194 by section 10-222g, for school employees to deal with bullying and
195 teen dating violence, (7) provide for the inclusion of language in
196 student codes of conduct concerning bullying, (8) require each school]
197 (F) requiring the safe school climate specialist or such specialist's
198 designee, in consultation with the school employee who witnessed or
199 received a report of aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing by
200 a student, to notify the parents or guardians of [students who commit
201 any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students
202 against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours
203 after the completion of the investigation described in subdivision (4) of
204 this subsection, (9) require each school to invite the parents or
205 guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a
206 meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures
207 being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against
208 whom such act was directed and policies and procedures in place to
209 prevent further acts of bullying, (10) require each school to invite the
210 parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of

211 bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting required
212 in subdivision (9) of this subsection, to discuss specific interventions
213 undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying, (11)
214 establish] such student upon a finding that such student committed an
215 act of bullying, not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of
216 an investigation described in subparagraph (D) of this subdivision, of
217 the specific interventions in progress or undertaken by the school to
218 prevent further acts of bullying by such student, (G) requiring the safe
219 school climate specialist or such specialist's designee to notify the
220 parents or guardians of a student against whom an act of bullying was
221 directed, not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of an
222 investigation described in subparagraph (D) of this subdivision, of the
223 measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of such
224 student and the policies and procedures in place at the school to
225 prevent further acts of bullying, (H) establishing a procedure for each
226 school to document and maintain records relating to reports and
227 investigations of suspected bullying in such school and to maintain a
228 list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school and make
229 such list available for public inspection, and annually report such
230 number to the Department of Education, and in such manner as
231 prescribed by the Commissioner of Education, [(12) direct] (I) directing
232 the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing
233 [repeated incidents of] bullying against a single individual, [or
234 recurrently perpetrated] bullying incidents by the same individual
235 [that may include both counseling and discipline, (13) prohibit] and, at
236 the discretion of the safe school climate specialist, aggressive behavior
237 or intentional harm-doing by the same individual that may not rise to
238 the level of bullying, such as restorative, equity-based, bias-informed,
239 culturally competent, trauma-informed interventions for (i) students
240 found to have engaged in bullying, (ii) students against whom acts of
241 bullying have been committed, (iii) parents and guardians, and (iv)
242 school employees. Interventions may include, but not be limited to,
243 referrals to a school counselor, psychologist or other appropriate social
244 or mental health service, plans that address safety measures the school
245 will take to protect students against further acts of aggressive behavior

246 or intentional harm-doing and periodic follow-ups by the safe school
247 climate specialist, and (J) prohibiting discrimination and retaliation
248 against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an
249 act of [bullying, (14) direct the development of student safety support
250 plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that
251 address safety measures the school will take to protect such students
252 against further acts of bullying, (15) require] aggressive behavior or
253 intentional harm-doing.

254 (c) Nothing in this section shall prevent the principal of a school, or
255 the principal's designee, [to notify] from notifying the appropriate
256 local law enforcement agency when such principal, or the principal's
257 designee, believes that any acts of bullying or aggressive behavior or
258 intentional harm-doing constitute criminal conduct. [, (16) prohibit
259 bullying (A) on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-
260 related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds,
261 at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or
262 used by a local or regional board of education, or through the use of an
263 electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used
264 by the local or regional board of education, and (B) outside of the
265 school setting if such bullying (I) creates a hostile environment at
266 school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, or (ii)
267 infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was
268 directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process
269 or the orderly operation of a school, (17) require, at the beginning of
270 each school year, each school to provide all school employees with a
271 written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate
272 plan, and (18) require that all school employees annually complete the
273 training described in section 10-220a or section 10-222j. The notification
274 required pursuant to subdivision (8) of this subsection and the
275 invitation required pursuant to subdivision (9) of this subsection shall
276 include a description of the response of school employees to such acts
277 and any consequences that may result from the commission of further
278 acts of bullying.]

279 [(c)] (d) Not later than [September 1, 2014] January 1, 2020, each

280 local and regional board of education that has not had a safe school
281 climate [plan] policy, developed pursuant to this section, previously
282 reviewed [and approved] by the Department of Education shall submit
283 a safe school climate [plan] policy to the department for review [and
284 approval] in accordance with the provisions of section 10-222p, as
285 amended by this act. [Not later than thirty calendar days after
286 approval by the department of such safe school climate plan, the] Each
287 board shall make such [plan] policy available on the board's [and each
288 individual school in the school district's] Internet web site and ensure
289 that such [plan] policy is included in the [school district's] board's
290 publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for
291 schools and in all student handbooks and employee manuals.

