



Substitute House Bill No. 6621

Public Act No. 21-95

**AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS
TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**

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

Section 1. Section 10-238 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

The board of education of any municipality, upon written petition signed by one per cent of the electors of such municipality or fifty such electors, whichever is greater, the signatures thereon to be verified by the clerk of the municipality, shall hold a public hearing on any question relating to the provision of education offered by such board specified in such petition. Such hearing shall be held at a time and place to be designated by such board, not later than three weeks after receipt by the board of such petition.

Sec. 2. Subsection (a) of section 10-214 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide annually to each pupil in kindergarten and grades one and three to five, inclusive, a vision screening. [.] Such vision screening may be performed using a Snellen chart [.] or an equivalent screening device, [such as] or an

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automated vision screening device. The superintendent of schools shall give written notice to the parent or guardian of each pupil (1) who is found to have any defect of vision or disease of the eyes, with a brief statement describing such defect or disease and a recommendation for the pupil to be examined by an optometrist licensed under chapter 380 or an ophthalmologist licensed under chapter 370, and (2) who did not receive such vision screening, with a brief statement explaining why such pupil did not receive such vision screening.

Sec. 3. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to study issues relating to the provision and funding of special education in the state during the school years commencing July 1, 2016, to July 1, 2020, inclusive. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, an examination of (1) the provision of special education and related services, including whether local and regional boards of education are providing such services directly or partnering with regional educational service centers, contracting with a private provider of special education services, as defined in section 10-91g of the general statutes, or as part of a cooperative arrangement pursuant to section 10-158a of the general statutes, (2) the cost of providing special education and related services, the total aggregate amount per school district per year and the annual percentage increase or decrease per school district of such cost, (3) the effect that the cost of special education has on a board of education's minimum budget requirement, (4) the level of state reimbursement to boards of education for special education, including the total amount for reimbursement submitted by each school district per year and the total amount received by such school district per year, and the percentage increase or decrease per year of the difference of the total amount submitted and the total amount received for each school district, and (5) the criteria and manner by which school districts are identifying students who require special education and related services, including whether school districts are overidentifying or underidentifying such students and the causes and reasons for such

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overidentification and underidentification.

(b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) Three appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of the Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and one of whom is the parent or guardian of a student who is enrolled in a public school and receiving special education services;

(2) Three appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Education Association and one of whom is the parent or guardian of a student who is enrolled in a public school and receiving special education services;

(3) Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut and one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center;

(4) Two appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education and one of whom is a representative of the RESC Alliance;

(5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of School Administrators and one of whom is a representative of the School and State Finance Project;

(6) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of Schools and one of

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whom is a representative of the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials;

(7) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee.

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

(d) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the cochairpersons of the task force from among the members of the task force. Such cochairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(e) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2022, the task force shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or January 1, 2022, whichever is later.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, the Department of Education shall, upon request, provide to and assist local and regional boards of education in administering a social-emotional learning assessment to students pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, each local and regional board of education shall administer a social-emotional learning

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assessment to students. A board may use (1) the social-emotional learning assessment provided by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, or (2) another social-emotional learning assessment or mental health and resiliency screening.

(c) For the school year commencing July 1, 2022, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional board of education may administer a social-emotional learning assessment to students. A board may use (1) the social-emotional learning assessment provided by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, or (2) another social-emotional learning assessment or mental health and resiliency screening.

(d) The parent or guardian of a student shall receive prior written notice of any social-emotional learning assessment or mental health and resiliency screening that is to be administered pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section. No student shall complete such assessment or screening unless such parent or guardian provides permission that such student may complete such assessment or screening.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) The Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Children and Families, the Office of Early Childhood and the Department of Public Health, shall design a state-wide social-emotional support strategy to provide support and assistance to local and regional boards of education for mental health, social-emotional support, behavioral support, trauma support and special education programs and services. The strategy shall include, but need not be limited to, recommendations regarding (1) training and recruiting mental health and social-emotional support staff and deploying them to school districts, (2) resources for school districts for the hiring of mental health and social-emotional support staff, (3)

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assisting boards in the development and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs, in accordance with the guidelines adopted pursuant to section 10-203c of the general statutes, (4) building on existing school and community collaborations that support student mental health and well-being, such as community school models, family resource centers, health clinics, child care that is available from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and year-round use of school facilities, (5) developing or enhancing state, regional and local support networks for mental health and trauma support services through interagency agreements, local action plans and model programs, (6) improving the knowledge and skill of educators and other school personnel in order to develop social-emotional learning and restorative practices competencies and capacities, (7) creating opportunities for educators to collaborate, share support and problem solve through team planning time and professional learning communities, (8) providing resources for state-wide and local efforts to engage parents and families to support the development of student social and emotional growth at home and in the community, and (9) providing opportunities for families to discuss topics relating to social-emotional learning, restorative practices, resiliency and ways to ensure racial equity in schools.

(b) The collaborative may consult with the national Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning to implement the provisions of this section.

