
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6880

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

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following unrelated changes in the education statutes:

1. requires local and regional boards of education (boards of education) to make curriculum approved by their school district curriculum committee, as well as all associated curriculum materials, available to parents and guardians under the requirements of the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (see BACKGROUND) (§ 1);
2. requires boards of education to post a notice online, in the school cafeteria, and other central areas of food consumption in each school that states that the lunch, breakfast, and other school-provided meals comply with federal nutritional value requirements (see BACKGROUND) (§ 2);
3. allows any parent under age 17, rather than only a mother, to request permission from the local or regional board of education to attend adult education classes (§ 3);
4. (a) requires the State Department of Education (SDE), when developing a plan for a statewide remote learning school, to narrow the range of students eligible to enroll and (b) extends the deadline to submit the plan to legislative committees (§ 4);
5. requires boards of education conducting a regular or special board meeting to make the agenda or any associated documents that members will review at the meeting available for public inspection and post them on the board's website (§ 5);

6. requires the education commissioner to appoint a parent advisory committee and a separate teacher advisory committee to address SDE's policy development and implementation (§ 6);
7. requires in-service trainings for teachers, administrators, and certified pupil personnel to include emergency responses to students who have a seizure in a school (§ 7);
8. requires SDE to support after school grant recipients in new, specified ways and allows the department to increase the amount it retains from the appropriation for this grant program (§ 8);
9. removes certain restrictions and state oversight on real estate transactions, contracting, and procurement by the State Educational Resource Center (SERC) (§ 9);
10. requires, rather than allows, SDE to allocate funding to SERC and specifies that the funding must be sufficient for SERC to provide services to various educational entities, providers, and SDE (see BACKGROUND) (§ 10);
11. extends the deadline for boards of education to begin providing free menstrual products in restrooms by one year, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024 (§ 11); and
12. expands the Connecticut Teachers' Retirement System to cover teachers employed by an interdistrict magnet school operated by (1) a private higher education institution's board of governors; (2) an SDE-approved, third-party nonprofit corporation; or (3) Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Inc. and Goodwin University Educational Services, Inc., specifically (§§ 12 & 13).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 4 — ELIGIBILITY FOR STATEWIDE REMOTE LEARNING SCHOOL

Under current law, SDE must develop a plan to create and implement a statewide remote learning school for grades kindergarten to 12. When making the plan, the department must estimate the number of

Connecticut students who may be eligible to enroll; however, current law does not require the department to set specific enrollment eligibility requirements. The bill instead limits eligibility to Connecticut students who are unable to attend school in-person due to a medical condition or vaccination status.

The bill also extends the deadline for submitting the plan, draft requests for proposals, and any legislation recommendations from July 1, 2023, to January 1, 2024. By law, SDE must submit these items to the Appropriations and Education committees.

§ 6 — PARENT AND TEACHER ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The bill creates advisory committee duties, membership requirements, term length, and compensation.

Duties

Under the bill, both the parent advisory committee and the teacher advisory committee have the following duties:

1. advise SDE's commissioner, administrators, and staff;
2. hold meetings at least quarterly and at least twice in-person each year;
3. make recommendations on topics determined with department administrators, including teacher recruitment, special education, testing and assessment, equitable teacher distribution, teacher diversity, school safety, and social and emotional learning;
4. submit annual reports summarizing the committee's work to SDE; and
5. consult with department administrators on the report or any recommendations produced, as needed.

Membership

The bill requires the committees to each have at least 10 members. The education commissioner must appoint the members from a pool of applications submitted to SDE using an application process she

determines. When appointing members, the commissioner must aim to create a committee that represents the (1) diversity of Connecticut's teachers and students and (2) areas of expertise designated by department administrators. She must also consult with any existing parent advisory committee and teacher advisory committee.

The commissioner must only appoint members who have the following qualifications:

1. an understanding of current issues in public education;
2. experience working in educational policy;
3. either an exceptional instructional practice with an ability to engage students as a teacher, or a demonstrated history of holding parent leadership roles in schools or advocacy groups; and
4. applied to SDE's Talent Office for membership on one of these committees.

Teacher Advisory Committee Members. For the teacher committee, the members must also be regular or special education teachers in Connecticut. At least five of them must have also been members of the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council as a finalist or semifinalist in any year.

Parent Advisory Committee Members. For the parent committee, the members must also include members who represent urban, suburban, and rural school districts and elementary, middle, and high schools.

Term Length

Under the bill, for the initial appointments to both committees, at least five members of each committee serve a one-year term from the appointment date, and the remaining five members serve a two-year term. After the initial terms expire, members must be appointed for two-year terms from the date of appointment.