292 [(d)] (e) On and after July 1, [2012] 2020, and not less than biennially
293 thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall require
294 each school in the district to [complete an assessment using the school
295 climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and
296 disseminated by the Department of Education pursuant to section 10-
297 222h. Each local and regional board of education shall collect the
298 school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit
299 such school climate assessments to the department] assess school
300 climate using a school climate assessment instrument. Such school
301 climate assessment instrument shall (1) be an empirically validated
302 survey that provides an in-depth profile of a school community's
303 strengths and areas that need improvement, such as the
304 Comprehensive School Climate Inventory published by the National
305 School Climate Center, (2) present grade-level appropriate questions
306 that permit the collection of information on students' perspectives and
307 opinions about the school climate, and (3) protect the anonymity of
308 respondents.

309 (f) A local or regional board of education may accept private
310 donations for the purposes of this section.

311 Sec. 3. Section 10-222h of the general statutes is repealed and the
312 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2020*):

313 (a) The Department of Education shall, within available
314 appropriations, (1) document school districts' [articulated needs for
315 technical assistance and training related to safe learning and bullying,
316 (2) collect information on the prevention and intervention strategies
317 used by schools to reduce the incidence of bullying, improve school
318 climate and improve reporting outcomes, (3) develop or recommend
319 model safe school climate plans for grades kindergarten to twelve,
320 inclusive, and (4) in collaboration with the Connecticut Association of
321 Schools, disseminate to all public schools grade-level appropriate
322 school climate assessment instruments, approved by the department,
323 to be used by local and regional boards of education for the purposes
324 of collecting information described in subdivision (2) of this subsection
325 so that the department can monitor bullying prevention efforts over
326 time and compare each district's progress to state trends. Such school
327 climate assessment instruments shall (A) include surveys that contain
328 uniform grade-level appropriate questions that collect information
329 about students' perspectives and opinions about the school climate at
330 the school, and (B) allow students to complete and submit such
331 assessment and survey anonymously] best practices for fostering a
332 positive school climate and any needs articulated by such districts for
333 technical assistance and training related to fostering a positive school
334 climate, and (2) recommend model safe and positive school climate
335 policies for school districts.

336 (b) [On or before February 1, 2014, and annually thereafter, the
337 department shall, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a,
338 submit a report on the status of its efforts pursuant to this section
339 including, but not limited to, the number of verified acts of bullying in
340 the state, an analysis of the responsive action taken by school districts,
341 an analysis of student responses on the uniform grade-level
342 appropriate questions described in subparagraph (A) of subdivision
343 (4) of subsection (a) of this section and any recommendations it may
344 have regarding additional activities or funding to prevent bullying in
345 schools and improve school climate to the joint standing committees of
346 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to
347 education and children and to the speaker of the House of

348 Representatives, the president pro tempore of the Senate and the
349 majority and minority leaders of the House of Representatives and the
350 Senate.] The Department of Education, in consultation with local, state
351 and national experts on social and emotional skills assessment and
352 development, shall, within available appropriations, develop a social
353 and emotional learning assessment instrument to measure individual
354 student attainment of the social and emotional learning competencies.
355 Such instrument shall (1) measure intrapersonal and interpersonal
356 competencies, (2) be age and grade level appropriate for children in
357 preschool and grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, (3) include
358 measures to ensure feasibility of implementation in schools and
359 districts, and (4) assess what children know and are able to do. Such
360 instrument shall not be used to evaluate problem behaviors or screen
361 students for behavioral or emotional problems.

362 (c) The department may accept private donations for the purposes
363 of this section.

364 Sec. 4. Section 10-222j of the general statutes is repealed and the
365 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2020*):

366 The Department of Education shall provide, within available
367 appropriations, annual training to school employees, as defined in
368 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, except those school employees
369 who hold professional certification pursuant to section 10-145b unless
370 such school employee who holds professional certification is the
371 district safe school climate coordinator [,] or the safe school climate
372 specialist, [or a member of the safe school climate committee, as
373 described in section 10-222k,] on the prevention, identification and
374 response to school bullying and teen dating violence, as defined in
375 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and the prevention of and
376 response to youth suicide. Such training shall be culturally competent
377 and bias-informed and focus on restorative practices and the social and
378 emotional learning competencies, including, but not limited to, self-
379 awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and
380 responsible decision-making and evidence-based tools to develop