Sec. 6. (*Effective July 1, 2021*) Not later than October 1, 2022, the Department of Education shall develop student social-emotional learning standards for grades four to twelve, inclusive. Such standards shall be designed for a multitiered system of support that is culturally relevant and responsive, emphasizes school connectedness and includes restorative practices. Such standards shall be made available on the department's Internet web site. As used in this section, "social-emotional

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learning" means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2022, the Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, shall convene a working group to (1) review sections 10-222d to 10-222p, inclusive, of the general statutes relating to bullying and safe school climate plans, (2) make recommendations concerning (A) amendments to said sections 10-222d to 10-222p, inclusive, (B) the inclusion of restorative practices in safe school climate plans, and (C) state-wide adoption of the National School Climate Standards, and (3) provide technical assistance and support to local and regional boards of education in adopting and implementing the Connecticut Model School Climate Policy, policy number 5131.914. The Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative may consult with or include representatives from the national Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning as members of the working group in implementing the provisions of this section.

Sec. 8. Section 10-233m of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

Each local or regional board of education that assigns a school resource officer to any school under the jurisdiction of such board shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with a local law enforcement agency regarding the role and responsibility of such school resource officer. Such memorandum of understanding shall include provisions addressing daily interactions between students and school personnel with school resource officers and shall include a graduated response model for student discipline. Any such memorandum of understanding entered into, extended, updated or amended on or after

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July 1, 2021, shall include a provision that requires all school resource officers to complete, while in the performance of their duties as school resource officers and during periods when such school resource officers are assigned to be at the school, any separate training specifically related to social-emotional learning and restorative practices provided to certified employees of the school pursuant to sections 10-148a and 10-220a, as amended by this act. For the purposes of this section, "school resource officer" means a sworn police officer of a local law enforcement agency who has been assigned to a school pursuant to an agreement between the local or regional board of education and the chief of police of a local law enforcement agency.

Sec. 9. Subsection (a) of section 10-148a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

(a) For the school year commencing July 1, [2019] 2021, and each school year thereafter, each certified employee shall participate in a program of professional development. Each local and regional board of education shall make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees, a program of professional development that is not fewer than eighteen hours in length, of which a preponderance is in a small group or individual instructional setting. Such program of professional development shall (1) be a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teacher and administrator effectiveness in increasing student knowledge achievement, (2) focus on refining and improving various effective teaching methods that are shared between and among educators, (3) foster collective responsibility for improved student performance, (4) be comprised of professional learning that (A) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, (B) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, distinguished educators, as described in section 10-145s, or other appropriate teachers, (C) occurs frequently on

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an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement, and (D) includes a repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school that is continuously available to such educators for comment and updating, and (5) include training in culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. Each program of professional development shall include professional development activities in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section. The principles and practices of social-emotional learning and restorative practices shall be integrated throughout the components of such program of professional development described in subdivisions (1) to (5), inclusive, of this subsection.

Sec. 10. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-220a of the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1) the nature and the relationship of alcohol and drugs, as defined in subdivision (17) of section 21a-240, to health and personality development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health and mental health risk reduction education that includes, but need not be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as defined in section 19a-581, violence, teen dating violence, domestic violence and child abuse, (3) school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in subsection (a) of

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section 10-222d, except that those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the Department of Education and is consistent with subsection (c) of section 10-145a, sections 10-222d, 10-222g and 10-222h, subsection (g) of section 10-233c and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-160, shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (4) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency life saving procedures, (5) the requirements and obligations of a mandated reporter, (6) the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia, as defined in section 10-3d, [and] (7) culturally responsive pedagogy and practice, and (8) the principles and practices of social-emotional learning and restorative practices. Each local or regional board of education may allow any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant to this section.

(b) Not later than a date prescribed by the commissioner, each local and regional board of education shall establish a professional development and evaluation committee. Such professional development and evaluation committee shall consist of (1) at least one teacher, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10-144d, selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, (2) at least one administrator, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10-144e, selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, and (3) such other school personnel as the board deems appropriate. The duties of such committees shall include, but not be limited to, participation in the development or adoption of a teacher evaluation and support program for the district, pursuant to section 10-151b, and the development, evaluation and annual updating of a comprehensive local professional development plan for certified employees of the district. Such plan shall: (A) Be directly related to the

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educational goals prepared by the local or regional board of education pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-220, as amended by this act, (B) on and after July 1, [2011] 2021, be developed with full consideration of the priorities and needs related to student social-emotional learning and restorative practices, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-148a, as amended by this act, and student academic outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education, [and] (C) provide for the ongoing and systematic assessment and improvement of both teacher evaluation and professional development of the professional staff members of each such board, including personnel management and evaluation training or experience for administrators, [shall] and (D) be related to regular and special student needs and may include provisions concerning career incentives and parent involvement. The State Board of Education shall develop guidelines to assist local and regional boards of education in determining the objectives of the plans and in coordinating staff development activities with student needs and school programs.

