

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH  
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



**PA 23-167—sSB 1**  
*Education Committee*  
*Appropriations Committee*

**AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

**[§ 1 — PUBLISHING SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURES,  
AND STATISTICS](#)**

*Requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2024, to annually publish each school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics for the previous fiscal year; requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2025, to prepare and publish the same data in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools*

**[§§ 2 & 3 — NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER REQUIRED  
TRAINING](#)**

*Requires SDE to provide, and newly elected school board members to take, training on the responsibilities and obligations of being a school board member*

**[§§ 4 & 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICTS](#)**

*Expands allowable alliance district funding uses to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school in the district; requires SDE to publish each alliance district's improvement plan*

**[§ 6 — WHOLESOME SCHOOL MEALS PILOT PROGRAM](#)**

*Requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program to award five grants to alliance districts to embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs*

**[§ 7 — VIRTUAL REALITY STUDY](#)**

*Requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality in grade 9-12 classroom instruction*

**[§ 8 — EDUCATOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM](#)**

*Requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience*

**[§§ 9 & 10 — SDE REVIEW OF SCHOOL BOARDS' INCREASING  
EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLANS](#)**

*Requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in prior law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2) implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

**[§§ 11 & 18 — ASPIRING EDUCATORS DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP  
PROGRAM](#)**

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Changes the name of the “minority teacher candidate” scholarship program to the “aspiring educators diversity” scholarship program; reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000; requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program*

### §§ 12-14 — EDUCATOR DIVERSITY POLICY OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

*Changes the name of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council to the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council and the term “minority” to “diverse” regarding students and educators*

### § 15 — ADJUNCT PROFESSOR PERMIT

*Allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time, nontenured college instructors to work part-time for a school district; establishes employment limits and criteria*

### § 16 — ADDING CURSIVE WRITING AND WORLD LANGUAGES TO THE MODEL CURRICULUM

*Adds cursive writing and world languages to the kindergarten to grade eight model curriculum that SDE must develop*

### § 17 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CREDIT FOR CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS

*Allows school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an approved credit recovery program*

### § 19 — USE OF CERTAIN OPEN CHOICE FUNDS

*Changes terminology describing excess Open Choice funds from “nonlapsing” to “additional,” limits the amount of these funds for one earmarked use, and allows any remaining funds to lapse*

### §§ 20-23 & 86 — IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS

*Requires a school board that received a waiver from using one of the state-approved reading models to implement its alternative model under the waiver by the 2024-25 school year; allows school boards without a waiver, but that have not adopted a state-approved model, to partially implement a state-approved model over time; eliminates a provision that allowed the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation due to insufficient resources or funding; extends a notification deadline*

### § 24 — REVIEW OF ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE READING MODEL OR PROGRAM

*Requires SDE’s literacy center to review issues related to implementation of the reading curriculum models and programs*

### § 25 — STATEWIDE MASTERY TEST AUDIT

*Requires the education commissioner to audit statewide mastery test and local testing requirements along with the preparation and administration time associated with them*

### §§ 26 & 27 — LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM

*Creates in DoAg the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse eligible school boards for buying locally or regionally sourced food for school meal programs; sets reimbursement rates for locally- and regionally-sourced food; outlines the grant process and requires DoAg to develop*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*guidelines; redirects unexpended CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program funds to the new program*

### §§ 28 & 33 — AEROSPACE AND AVIATION TRAINING

*Allows school boards to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students; requires creation of a working group to study the feasibility of an aviation and aerospace high school*

### § 29 — MODEL PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to develop a model paraeducator training program for high school students*

### § 30 — DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON SCHOOL OPTIONS

*Requires school boards to annually distribute information on vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education school options to middle school students*

### § 31 — HIGH SCHOOL PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

*Requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education that have DOL-registered pre-apprenticeship programs in their high school curriculum*

### § 32 — EXPANSION OF DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

*Requires SDE, in partnership with boards of education and public higher education institutions, to expand opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for high school students, including courses required for health care occupations*

### §§ 34 & 35 — SCHOOL NURSES AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS

*Exempts school nurses and nurse practitioners from the work experience requirement in state regulations; requires employing boards of education to provide 15 hours of professional development biennially to school nurses and nurse practitioners beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

### § 36 — COMMISSION TO STUDY EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

*Creates a new commission to study various educational issues, including funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools, and related accountability measures*

### § 37 — ANNUAL ENROLLMENT REPORTS

*Requires local and regional boards of education, magnet school operators, and charter school governing councils to annually report enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE*

### §§ 38-40 — RENAMING AND REVISING THE ALLIANCE DISTRICTS

*Renames the alliance districts as the educational reform districts and reduces the number of these designated districts to 20; makes conforming changes in ECS and tiered PILOT grants law*

### § 41 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT HOLDBACK FOR MINORITY TEACHER PROGRAM FUNDING

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Requires SDE to calculate alliance districts' funding holdback for minority teacher residency candidates using a new formula for FY 24; limits this formula to FY 24 only*