381 those competencies. Such training may include, but not be limited to,
382 (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent [bullying]
383 aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and teen dating
384 violence, [among students in school and outside of the school setting,]
385 (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate and effective
386 interventions to stop [bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional
387 harm-doing and teen dating violence, (3) [information regarding the
388 interaction and relationship between students committing acts of
389 bullying and teen dating violence, students against whom such acts of
390 bullying and teen dating violence are directed and witnesses of such
391 acts of bullying and teen dating violence, (4)] research findings on
392 [bullying] aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and teen
393 dating violence, such as information about the types of students who
394 have been shown to be at-risk for [bullying] aggressive behavior or
395 intentional harm-doing and teen dating violence in the school setting,
396 [(5)] (4) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying, as
397 defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, [(6)] (5) Internet
398 safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying, or [(7)] (6) information on
399 the incidence of youth suicide, methods of identifying youths at risk of
400 suicide and developmentally appropriate strategies for effective
401 interventions to prevent youth suicide. Such training may be
402 conducted in a training-of-trainers model and presented in person by
403 mentors, offered in state-wide workshops or through on-line courses.

404 Sec. 5. Section 10-222k of the general statutes is repealed and the
405 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2020*):

406 (a) For the school year commencing July 1, [2012] 2020, and each
407 school year thereafter, the superintendent of each local or regional
408 board of education shall appoint, from among existing school district
409 staff, a district safe school climate coordinator. The district safe school
410 climate coordinator shall: (1) Be responsible for implementing the
411 district's safe school climate [plan] policy, developed pursuant to
412 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, (2) collaborate with the safe
413 school climate specialists, described in subsection (b) of this section,
414 the board of education for the district and the superintendent of

415 schools of the school district to foster a positive school climate and
416 prevent, identify and respond to suspected bullying in the schools of
417 the district, and (3) [provide data and information, in collaboration
418 with the superintendent of schools of the district, to the Department of
419 Education regarding bullying, in accordance with the provisions of
420 subsection (b) of section 10-222d and subsection (a) of section 10-222h,
421 and (4) meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice
422 during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the
423 school district and] collaborate with the social and emotional learning
424 and school climate council, if any, established pursuant to subsection
425 (c) of this section to make recommendations concerning amendments
426 to the district's safe school climate [plan] policy.

427 (b) For the school year commencing July 1, [2012] 2020, and each
428 school year thereafter, the principal of each school, or the principal's
429 designee, shall serve as the safe school climate [specialist] coordinator
430 and shall (1) [investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts
431 of bullying in the school in accordance with the district's safe school
432 climate plan, (2) collect and maintain records of reports and
433 investigations of bullying in the school, and (3) act as the primary
434 school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding
435 to reports of bullying in the school] lead the school's efforts to establish
436 a positive school climate, (2) investigate or supervise the investigation
437 of suspected bullying in the school in accordance with the district's
438 safe school climate policy, and (3) collect and maintain records of
439 investigations of aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and
440 findings of bullying in the school.

441 (c) [(1)] For the school year commencing July 1, [2012] 2020, and
442 each school year thereafter, [the principal of each school shall establish
443 a committee or designate at least one existing committee in the school
444 to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate
445 and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such
446 committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student
447 enrolled in the school appointed by the school principal] each local and
448 regional board of education may establish a social and emotional

449 learning and school climate council. The members of such council shall
450 be individuals who work in, attend or are otherwise affiliated with a
451 school under the jurisdiction of the local or regional board of
452 education, and shall include, but not be limited to, a school
453 administrator, parent or guardian, teacher, student and member of the
454 community. The council shall, in consultation with the district safe
455 school climate coordinator, (1) monitor school climate improvement
456 efforts, (2) identify patterns of aggressive behavior or intentional harm-
457 doing among students in the schools, (3) identify best practices for
458 promoting a positive school climate, (4) identify and pursue resources
459 to educate students, parents and guardians of students, school
460 employees and the community on issues relating to fostering a positive
461 school climate and social and emotional learning in schools, and (5)
462 perform any other duties as determined by the local or regional board
463 of education that are related to the prevention of and intervention in
464 aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and fostering a positive
465 school climate in the school district.

466 [(2) Any such committee shall: (A) Receive copies of completed
467 reports following investigations of bullying, (B) identify and address
468 patterns of bullying among students in the school, (C) implement the
469 provisions of the school security and safety plan, developed pursuant
470 to section 10-222m, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting
471 of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening
472 behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, (D) review and
473 amend school policies relating to bullying, (E) review and make
474 recommendations to the district safe school climate coordinator
475 regarding the district's safe school climate plan based on issues and
476 experiences specific to the school, (F) educate students, school
477 employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to
478 bullying, (G) collaborate with the district safe school climate
479 coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance
480 with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d and subsection
481 (a) of section 10-222h, and (H) perform any other duties as determined
482 by the school principal that are related to the prevention, identification
483 and response to school bullying for the school.

