
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 1032 (File 405, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following revisions in the education statutes:

1. creates a new reporting requirement for boards of education with schools or districts that decline to implement the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Lunch Program (§ 1);
2. requires local and regional boards of education to develop a policy by July 1, 2022, for equitable identification of gifted and talented students that uses multiple identification methods that comply with State Department of Education (SDE) guidelines (§ 2);
3. requires boards of education to create or revise a policy for student placement in advanced academic courses or programs that is not based exclusively on academic performance (§ 3);
4. creates new a content requirement for grades 6-12 student success plans and generally requires the plans to be created in collaboration with students and their parents or guardians (§ 4);
5. requires board of education to adopt a new challenging curriculum policy (§ 5);
6. requires boards of education to adopt a policy to improve the completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) among grade 12 students or students in adult education programs (§ 6);
7. adds to the list of goals that a board of education may include in

- its application to the education commissioner for alliance district funds (§ 7);
8. requires SDE to publish and make available on its website the annual FAFSA student completion rate for the graduating class of each high school and each school district (§ 8);
 9. requires the education commissioner to establish a working group to develop ways to improve student FAFSA completion rates (§ 9);
 10. raises, from age 17 to 18, the age when a student may withdraw from high school from, beginning in the 2023-24 school year, but also allows a parent or guardian of a 17-year-old student to withdraw the student if he or she simultaneously enrolls in an adult education program (§ 10);
 11. generally raises, from age 17 to 18, the minimum age at which a student can get permission from the education commissioner to take the GED or another SDE-approved high school equivalency test (§ 11);
 12. allows the education commissioner to make recommendations to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Education Committee about policies to make higher education more affordable (§ 12); and
 13. requires boards of education to update their written weighted grading policy to address additional courses and programs (§ 13).

*Senate Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill eliminating provisions requiring SDE to study education statutes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021, except the provisions on the FAFSA working group (§ 9) and SDE recommendations about new initiatives (§ 12) take effect upon passage.

§ 1 — SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The bill creates a new reporting requirement for certain boards of education that participate in the National School Lunch Program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. One component of this program, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), generally allows a school or an entire district to serve free breakfast and lunch to all students without collecting household applications. A school may do this if at least 40% of its enrolled students participate in another means-tested program, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Eligible Connecticut schools and districts that wish to participate must submit required documentation to SDE.

Under the bill, any board of education that has at least one school in its district that qualifies for the maximum federal reimbursement for all school meals served under the CEP, and chooses not to implement the CEP, must annually report to SDE starting by December 1, 2021, on the reasons why. The report must include, (1) specific impediments to implementing the CEP; (2) actions required to remove these impediments; and (3) a plan to implement the CEP the following year, if possible.

§ 3 — ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT POLICY

Under the bill, local and regional boards of education must adopt or revise a policy on student eligibility to enroll in advanced courses or programs by July 1, 2022. The bill defines these courses and programs as honors or advanced placement classes, the International Baccalaureate or Cambridge International programs, dual enrollment, dual credit, early college, or any other advanced or accelerated course or program offered by a school board in grades 9-12.

This policy cannot be based solely on students' previous academic performance (i.e., course grades and grade point averages). Any policy that uses prior academic performance must rely on evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in the advanced course or program. Additionally, the policy must (1) offer multiple ways for students to become eligible, including recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors, or other school personnel

and (2) align with SDE guidance.

§ 4 — STUDENT SUCCESS PLANS

By law, boards of education must create a student success plan for each public school student beginning in grade 6. The plan must include their career and academic choices in grades 6 to 12.

Beginning July 1, 2021, the bill requires student success plans to be created in collaboration with each student and his or her parent or guardian, if possible. Beginning July 1, 2022, the plans must include an academic plan that complies with the respective school district's challenging curriculum policy (see § 5 below), to the extent that it does not conflict with the career choices in the plan.

§ 5 — CHALLENGING CURRICULUM POLICY

Under the bill, each board of education must adopt a challenging curriculum policy that includes at least the following:

1. criteria for identifying grade 8 and 9 students who may enroll in an advanced course or program and
2. the requirement that these students have an academic plan that allows them to enroll in one or more advanced courses and earn college credit or gain career readiness skills.

The bill requires the challenging curriculum policy to be aligned with SDE guidance.