### § 42 — INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP

*Expands the school indoor air quality working group's charge and extends its reporting deadline*

### §§ 43 & 44 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROGRAM

*Requires more frequent indoor air quality inspections; requires the inspection reports to be submitted to DAS on a form the agency creates*

### § 45 — OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE COMFORT RANGE GUIDELINES

*Requires DPH to develop temperature comfort range guidelines for school buildings*

### § 46 — PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANT

*Requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts*

### §§ 47-71, 74 & 87 — CHANGES TO SCHOOL CLIMATE DUTIES AND PROCEDURES

*Makes various changes to school climate duties and procedures, including defining "school climate" and related terms; requires (1) the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to develop school climate standards based on national guidelines; (2) each school district to have a school climate coordinator and each school to have a school climate specialist and a school climate committee; (3) each school climate committee to biennially administer a school climate survey; and (4) the creation of a school climate improvement plan that aligns with the state's school climate standards*

### §§ 72 & 73 — SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

*Requires that the MOU that assigns an SRO to schools specify the SRO's duties and procedures; requires school boards to post the MOUs on their website and in the SRO's assigned school; requires each SRO to submit a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts*

### § 75 — SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES WORKING GROUP

*Requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group, under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, to study current school discipline practices and report the study's results to the Education Committee*

### §§ 76-82 — SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

*Makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion*

### §§ 83 & 84 — GRANTS FOR HIRING VARIOUS SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL

*Removes in two SDE grant programs for hiring school mental health personnel the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts; delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer the school mental health therapist grant program; adjusts education commissioner reporting dates*

§ 85 — GRANT FOR DELIVERY OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

*Delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer a grant program for boards of education and youth camp and summer program operators to provide mental health services; removes the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE*

§ 87 — REPEALER

*Repeals laws containing school climate requirements for school boards and SDE that conflict with the act's provisions*

**§ 1 — PUBLISHING SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIPTS, EXPENDITURES, AND STATISTICS**

*Requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2024, to annually publish each school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics for the previous fiscal year; requires SDE, starting by February 15, 2025, to prepare and publish the same data in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools*

By law, school superintendents must report returns of the school district's receipts, expenditures, and statistics to the education commissioner by September 1 of each year while allowing for revisions up to December 31. The returns must be certified by an independent public accountant by December 31. The act requires that the returns be filed according to the commissioner's instructions, rather than made under those instructions as under prior law.

The act also requires the State Department of Education (SDE), by February 15, 2024, and each following year, to publish on its website the data in the required reports and returns by education program type, expense function, expense object, and funding source. Sources must include federal, combined state and local, and combined private and other sources for the school and district level. SDE must also develop and publish a guide with definitions for each category of expenditure and funding source.

Additionally, the act requires SDE, beginning by February 15, 2025, and each following year, to develop and publish (presumably, on its website) the data mentioned above in a format that allows financial comparisons between school districts and schools, including student enrollment and demographic statistics as of October 1 of the school year in which the reports and returns were filed.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

**§§ 2 & 3 — NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER REQUIRED TRAINING**

*Requires SDE to provide, and newly elected school board members to take, training on the responsibilities and obligations of being a school board member*

The act requires SDE to develop an annual training program for newly elected school board members that at least includes a school board member's role and responsibilities, a board of education's duties and obligations, and school district budgeting and education finance. When developing and providing the training,

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

SDE may collaborate with an association that represents Connecticut boards of education and accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations.

The act requires SDE to begin offering the annual training on and after July 1, 2023. First-time elected school board members must complete the training at a time and in a way SDE determines, but within one year after assuming office.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 4 & 5 — ALLIANCE DISTRICTS

*Expands allowable alliance district funding uses to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school in the district; requires SDE to publish each alliance district's improvement plan*

The act expands the items that alliance district funding may be spent on to include establishing a family resource center in each elementary school under the school board's jurisdiction. (PA 23-208, § 3, repeals this provision.) Family resource centers provide child care services, remedial educational and literacy services, families-in-training programs, and support services to parents getting temporary family assistance or to other parents in need.

By law, alliance districts must spend their alliance funds (1) according to the plan submitted with the application; (2) on the minority candidate certification, retention, and residency program; (3) on Education Cost Sharing (ECS) spending requirements; and (4) on any other items allowed under SDE guidelines. The act specifies that the plan is an "improvement plan" (see *Background — Alliance Districts*).

The act requires SDE to publish on its website the improvement plan that each alliance district must submit with its application for the alliance portion of its ECS aid. It also requires school boards for alliance district towns to annually submit these improvement plans to SDE.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Background — Alliance Districts*

By law, there are currently 36 alliance districts that have been designated for five years. The designation applies to (1) the 33 school districts with the lowest accountability index scores and (2) 3 districts that were designated in previous years but that may not now be among the 33 with the lowest scores (see below). State law allows the education commissioner to withhold some of an alliance district's ECS aid until the district has submitted a satisfactory application and improvement plan.