484 (3) Any parent or guardian serving as a member of any such
485 committee shall not participate in the activities described in
486 subparagraphs (A) to (C), inclusive, of subdivision (2) of this
487 subsection or any other activity that may compromise the
488 confidentiality of a student.]

489 Sec. 6. Section 10-222p of the general statutes is repealed and the
490 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2020*):

491 [(a) The Department of Education shall receive each safe school
492 climate plan submitted pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-222d
493 and review each such plan for compliance with the provisions of
494 subsection (b) of section 10-222d. Not later than thirty calendar days
495 after receiving such plan, the department shall approve or reject such
496 plan. If the department rejects a safe school climate plan, the
497 department shall provide notice of such rejection and the reasons for
498 such rejection to the local or regional board of education that
499 submitted such plan. Such local or regional board of education shall
500 redevelop and resubmit a safe school climate plan to the department
501 for approval not later than thirty calendar days after receipt of notice
502 of such rejection. Not later than thirty calendar days after receiving
503 such resubmitted plan, the department shall approve or reject such
504 plan. If the department rejects a resubmitted safe school climate plan,
505 the department shall provide notice of such rejection to the local or
506 regional board of education that resubmitted such plan. Not later than
507 thirty calendar days after receiving notice of such rejection and the
508 reasons for such rejection, such local or regional board of education
509 shall adopt an appropriate model safe school climate plan, developed
510 or recommended by the department pursuant to subdivision (3) of
511 subsection (a) of section 10-222h.]

512 [(b)] The Department of Education shall, in consultation with local
513 and regional boards of education, make available on the department's
514 Internet web site [(1) each safe school climate plan that has been
515 approved by the department, (2) a list of the school districts that have
516 an approved safe school climate plan, and (3) a list of the school

517 districts whose safe school climate plans have been rejected and that
518 are in the process of resubmitting their safe school climate plans for
519 approval by the department] a model safe school climate policy.

520 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2019*) Each local and regional board of
521 education, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall
522 provide to school administrators training materials regarding the
523 prevention of and intervention in discrimination against and targeted
524 harassment of students based on such students' (1) actual or perceived
525 differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry,
526 national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or
527 expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical
528 appearance or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability,
529 or (2) association with individuals or groups who have or are
530 perceived to have one or more of such characteristics. Such training
531 materials may be delivered in collaboration with one or more
532 organizations offering training on identifying, preventing and
533 intervening in discrimination including, but not limited to, the
534 Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

535 Sec. 8. Subsection (a) of section 10-220a of the general statutes is
536 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
537 *1, 2019*):

538 (a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-
539 service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil
540 personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or
541 professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such
542 teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1)
543 the nature and the relationship of alcohol and drugs, as defined in
544 subdivision (17) of section 21a-240, to health and personality
545 development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health
546 and mental health risk reduction education that includes, but need not
547 be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and
548 the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy,
549 sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as

550 defined in section 19a-581, violence, teen dating violence, domestic
551 violence and child abuse, (3) school violence prevention, conflict
552 resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the
553 identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in
554 subsection (a) of section 10-222d, as amended by this act, except that
555 those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model
556 approach that is approved by the Department of Education and is
557 consistent with subsection (c) of section 10-145a, sections 10-222d, as
558 amended by this act, [10-222g] and 10-222h, as amended by this act,
559 subsection (g) of section 10-233c and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-
560 160, shall not be required to provide in-service training on the
561 identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (4)
562 cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency life saving
563 procedures, (5) the requirements and obligations of a mandated
564 reporter, and (6) the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based
565 structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia, as defined
566 in section 10-3d. Each local or regional board of education may allow
567 any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a
568 voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant
569 to this section.

570 Sec. 9. Section 10-222l of the general statutes is repealed and the
571 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2019*):

572 (a) No claim for damages shall be made against a school employee,
573 as defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, who reports,
574 investigates and responds to bullying or teen dating violence, as
575 defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, in accordance with
576 the provisions of the safe school climate [plan] policy, described in
577 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, if such school employee was
578 acting in good faith in the discharge of his or her duties or within the
579 scope of his or her employment. The immunity provided in this
580 subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross,
581 reckless, wilful or wanton misconduct.

582 (b) No claim for damages shall be made against a student, parent or

583 guardian of a student or any other individual who reports an act of
584 bullying or teen dating violence to a school employee, in accordance
585 with the provisions of the safe school climate [plan] policy described in
586 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, if such individual was acting
587 in good faith. The immunity provided in this subsection does not
588 apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, wilful or
589 wanton misconduct.