Sec. 11. Subsection (b) of section 10-220 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

(b) The board of education of each local or regional school district shall, with the participation of parents, students, school administrators, teachers, citizens, local elected officials and any other individuals or groups such board shall deem appropriate, prepare a statement of educational goals for such local or regional school district. The statement of goals shall be consistent with state-wide goals pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-4 and include goals for the integration of principles and practices of social-emotional learning and restorative practices in the program of professional development for the school district, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-148a, as amended by this act, and career placement for students who do not

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pursue an advanced degree immediately after graduation. Each local or regional board of education shall annually establish student objectives for the school year which relate directly to the statement of educational goals prepared pursuant to this subsection and which identify specific expectations for students in terms of skills, knowledge and competence.

Sec. 12. Section 10-155k of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

On and after July 1, 2013, the Commissioner of Education shall establish a School Paraprofessional Advisory Council, which on and after July 1, 2021, shall be known as the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, consisting of (1) one school paraprofessional from each state-wide bargaining representative organization that represents school paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, (2) one representative from each of the exclusive bargaining units for certified employees, chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, (3) the most recent recipient of the Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Award, (4) two representatives from the regional educational service centers, appointed by the Commissioner of Education, and (5) a school administrator, appointed by the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators. The council shall hold quarterly meetings and advise, at least quarterly, the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, of the needs for (A) professional development and the training of paraprofessionals and the effectiveness of the content and the delivery of existing training for such paraprofessionals, (B) appropriate staffing strategies for paraprofessionals, and (C) other relevant issues relating to paraprofessionals. The council shall report, annually, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, on the recommendations given to the commissioner, or the commissioner's designee, pursuant to the provisions of this section, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education.

Sec. 13. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2022, the

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School Paraeducator Advisory Council, established pursuant to section 10-155k of the general statutes, as amended by this act, shall conduct a study concerning the following: (1) Appropriate minimum employment standards, including pay rates, health care coverage, retirement benefits and professional development opportunities for paraeducators that focus on maximizing the success of paraeducators in the classroom; (2) safety issues relating to paraeducators who work with students who have behavioral issues, including the availability of appropriate safety equipment for paraeducators at each school; (3) issues relating to the assignment of substitute teaching duties to paraeducators, including emergency situations when a paraeducator is asked to serve as a substitute teacher; and (4) issues relating to the duties of paraeducators who work with students who have individualized education programs.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2022, the council shall develop proposals for the creation of a pathway for continued career and professional development, including, but not limited to, (1) paraeducator certificate and apprenticeship programs that offer course credits that apply to transferrable associate degree programs; (2) associate degree programs that (A) build upon and do not duplicate the courses and competencies of paraeducator certificate programs, (B) incorporate field experiences, (C) are aligned with the standards and competencies for teachers, and (D) are transferrable to a bachelor's degree in education and teacher certification programs; and (3) bachelor's degree programs that lead to teacher certification that build upon and do not duplicate the courses and competencies of transferrable associate degrees.

(c) The council shall submit the study described in subsection (a) of this section and the proposals described in subsection (b) of this section, and any recommendations for legislation to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

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Sec. 14. Subsection (c) of section 10-222k of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

(c) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school shall establish a committee or designate at least one existing committee in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the school principal, and for the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, such committee shall also include (A) school personnel, including, but not limited to, at least one teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b, (B) medical and mental health personnel assigned to such school, and (C) in the case of a committee for a high school, at least one student enrolled at such high school who is selected by the students of such school in a manner determined by the school principal.

(2) Any such committee shall: (A) Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying, (B) identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school, (C) implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, developed pursuant to section 10-222m, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, (D) review and amend school policies relating to bullying, (E) review and make recommendations to the district safe school climate coordinator regarding the district's safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school, (F) educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying, (G) collaborate with the district safe school climate coordinator

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in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d and subsection (a) of section 10-222h, and (H) perform any other duties as determined by the school principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying for the school.

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

Sec. 15. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Education shall develop a plan for the creation and implementation of a state-wide virtual school that offers grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, and provides virtual learning instruction by means of one or more Internet-based software platforms.

(b) The virtual school contemplated and created under such plan, shall (1) be maintained by and under the direction and control of the State Board of Education, (2) provide in each school year no less than one hundred eighty days of actual school sessions and nine hundred hours of actual school work for grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, provided not more than seven hours of actual school work in any school day shall count toward the total required for the school year, (3) offer coursework and a curriculum that is rigorous, aligned with curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education, and in accordance with the state-wide subject matter content standards, adopted by the state board pursuant to section 10-4 of the general statutes, (4) grant a diploma, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-5 of the general statutes, to any student enrolled in such virtual school who has satisfactorily completed the high school graduation requirements described in section 10-221a of the general statutes, and (5) be created with consideration given to best practices in virtual learning,

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technological capabilities of students throughout the state and equity.

(c) Not later than February 1, 2022, the department shall submit the plan and any recommendations for legislation related to the implementation of such plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 16. (*Effective from passage*) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-157 of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Education may grant an additional one-time extension of the probationary period for the school year commencing July 1, 2021, to any person who has been appointed as an acting superintendent and has not been able to become properly certified or successfully complete a school leadership program approved by the State Board of Education during the school years commencing July 1, 2019, and July 1, 2020.

Approved June 28, 2021