The bill allows members to be appointed for more than one term but requires them to reapply for each new term. It also requires members to continue to serve until their successors are appointed. The education commissioner must fill any vacancy that occurs before a term's expiration by choosing from the committee's existing applicant pool. The new member then serves for the balance of the unexpired term.

Compensation

The bill requires the parent and teacher advisory groups' members to serve without compensation, but SDE must reimburse for the following, if funds are available:

1. members' expenses necessarily incurred in performing their duties and
2. local or regional board of educations' payments to substitute teachers who cover for teachers who are members of an advisory group, while performing advisory committee duties.

§ 7 — IN-SERVICE TRAINING TOPIC

By law, boards of education must have an in-service training program for their teachers, administrators, and certified pupil personnel; paraprofessional and noncertified employees may also participate voluntarily. Current law requires training on eight topics, and the bill adds a ninth: emergency response to students who experience a seizure in a school. This training must at least include (1) recognizing seizure signs and symptoms, (2) appropriate steps for seizure first aid, (3) information about seizure action plans for students, and (4) administering seizure rescue medication or prescribed Vagus Nerve Stimulator magnet electrical stimulation for those authorized to administer medication under state law.

§ 8 — SUPPORT FOR AFTER SCHOOL GRANT RECIPIENTS

By law, SDE may administer an after school grant program to support programs for students in grades kindergarten through 12 that offer educational, enrichment, and recreational activities for children and have a parent involvement component. Local and regional boards of

education, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations are eligible recipients (CGS § 10-16x(a)).

Current law requires SDE to give after school grant recipients technical assistance, evaluation, program monitoring, professional development, and accreditation support. The bill requires the department to collaborate with regional educational service centers to give the recipients (and, for some forms, applicants) more specific and targeted forms of support by doing the following:

1. monitoring and evaluating programs and activities,
2. conducting a comprehensive evaluation of programs' effectiveness,
3. implementing risk assessments,
4. providing technical assistance and training to eligible applicants, and
5. ensuring program activities are aligned with state academic standards.

The bill also allows SDE to increase the percentage of appropriated grant funds it retains, from 4% to 7.5%, to provide this support.

§ 9 — SERC REAL ESTATE AND CONTRACTING

SERC, a quasi-public agency, was statutorily created to help the State Board of Education provide programs and activities that promote educational equity and excellence. Current law authorizes SERC to make certain transactions involving real estate (e.g., investing in it, buying, selling, or managing it, or entering agreements over it). The bill removes the requirement that these transactions be subject to state agency approval, review, or regulation to comply with any requirements in state law (including those governing state real estate overseen by the Department of Administrative Services).

It also removes SERC from being subject to the following rules, regulations, and restrictions on purchasing, procurement, personal

service agreements, and asset dispositions:

1. those generally applicable to state agencies;
2. Title 4, which governs the management of state agencies (CGS §§ 4-1 to 4-289);
3. Title 4a, which governs administrative services (CGS §§ 4a-1 to 4a-101);
4. Title 4b, which governs state real estate (CGS §§ 4b-1 to 4b-136);
and
5. the law governing permissible methods for awarding contracts for supplies, materials, equipment, and contractual services (CGS § 4e-19).

By law and unchanged by the bill, SERC remains subject to state audit by the Auditors of Public Accounts.

§§ 12 & 13 — ADDITIONS TO THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

By law, teachers employed at a “public school,” as defined in state law, may participate in the Connecticut Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS). The bill adds to the definition of “public school” any interdistrict magnet school that is operated by (1) a private higher education institution’s board of governors or (2) an SDE-approved, third-party nonprofit corporation, so long as the magnet school is classified as a public school by the Teachers’ Retirement Board (TRB).

The bill also requires the TRB to (1) classify as public schools all schools operated by Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Inc. and Goodwin University Educational Services, Inc. and (2) admit each teacher employed at them.

BACKGROUND

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

PPRA, in part, gives parents and guardians the right to inspect instructional material used by the school district as part of their

student's educational curriculum (excluding academic tests and assessments) (20 U.S.C. § 1232h).

Federal Nutritional Meal Requirements

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has established nutritional standards for the national school lunch and breakfast programs (7 C.F.R. Parts 210 and 220).

SERC Services

SDE funding allows SERC to provide professional development services, technical assistance, evaluation activities, and policy analysis to (1) local and regional boards of education, (2) SDE, (3) charter schools, (4) the Technical Education and Career System, (5) school readiness program providers, and (6) other educational entities and providers. SERC must spend the funding consistent with the education commissioner's procedures and conditions (CGS § 10-357e).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44 Nay 0 (03/24/2023)