590 (c) No claim for damages shall be made against a local or regional
591 board of education that implements the safe school climate [plan]
592 policy, described in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and
593 reports, investigates and responds to bullying or teen dating violence,
594 as defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, if such local or
595 regional board of education was acting in good faith in the discharge
596 of its duties. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply
597 to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, wilful or wanton
598 misconduct.

599 Sec. 10. Subsection (a) of section 10-222n of the general statutes is
600 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
601 *1, 2019*):

602 (a) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Department of Emergency
603 Services and Public Protection, in consultation with the Department of
604 Education, shall develop school security and safety plan standards.
605 The school security and safety plan standards shall be an all-hazards
606 approach to emergencies at public schools and shall include, but not be
607 limited to, (1) involvement of local officials, including the chief
608 executive officer of the municipality, the superintendent of schools,
609 law enforcement, fire, public health, emergency management and
610 emergency medical services, in the development of school security and
611 safety plans, (2) a command center organization structure based on the
612 federal National Incident Management System and a description of the
613 responsibilities of such command center organization, (3) a
614 requirement that a school security and safety committee be established
615 at each school, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-222m,

616 (4) crisis management procedures, (5) a requirement that local law
617 enforcement and other local public safety officials evaluate, score and
618 provide feedback on fire drills and crisis response drills, conducted
619 pursuant to section 10-231, (6) a requirement that local and regional
620 boards of education annually submit reports to the Department of
621 Emergency Services and Public Protection regarding such fire drills
622 and crisis response drills, (7) procedures for managing various types of
623 emergencies, (8) a requirement that each local and regional board of
624 education conduct a security and vulnerability assessment for each
625 school under the jurisdiction of such board every two years and
626 develop a school security and safety plan for each such school, in
627 accordance with the provisions of section 10-222m, based on the results
628 of such assessment, (9) a requirement that the [safe school climate
629 committee] social and emotional learning and school climate council
630 for each school, established pursuant to section 10-222k, as amended
631 by this act, collect and evaluate information relating to instances of
632 disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of
633 bullying, as defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and
634 report such information, as necessary, to the district safe school climate
635 coordinator, described in section 10-222k, as amended by this act, and
636 the school security and safety committee for the school, established
637 pursuant to section 10-222m, and (10) a requirement that the school
638 security and safety plan for each school provide an orientation on such
639 school security and safety plan to each school employee, as defined in
640 section 10-222d, as amended by this act, at such school and provide
641 violence prevention training in a manner prescribed in such school
642 security and safety plan. The Department of Emergency Services and
643 Public Protection shall make such standards available to local officials,
644 including local and regional boards of education.

645 Sec. 11. Section 10-222g of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective*
646 *July 1, 2019*)

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	10-222d
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2020</i>	10-222h
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2020</i>	10-222j
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2020</i>	10-222k
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2020</i>	10-222p
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	10-220a(a)
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	10-222l
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	10-222n(a)
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2019</i>	Repealer section

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 1(d), "working group" was changed to "council" for accuracy, in Section 2(a), "and section 1 of this act" was inserted for clarity, in Section 2(b), "policy" was inserted after "climate" for clarity, in Section 2(b)(3), "that will" was changed to "to" for clarity and "under the jurisdiction of the local or regional board of education" was deleted to eliminate redundant language, in Section 2(b)(3)(F), "a school employee" was changed to "the school employee", "if such student is found to have committed" was changed to "upon a finding that such student committed" and "by such student" was added for clarity, in Section 2(b)(3)(J), "bullying" was bracketed, and after the closing bracket "aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing" was inserted for consistency, in Section 2(d), "The board" was changed to "Each board" for clarity, in Section 5(c), "local or regional" was changed to "local and regional" for accuracy and in Section 7 "or information" was struck for consistency.

KID *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 20 \$	FY 21 \$
Education, Dept.	GF - Cost	85,000	85,000
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	35,012	35,012

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 20 \$	FY 21 \$
Local and Regional School Districts	STATE MANDATE ² - Cost	over 100,000 for small districts to over 1.2 million for larger districts	over 100,000 for small districts to over 1.2 million for larger districts

Explanation

The bill, which makes numerous changes to the laws related to school bullying and safe school climate, results in a cost to the State Department of Education of \$85,000 annually for a full-time Education Consultant position (and corresponding fringe benefits costs of \$35,012, annually). The Education Consultant would be responsible for completing the additional and expanded requirements contained within the bill, including: reviewing safe school climate policies, developing a social and emotional learning assessment instrument,

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.19% of payroll in FY 20 and FY 21.

² State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

and providing training, as needed, to school employees and administrators.

