

Questions for Nominees to the State Board of Education

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State Board Of Education (CGS §§ [10-1](#); [10-3a](#); [10-4](#))

- Consists of 10 voting members who serve staggered four-year terms, the president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the chairman of the technical high school system board who serve as nonvoting ex-officio members, and two nonvoting student members who serve one-year terms.
- Recommends a candidate for education commissioner to the governor.
- Has general supervision and control of the educational interests of the state, including preschool, elementary, and secondary education; special education; adult education; and vocational education. As defined by law, the educational interests of the state are to ensure that (1) each student has an equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences; (2) each school district finance at a reasonable level, at least equal to the state's minimum expenditure requirement, an educational program designed to achieve this end; (3) in order to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation, each school district provides educational opportunities for its students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds and may provide such opportunities with students from other communities; and (4) statutory mandates within the State Board of Education's (SBE) jurisdiction are implemented.
- Sets state educational policy in collaboration with the governor and the General Assembly.
- Appoints five members to the 11-member technical high school system board.
- Authorizes charter and interdistrict magnet schools.

- Adjudicates complaints against local boards of education that fail to implement the state's educational interests.
- Serves as the final administrative appeal board for issuing and revoking teaching certificates and other educational credentials needed to work in Connecticut public schools.

Questions for Nominees

1. What issues do you believe SBE should prioritize during your term? Since you are being re-appointed to the board, what are SBE's recent accomplishments?
2. With the new governor in office, there is considerable interest in who will be the new education commissioner. Part of the board's job is to recommend a candidate for commissioner to the governor. How do you plan to go about this important task and what qualities and background are you looking for in a candidate?
3. What do you believe to be the greatest challenges students face today, and how can SBE support students in facing them?
4. [PA 18-24](#) required all school districts to include Holocaust and genocide education in their social studies curriculum and this session the legislature is considering bills that would require districts to provide education on African-American studies, ([HB 7082](#)), Latino and Puerto Rican studies ([HB 7083](#)), and computer science ([SB 957](#)). While all of these subjects have merit, what do you think about the trend of the state specifically mandating what local districts must teach? Is the state striking the right balance between creating statewide standards and maintaining local autonomy? Furthermore, SBE is charged by law with approving statewide subject matter standards and preparing courses of study and curriculum guides. Does the legislature, by setting content and curriculum requirements, interfere with what has traditionally been SBE's purview?
5. Under current law, public (and private) school children must be immunized for certain communicable diseases in order to attend school ([CGS § 10-204a](#)). The law provides exceptions when (1) the immunization is medically contraindicated for the child or (2) the immunization is contrary to the religious beliefs of the child or the child's parents. Due to recent concerns about measles outbreaks in other parts of the country, some question whether the religious exception should remain in law. What is your position on this and do you think SBE has a role in this issue?
6. A few years ago, the legislature enacted [PA 16-189](#), An Act Concerning Student Data Privacy, to address concerns over student personal information being used by private, for-profit companies. Are you familiar with this law and do you think it does enough to protect student data made available through school?
7. In 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which, among other things, allows states to decouple student standardized test scores from teacher evaluations. Do you think student scores should be used for evaluating teachers?

8. In 2016, Connecticut began requiring that 11th grade students take the SAT in place of the Smarter Balanced assessment. Other states, such as Colorado, Delaware, and Montana have also dropped their high school consortium tests (e.g., Smarter Balanced and PARCC) in favor of a college entrance exams such as the SAT or ACT. Does this trend weaken the Common Core assessment consortia? Do you believe Connecticut should reassess using Smarter Balanced exams for grades three through eight as well?
9. Federal law (ESSA) requires school districts to maintain a 95% participation rate for standardized testing in grades three through eight and high school. Federal and state laws remain silent, however, on whether parents have the right to opt their child out of testing. If a school district falls short of the participation threshold when parents opt their child out, how should the state respond?
10. By law, starting with the graduating class of 2023, all high school students will be required to (a) earn 25, rather than 20, credits; (b) pass five end-of-year examinations; and (c) complete a senior demonstration project in order to graduate ([CGS § 10-221a\(c\)](#)). Do you think these new high school graduation standards will help prepare students for careers and college?
11. Over the past few years, several bills have been introduced to narrow the age range of kindergarten children upon enrollment. State law currently allows parents to enroll their children as early as age four years, eight months and as late as age seven ([CGS §§ 10-15c & 10-184](#)). What are your thoughts on enrolling these age groups in kindergarten?
12. What is the most important special education issue currently facing the state? What role should SBE play in addressing this issue?
13. Connecticut has an array of school choice options, ranging from themed magnet schools to charter schools and Open Choice seats in participating districts. How should the state measure the success of these programs? Where is there room for improvement?

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