

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 19-130—sSB 1018
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

SUMMARY: This act restricts how priority school district (PSD) grants can be spent by tying the grant to improvements in a school district's accountability index (AI) score (see BACKGROUND). Grant recipients that do not have an increased AI score can only spend the grant money on (1) reading instruction, (2) numeracy instruction, and (3) efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism. Under prior law, the grants could be used for a variety of program purposes without regard to a district's AI score.

For grant recipients that are not subject to the above restrictions, the act expands the allowed uses for PSD grants. It also changes some reporting requirements for all PSDs.

In addition, it requires the Technical Education and Career System (TECS) board (i.e., technical high school board) to identify a list of critical construction trades that are essential to the state's construction workforce needs and sets a deadline to develop a plan to create new programs or expand existing ones.

The act also makes minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

§ 1 — PSD GRANTS

Under the act, the education commissioner must determine by March 1, 2022, whether each PSD's AI has improved during the 2018-19 to 2020-21 school years. The act establishes a two-track process to impose grant conditions on these districts during the 2022-23 to 2024-25 school years.

If AI scores have improved, the district may expend its PSD grant on any of the existing PSD grant purposes, plus a few new ones added by the act (see below).

If scores have not improved, the education commissioner must develop a three-year plan for the district's PSD grant, and the district may only spend the grant on (1) scientifically-based reading research and instruction, (2) numeracy instruction, and (3) support for chronically absent children and district chronic absenteeism rate reduction.

The act removes the requirement that all proposals for grants prioritize the development or expansion of extended-day kindergarten programs.

Changes to PSD Grant Allowed Uses

For districts that do not have any restrictions on how they can use their PSD

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

grant, the act expands the list of allowable grant uses to include (1) numeracy instruction and (2) support for chronically absent children and efforts to reduce the district chronic absenteeism rate. By law, unchanged by the act, the grants can also be used for such programs as (1) dropout prevention; (2) alternative education for students having difficulty in traditional education programs; and (3) academic enrichment, tutoring, and recreation during non-school hours and the summer. The act also substitutes scientifically-based reading research and instruction for early reading intervention programs.

§ 3 — REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

By law, each PSD must prepare an annual evaluation. Prior law required that the evaluation include documentation of program improvement and student achievement. The act instead requires a description of whether the program is (1) improving student achievement and enhancing educational opportunities in the district and (2) achieving the commissioner-approved objectives and performance targets in the school district's proposal or the plan developed by the commissioner, as appropriate.

By law and unchanged by the act, the evaluation must also (1) describe program activities and (2) be submitted to the education commissioner by August 15 of the fiscal year following the year in which the district participated in the PSD program.

The act also requires the State Board of Education to prepare an annual, rather than triennial, evaluation of the program, due July 1, 2020, rather than December 15 as under prior law.

§§ 4 & 5 — NEW TECS PROGRAMS AND CRITICAL CONSTRUCTION TRADES

New TECS Program Factors

By law, the TECS board must consider adding new trade programs to the technical high school, and such decisions must be based on at least the following factors:

1. projected employment demand for program graduates,
2. the cost of establishing the program,
3. availability of qualified instructors,
4. existence of similar programs at other educational institutions, and
5. student interest in the trade.

The act requires the board to additionally consider (1) the need to diversify the trade with workers from underrepresented populations and (2) workforce training needs of students, graduates, and residents of alliance districts and priority school districts and students and graduates of priority schools. (Alliance districts are the 30 lowest performing school districts when measured by AI scores. Priority schools are schools in which 40% or more of the lunches are served to students eligible for free and reduced priced lunches under federal law and regulation, not

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

including schools in PSDs.)

Critical Construction Trades

The act requires the TECS board, in consultation with the Labor Department, to identify by October 1, 2019, a list of critical construction trades that are essential to the state's construction workforce needs. In developing the list, the board must consider the same factors that TECS must consider regarding new trade programs as expanded by the act (see above). The board must post and update the list of critical construction trades on its website.

Further, the act requires the TECS board to develop a plan by July 1, 2020, and within available appropriations to create new or expand existing programs in these critical construction trades.

BACKGROUND

Accountability Index (AI)

AI is the performance score the State Department of Education calculates for each public school and school district. The index consists of multiple weighted student, school, or district-level measures (CGS § 10-223e). One measure is performance index scores (i.e., the statewide mastery test scores for student subgroups, schools, or districts as specified in the subject areas below) along with additional indicators as chosen by the department.

The indicators are as follows:

1. English language arts (ELA) and math performance indices (for all students and separately for high needs students);
2. ELA average percentage of growth target achieved (for all students and separately for high needs students);
3. math average percentage of growth target achieved (for all students and separately for high needs students);
4. chronic absenteeism (for all students and separately for high needs students);
5. preparation for college and career readiness (CCR) (i.e., percentage of students taking rigorous courses while in high school, such as advanced placement or dual enrollment, career and technical education, or workplace experience);
6. preparation for CCR (i.e., percentage passing exams in rigorous courses);
7. on-track to high school graduation;
8. four-year graduation (for all students);
9. six-year graduation (for high needs students);
10. postsecondary entrance; and
11. physical fitness and arts access.

PSDs

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

By law, SDE determines the PSDs each year. The PSDs for 2018-19 were Ansonia, Bridgeport, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, Manchester, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam (transitioning out), Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham. PSDs are school districts (1) in the state's most populous cities and (2) with the greatest number and proportion of educationally and economically needy students.