The bill also results in a cost, and corresponding state mandate to local and regional school districts, associated with broadening the definition of bullying and expanding training requirements for both certified and non-certified school employees. It is estimated the total cost would exceed \$100,000 per district, and for larger districts the cost could exceed \$1.2 million. The Safe School Climate Specialist in each school would require additional resources to investigate broadened bullying allegations that fall under the definition of bullying and would not have been covered under the current definition.

Local and regional school districts would require additional resources to fulfill the bill's training requirements. The additional resources would include an increase in substitute coverage while certified employees participate in the training, and additional hourly compensation for non-certified employees completing the expanded training.

The exact magnitude of the state mandate would vary by district according to size, the increased number of bullying allegations, and the manner in which the district implements the changes contained within the bill.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7215

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL CLIMATES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes numerous changes to the laws related to school bullying and safe school climate. Principally, it:

1. establishes an eight-member Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Council and tasks it with, among other things, monitoring school climate improvement efforts in the state;
2. modifies the definition of bullying by, among other things, eliminating the requirement that the action occur between students;
3. extends the bullying reporting requirements that apply to school employees to also apply to school volunteers;
4. requires local and regional boards of education (school boards) to develop and implement safe school climate policies instead of safe school climate plans as under current law, and makes numerous modifications to the information that must be included in them;
5. modifies how school boards must annually conduct school climate assessments and requires the boards to provide school administrators with training materials on preventing and intervening in student intimidation and harassment;
6. eliminates a requirement that school principals establish or designate a committee to develop a safe school climate and address bullying issues and instead permits each school board to

establish a social and emotional learning and school climate council;

7. requires SDE to (a) document school districts' best practices for fostering a safe school climate, (b) recommend model safe and positive school climate policies for districts and post such a policy on its website, and (c) develop a social and emotional learning assessment instrument to measure individual student attainment of such competencies;
8. modifies the responsibilities for district safe school climate coordinators and renames safe school climate specialists as safe school climate coordinators; and
9. makes numerous minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019; except the provisions related to school district best practices, school employee training, safe school climate coordinators, school climate councils, and the model safe school climate policy are effective July 1, 2020; and the provision establishing the social and emotional learning and school climate advisory council is effective upon passage.

§§ 1 & 2 — SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The bill establishes an eight-member Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Council.

The council is tasked with:

1. monitoring school climate improvement efforts in the state;
2. identifying best practices for promoting positive school climates;
3. identifying and pursuing resources to educate school boards on fostering positive school climates and social and emotional learning in schools; and
4. performing any other research on social and emotional learning

and fostering positive school climates that the council deems appropriate.

Definitions

Under the bill, a “school climate” means the quality and character of school life based on patterns of students’, parents’, and school employees’ experiences, including norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. Currently, school climate means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

A “positive school climate” is a school climate that:

1. promotes norms, values, expectations, and beliefs that support feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe;
2. causes students, their families, and school employees to feel engaged and respected and to work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision;
3. encourages educators to model and nurture attitudes that emphasize learning’s benefits and satisfaction; and
4. allows for each person to contribute to the school’s operation and care of the school’s physical environment.

“Social and emotional learning” means the process through which people achieve emotional intelligence through competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and reasonable decision-making.

“Emotional intelligence” means a person’s ability to:

1. perceive or recognize and manage his or her emotions and those of others;
2. use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities including

reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication;
and

3. understand and label emotions.

Membership

The advisory council members include the SDE commissioner and the commission on women, children, and seniors (CWCS) executive director, or their designees, and one representative each from:

1. the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education;
2. the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents;
3. the Connecticut Association of Schools;
4. the American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut;
5. the Connecticut Education Association; and
6. the Connecticut Association of School Administrators.

Appointments to the council must be made within 30 days of the bill's passage and the council must hold its first meeting within 60 days after passage.

The council members must elect a chairperson from among the members and the CWCS administrative staff must serve as the council's administrative staff. The appointing authorities must fill any vacancies.

The council must begin annually reporting to the Children's and Education committees by January 1, 2020.

§ 2 – BULLYING DEFINITION

The bill modifies the definition of "bullying" to mean a determination that aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing was direct or indirect; severe, persistent, or pervasive; and characterized by an imbalance of power. For these purposes:

1. an “imbalance of power” is a disparity between individuals with respect to social status or relative physical size or created because a group directed aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing at an individual and
2. “aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing” means an act that (a) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual or damage to his or her property; (b) places an individual in reasonable fear of harm or property damage; (c) creates a hostile school environment for an individual; or (d) infringes on an individual’s rights and opportunities at school.

Currently, bullying is one or more students’ repeated use of a written, oral, or electronic communication directed at or referring to a student in the same school district, or a physical act or gesture repeatedly directed at another student in the district, that (1) leads to any of the outcomes listed above under “aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing” or (2) substantially disrupts the school’s education process or orderly operation.

