OLR Bill Analysis
sSB 1018

AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP.

SUMMARY
This bill creates a new method of awarding priority school district (PSD) grants by tying grant eligibility to improvements in a school district’s English language arts (ELA) performance index and attendance and chronic absenteeism accountability scores. The ELA performance index and the attendance and chronic absenteeism accountability scores are parts of the broader accountability index that the State Department of Education (SDE) uses to measure performance for school districts and individual schools (see BACKGROUND).

The new method applies to the primary PSD grant and the other PSD component grants, which are funds for (1) the early reading success program, (2) summer school and weekend hours, and (3) extended school hours for enrichment and recreation. PSDs are school districts (1) in the most populous cities and (2) with the greatest number and proportion of educationally and economically needy students (see BACKGROUND).

The bill requires any alliance district that has not improved its accountability index consistently over the previous three fiscal years to spend 50% of its alliance aid on intensive reading instruction and the other 50% on strategies contained in SDE’s evidence-based practice guides.

It also changes some reporting requirements for PSDs and alliance districts.

The bill allows the education commissioner to permit a school to leave the commissioner’s network of schools program if she determines that continued participation in the network will not likely
result in the school improving its accountability index.

The bill also makes minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

§§ 1 & 4 — PSD GRANTS

Under the bill, if a PSD’s ELA performance index and attendance and chronic absenteeism index scores have improved during the prior fiscal year, it continues to receive 100% of the PSD grant it is eligible for and must spend the money on the existing options under the PSD law. These include 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.

If a PSD fails to improve its ELA performance index and attendance and chronic absenteeism index scores, the bill (1) restricts how the PSD grant can be spent for the first subsequent year, (2) then reduces the grant in the next year if scores continue not to improve, and (3) finally eliminates the grant in the third year if scores do not improve.

The bill includes several steps for this process. For FY 20, it requires the education commissioner to determine whether each PSD’s ELA performance index and attendance and chronic absenteeism accountability scores for FYs 17-19 have consistently and continually improved.

If a district’s scores have not improved during the FYs 17-19 period, the bill establishes a two-track process to impose the new grant conditions described in Table 1 below. On one track, if the scores improve, then the district retains 100% of the grant but is limited on how the grant money can be spent. On the other track, if scores do not improve over two years, then the grant to the district is eliminated by FY 22.

Table 1: Priority School District Grant Funding and Conditions
### Year | Scores have not improved
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FY 2020 | - Grant amount: 100%
- Conditions: 50% must be spent on intensive reading instruction and the other 50% on supports for chronically absent students and on reducing the chronic absenteeism rate

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track 1: Scores improved</th>
<th>Track 2: Scores have not improved</th>
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FY 2021 | - Grant amount: 100%
- Conditions: 50% must be spent on intensive reading instruction
| - Grant amount: 50%
- Conditions: 100% of the now-reduced grant must be spent on intensive reading instruction |
FY 2022 | - Grant amount: 100%
- Conditions: 50% must be spent on intensive reading instruction
| Grant amount: Grant eliminated |

*For FY 20, the first year of the new conditions, the lookback is over three years FY17-19. For FYs 21 and 22, there is a one year lookback to determine improvement.*

For FY 23 and each subsequent year, any district that did not receive a PSD grant for FY 22 or for the prior fiscal year will no longer be eligible for PSD grants. (It is not clear what happens in FY 23 and the following years for districts that initially had scores that did not improve for FYs 17-19 but had continuous improvement since FY 20.)

For FY 21 and each subsequent year, SBE must award any unallocated PSD grants on a proportional basis to the PSDs whose ELA and absenteeism scores have improved from the prior fiscal year.

**§§ 2 & 3 — REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Under current law, each PSD must prepare an annual evaluation that includes documentation of program improvement and student achievement. The bill modifies this to require a description of whether the program is improving student achievement and enhancing educational opportunities in the district. Unchanged from current law,
the evaluation must (1) include a description of 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.

Under current law, each PSD that receives funding for the extended school hours component must prepare an annual program report that describes and documents program operation, student participation, and other indicators of success. The bill replaces indicators of success with a description and documentation on whether the program is improving student achievement and enhancing educational opportunities in the district. Unchanged from current law, the reports must be submitted to the education commissioner in a form and at a time as she prescribes.

§ 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICTS

The bill requires that any alliance district that has not improved its accountability index consistently over the previous three fiscal years must spend 50% of its alliance aid on intensive reading instruction and the other 50% on strategies contained in SDE’s evidence-based practice guides. SDE provides the guides to districts to help them improve their instructional and student support programs. Alliance aid is any Education Cost Sharing funds that the lowest performing 30 school districts receive above the baseline aid for FY 12. Districts performance is judged based on their accountability index scores.

The bill also requires, beginning with FY 20 and for each subsequent year, each alliance district to submit to the education commissioner an academic performance evaluation that indicates whether the district is achieving the objectives and performance targets contained in the district’s commissioner-approved alliance district plan. Under current law, the commissioner is authorized to renew alliance funding if the alliance district provides evidence that it is achieving the plan’s objectives and performance targets.

§ 6 — COMMISSIONER’S NETWORK

The bill creates a new method by which a school in the
commissioner’s network of schools may leave the network. The network program allows the commissioner to provide additional funds and state oversight to low-achieving schools.

Under current law, the commissioner must consider whether the school district where the school is located has the capacity to ensure the school will maintain or improve its student academic performance if it leaves the network. If the commissioner determines the school is ready, the board of education for the school, in consultation with the commissioner, must develop a plan to be considered by SBE for the school to revert back to full local control. Under the bill, if the commissioner determines that the school's participation in the commissioner's network is not likely to improve the school's accountability index, (1) the school may exit the network and (2) the board of education for the school must develop, in consultation with the commissioner, a plan, subject to SBE’s approval, for transition back to full local control.

Unchanged by the bill, the commissioner retains the option of keeping a school in the network for an additional year if she believes the school would benefit from the additional time.

BACKGROUND

Accountability Index

The accountability index is the performance score SDE 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. ELA performance index (for all students),

2. ELA performance index (for high needs students),
3. math performance index (for all students),
4. math performance index (for high needs students),
5. ELA average percentage of growth target achieved (for all students),
6. ELA average percentage of growth target achieved (for high needs students),
7. math average percentage of growth target achieved (for all students),
8. math average percentage of growth target achieved (for high needs students),
9. chronic absenteeism (for all students),
10. chronic absenteeism (for high needs students),
11. 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),
12. preparation for CCR (i.e., percentage passing exams in rigorous courses),
13. on-track to high school graduation,
14. four-year graduation (for all students),
15. six-year graduation (for high needs students),
16. postsecondary entrance,
17. physical fitness, and
18. arts access.

**PSDs**
By law, SDE determines the PSDs each year. The PSDs for 2018-19 are Ansonia, Bridgeport, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, Manchester, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam (transitioning out), Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP
Yea 35  Nay 0  (03/25/2019)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 37  Nay 11  (05/02/2019)