Additionally, the bill requires each board of education to create an academic plan for each student identified in grade 8 or 9 as eligible to enroll in an advanced course or program. The plan must be designed to enroll the student in one or more advanced courses or programs and allow the student to earn college credit or result in career readiness. Furthermore, the academic plan must be aligned with the following:

1. the courses or programs currently offered by the board of education,
2. the student's student success plan (see § 4 above),

3. the high school graduation requirements established in state law,
4. any other board-adopted policies or standards relating to student enrollment eligibility for advanced courses or programs, and
5. SDE guidance.

The bill allows a student or his or her parent or guardian to decline to implement the academic plan's provisions.

§ 6 — FAFSA COMPLETION RATES

The bill requires boards of education to adopt a policy by July 1, 2022, to improve the completion rates for FAFSA among grade 12 students or students in adult education programs. It allows boards to accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations, to implement the adopted policy provisions.

§ 7 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT PLANS

The bill adds to the list of goals that a board of education may include in its application to the SDE commissioner for alliance district funds the goal of implementing its policy to improve FAFSA completion rates by grade 12 and adult education students (see § 6 above). Alliance district funds are awarded to the 30 school districts that have the lowest achievement as rated by the state's accountability index, plus any districts previously designated as alliance districts (CGS § 10-262u).

§ 8 — FAFSA COMPLETION RATE

The bill requires SDE, by July 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, to publish and make available on its website the student FAFSA completion rate for the graduating class of each high school and school district. It also allows SDE to refrain from publishing completion data for certain students entering careers that are not relevant or applicable to FAFSA completion.

§ 9 — FAFSA WORKING GROUP

The bill requires the education commissioner establish a working group to develop ways to improve student FAFSA completion rates. The group's membership must be comprised of at least the following 11 members:

1. the Office of Higher Education executive director, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities president, and UConn president, or their designees;
2. one Connecticut Association of Boards of Education representative;
3. one Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents representative;
4. one Connecticut Education Association representative,
5. one American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut representative;
6. one Connecticut Association of Schools representative;
7. one RESC Alliance representative;
8. one Connecticut School Counselor Association representative;
and
9. one Connecticut Students for a DREAM representative.

The bill requires the working group to report its strategies and recommendations to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees by December 1, 2024.

§ 10 — AGE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM HIGH SCHOOL

The bill raises, from age 17 to 18, the age when a student may withdraw from high school, beginning in the 2023-24 school year. The student must appear in person at the school in order to withdraw. The bill also allows a parent or guardian of a 17-year-old student to withdraw the student, but simultaneously requires his or her

enrollment in an adult education program.

Additionally, the bill requires the adult education withdrawal and enrollment form to include the following:

1. an attestation from a school counselor or administrator that the school district has provided the parent or guardian information about the educational options available in the school system and community and
2. an attestation from the parent or guardian that the student will be enrolled in an adult education program upon withdrawing from school.

§ 11 — GED AGE

The bill correspondingly raises the minimum age, from age 17 to 18, at which a student can get permission from the education commissioner to take the GED or another SDE-approved high school equivalency test in order to earn a state high school diploma. However, a 17-year old student may also take the test with the commissioner's permission, for good cause shown.

§ 12 — SDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO OPM AND THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The bill allows the education commissioner, with SBE approval, to make recommendations by January 1, 2022, to the OPM secretary and the Education Committee on the following topics:

1. educating students and families about the net cost of college, the use of federal Pell grants to increase college affordability, and the varying income potential of different college and certificate programs;
2. strategies for removing barriers and simplifying access to high-quality postsecondary education and training options, including nondegree programs;
3. the feasibility of establishing an early high school graduation program that grants scholarships to students who graduate high

school in three years or less to attend an undergraduate, in-person program at a non-profit Connecticut higher education institution; and

4. the feasibility of developing a standardized exit survey for all grade 12 students.

Under the bill, the education commissioner must consult with parents, teachers, and school administration before making any of the above recommendations. The commissioner may also establish a working group to help create the recommendations.

§ 13 — WEIGHTED GRADING POLICY

The bill requires boards of education to update as necessary the written weighted grading policy for honors and advanced placement classes that they must have under existing law. It specifies that this policy must address the manner in which students' grade point averages are calculated.

Under the bill, the board must update the policy to address whether the following courses or programs are also given added weight for GPA and class rank calculation, in addition to honors and advanced placement classes under current law: International Baccalaureate, Cambridge International, dual enrollment, dual credit, or early college.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 38 Nay 0 (03/22/2021)