Currently, bullying includes written, oral, or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture on the basis of having, or associating with individuals who have, certain actual or perceived characteristics (e.g., race, gender, or disability). Under the bill, bullying instead includes aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing on the basis of such characteristics or associations.

By broadening the definition of bullying, the bill also broadens the definition of cyberbullying which, as under current law, is bullying through the internet, mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications.

§§ 2, 6, & 11 — SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE POLICY

The bill requires school boards to develop and implement a safe school climate policy, instead of a safe school climate plan, to address bullying and teen dating violence as required under current law.

The policy must include certain provisions regarding aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing that are similar to provisions regarding bullying that are currently required for the school climate plans, such as provisions on reporting and investigating such incidents.

The bill requires the policy to promote preventing and intervening in aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and fostering a positive school climate by using model school climate standards such as the National School Climate Center's standards.

The bill permits school boards to accept private donations for purposes related to these policies or for the school climate assessments discussed below.

School Employee

The bill broadens the definition of school employee for certain safe school climate purposes to include a volunteer who, in performing his or her duties, has regular contact with students and provides services to, or on behalf of, students enrolled in a public, elementary, middle, or high school. As under current law, school employees for these purposes also include teachers and various other professionals employed by a school board or working in a public school and any other school board-contracted individuals who, in performing their duties, have regular contact with or provide services to, or on behalf of students.

By broadening this definition of "school employee" to include volunteers, the bill:

1. requires schools to provide an orientation on their safety and security policy to school volunteers;
2. requires SDE, within available appropriations, to provide annual training to school volunteers on preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying and teen dating violence and preventing teen suicide; and

3. requires volunteers to report certain bullying behaviors to the school safe climate coordinator and generally provides immunity from damages for reporting, investigating, or responding to bullying or teen dating violence.

Each of the above requirements and immunities already apply to other school employees.

Prevention Strategies

Under the bill, each school board's policy must include prevention strategies for bullying and teen dating violence in schools. The bill sets out several permissible strategies, many of which are similar to the strategies permitted for the safe school climate plans under current law.

The bill additionally allows the policies to include strategies that adopt evidence-based, data-driven systems for assessing, implementing, and continuously improving culturally competent, restorative, social, and emotional learning in consultation with, or on the recommendation of, SDE.

Notice Requirements

The bill modifies current law's notice requirements to parents and guardians and law enforcement regarding incidents of bullying.

Parents and Guardians. The policy must require the safe school climate specialist or his or her designee, in consultation with a school employee who witnesses or receives a report of a student's aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing, to notify the:

1. parents or guardians of the child subjected to bullying of the measures the school is taking to ensure the student's safety and the policies and procedures in place at the school to prevent further bullying and
2. parents or guardians of the child who engaged in bullying of specific interventions the school has undertaken or that are in

progress to prevent further bullying.

This notice is similar to the notice requirements under current law and, as currently required, must be provided within 48 hours after completion of the investigation.

The bill eliminates a requirement that the school invite those parents or guardians to attend separate meetings at the school to discuss measures and interventions the school is taking to prevent further bullying.

Law Enforcement. The school climate plan under current law must require school principals or their designees to notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when they believe that an act of bullying constitutes criminal conduct. The bill eliminates this requirement but specifies that it does not prevent principals or their designees from notifying law enforcement if they believe that an act of bullying, aggressive behavior, or intentional harm-doing constitutes criminal conduct.

Bullying Interventions

The school climate plan under current law must direct the development of case-by-case interventions, which may include both counseling and discipline, for addressing repeated bullying incidents against a single individual or recurrent bullying by the same individual.

The policy under the bill must instead direct the development of case-by-case interventions to address bullying against a single individual, bullying incidents by the same individual and, at the safe school climate specialist's discretion, aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing by the same individual that may not rise to the level of bullying. These interventions may include restorative, equity-based, trauma- and bias-informed, culturally competent interventions for students who engaged in bullying, students who have been bullied, parents and guardians, and school employees.

Publication

Current law required school boards to submit their school climate plans to SDE for review and approval by September 1, 2014. The bill instead requires the boards to submit their policies to SDE for review by January 1, 2020 if not previously reviewed, but eliminates the approval requirement. (The bill also repeals the law that lays out the review process.) As is currently required for school climate plans, the board must make the policies available on its website (though not on each school's website as is currently required for the climate plans) and include them in all student handbooks and school rules, procedures, and standards of conduct it publishes. Additionally, the bill requires school boards to include the policies in the school employee manuals.

Review Process

The bill eliminates the process in current law by which SDE receives and reviews school climate plans, but does not establish a review process for the school climate policies the bill requires. It also eliminates requirements that SDE make available on its website approved safe school climate plans and information about the status of towns without such plans. Instead, it requires SDE, in consultation with school boards, to make available on its website a model safe school climate policy.

§§ 2 & 7 — OTHER SCHOOL BOARD REQUIREMENTS***School Climate Assessment***

Currently, school boards are required to have each school in their district biennially complete a school climate assessment using SDE-approved instruments, which include student surveys and allow students to complete the assessment and surveys anonymously. The bill eliminates the requirement that the assessment instruments be approved by SDE and instead sets standards for such instruments that are similar to the information that must be included in SDE-approved instruments under current law.

The bill also eliminates requirements that (1) SDE, within available appropriations, disseminate grade-level appropriate school climate

assessment instruments to all public schools and (2) the school boards collect the assessments and submit them to SDE.

School Administrator Training Materials

The bill requires each school board, in consultation with SDE, to provide training materials to school administrators on preventing and intervening in discrimination against, and targeted harassment of, students based on their:

1. actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability; or
2. association with individuals or groups who have or are perceived to have one or more of those characteristics.

Under the bill, the materials or information may be delivered in collaboration with one or more organizations that offer training on identifying, preventing, and intervening in discrimination, including the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

§ 5 — SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE COUNCIL

The bill eliminates a requirement that each school principal annually establish or designate a committee responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing bullying issues in the school. The bill also eliminates the responsibilities assigned to the committees under current law, such as reviewing, identifying, and addressing school bullying patterns.

Instead, the bill permits each school board to annually establish a social and emotional learning and school climate council. The council members must work in, attend, or otherwise be affiliated with a school under the board's jurisdiction and must include a school administrator, parent or guardian, teacher, student, and community

member. If established, such a council must do the following, in consultation with the district safe school climate coordinator:

1. monitor school climate improvement efforts;
2. identify patterns of aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing among students;
3. identify best practices for promoting a positive school climate;
4. identify and pursue resources to educate students, their parents and guardians, school employees, and the community on issues related to fostering a positive school climate and social and emotional learning in schools; and
5. perform any other duties as the board determines that are related to preventing and intervening in aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing and fostering a positive school climate in the district.

§§ 2, 3, 4 — SDE REQUIREMENTS

Best Practices

The bill requires SDE, within available appropriations, to document school districts' best practices for fostering a positive school climate and recommend model safe and positive school climate policies for school districts.

School Employee Training

Existing law requires SDE, within available appropriations, to provide annual training to non-certified staff and certified staff who are safe school climate specialists or coordinators on preventing, identifying, and responding to school bullying and teen dating violence and preventing and responding to youth suicide. The bill specifies that the training must be culturally competent and bias-informed and focus on restorative practices and the social and emotional learning competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible

decision making and evidence-based tools to develop those competencies. It also makes minor changes to some of the other required training components.

Currently, the training may be presented in person by mentors, offered in state-wide workshops, or through on-line courses. The bill additionally permits the training to be conducted in a training-of-trainers model.

Social and Emotional Learning Assessment Instrument

The bill requires SDE, in consultation with local, state and national experts on social and emotional skills assessment and development and, within available appropriations, to develop a social and emotional learning assessment instrument to measure individual student attainment of the social and emotional learning competencies. The instrument must:

1. measure intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies,
2. be age and grade level appropriate for children in preschool through grade 12,
3. include measures to ensure implementation is feasible, and
4. assess what children know and are able to do (presumably in regards to social and emotional skills).

The instrument cannot be used to evaluate problem behaviors or students for behavioral or emotional problems.

Annual Report Requirement

The bill eliminates a requirement that SDE annually report to the Children's and Education committees and legislative leaders on various matters, including bullying data and the department's efforts to address bullying and improve school climate.

§ 5 — SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE COORDINATORS

By law, each school superintendent must annually appoint a district

safe school climate coordinator from among existing school district staff. Starting July 1, 2020, the bill makes the coordinator responsible for implementing the safe school climate policy, instead of the safe school climate plan as required under current law. It also requires the coordinator to collaborate with any social and emotional learning and school climate council the school board establishes. The bill also eliminates requirements that the coordinator provide bullying data to SDE and meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice each school year to discuss bullying issues in the district.

Currently, each school principal or his or her designee must serve as the school's safe school climate specialist. The bill renames the specialist role as safe school climate coordinator starting July 1, 2020 and requires the individual to lead the school's efforts to establish a positive school climate, instead of act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and responding to reported school bullying as required under current law. The bill also makes other minor changes to the coordinator's responsibilities to conform to other changes in the bill.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14 Nay 0 (03/07/2019)