### *Background — Accountability Index Scores*

By law, the "accountability index score" for a school district or an individual school is the score resulting from multiple weighted measures that (1) include the mastery test scores (i.e., the performance index score) and high school graduation rates and (2) may include academic growth over time, attendance and chronic absenteeism, postsecondary education and career readiness, enrollment in and

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

graduation from higher education institutions and postsecondary education programs, civics and arts education, and physical fitness (CGS § 10-223e(a)).

### § 6 — WHOLESOME SCHOOL MEALS PILOT PROGRAM

*Requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program to award five grants to alliance districts to embed a professional chef in the district to assist school meal programs*

For FYs 24 to 26, the act requires SDE to administer a wholesome school meals pilot program that awards five grants to embed a professional chef in five alliance districts. The chef must help school meal programs build food service staff capacity, improve meal quality, increase diner satisfaction, streamline operations, and establish a financially viable school meal program.

The act requires SDE to partner with an organization that specializes in placing chefs for the pilot program's purposes.

Under the act, an alliance district may apply for the grant by October 1, 2023, on an application the department establishes. SDE must review each application and award five grants. Each grant recipient must receive an annual \$150,000 grant in each year of the pilot.

By January 1, 2027, SDE must report on the school meals pilot program to the Appropriations and Education committees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 7 — VIRTUAL REALITY STUDY

*Requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality in grade 9-12 classroom instruction*

The act requires SDE to study the use of virtual reality as part of grade 9-12 classroom instruction. The study must include at least the following: (1) a review of best practices for using virtual reality in the classroom, (2) appropriate safety measures for its use, and (3) ways that local or regional boards of education may responsibly invest in and purchase virtual reality equipment and programs. SDE must report its findings and any recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### § 8 — EDUCATOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

*Requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience*

The act requires SDE to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative starting in FY 24 to enable students enrolled in educator preparation programs, residency programs, or alternate route to certification (ARC) programs to get classroom teaching experience while working towards becoming full-time, certified teachers after successfully completing the programs.

The act also requires SDE to develop (1) participation guidelines for educator

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

preparation programs, residency programs, and ARC programs included under the initiative; (2) administrative implementation guidelines that are consistent with federal laws and regulations; and (3) compensation levels for students enrolled in any of the three types of programs included under the educator apprenticeship initiative. Under the act, SDE must seek state Department of Labor certification for the initiative to leverage federal grants and funding.

By law, participants in an apprenticeship must be paid (CGS § 31-22m). Teacher residency program participants were paid prior to the act (CGS § 10-156gg), but the educator preparation and ARC program participants were not.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Residency Programs and Apprenticeship Participation*

Under the act, the education commissioner may permit a student enrolled in a residency program to participate in the apprenticeship program upon the request of the superintendent for the school district where the student is assigned for the residency program. Upon successfully completing a residency program and with the superintendent's recommendation, the State Board of Education (SBE) must issue an initial educator certificate to the student, and the student is exempted from the statutory teacher subject area assessment requirements.

### §§ 9 & 10 — SDE REVIEW OF SCHOOL BOARDS' INCREASING EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLANS

*Requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in prior law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2) implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

Prior law required every local and regional board of education (i.e., school board) to develop and implement a "minority educator recruitment" plan for each school district to give its students opportunities to interact with teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation. The act changes the plan's name to the "increasing educator diversity" plan and requires each school board to submit its plan to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval.

The act requires the commissioner to review each increasing educator diversity plan. She may approve it or return the plan to the school board with instructions to revise it, in which case the school board must revise the plan according to the instructions by May 15, 2024, and resubmit the plan for approval.

Under the act, beginning with the 2024-25 school year, school boards must implement their commissioner-approved plans and post them on their websites. SDE must also post the plans on its website.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 11 & 18 — ASPIRING EDUCATORS DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Changes the name of the “minority teacher candidate” scholarship program to the “aspiring educators diversity” scholarship program; reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000; requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program*

Under prior law, SDE administered a minority teacher candidate scholarship program to award an annual scholarship to “minority” students who met the following criteria:

1. graduated from a public high school in a “priority school district” (i.e., generally, districts whose students receive low standardized test scores and have high levels of poverty (CGS § 10-266p(a))) and
2. were enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a four-year higher education institution.

The act renames the program as the “aspiring educators diversity” scholarship program. It also makes a conforming change by replacing references to “minority” students with references to “diverse” students. (The terms have the same meaning under prior law and the act.)

The act makes other changes affecting the program, such as (1) reducing the maximum annual scholarship and (2) requiring SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Scholarship Grant Changes*

The act reduces the maximum annual scholarship amount that a student may receive from \$20,000 to \$10,000. It adds the requirement that scholarship recipients be in good standing in their teacher preparation programs.

It also requires the education commissioner to develop scholarship repayment criteria for recipients who are not employed as certified teachers by a local or regional board of education after graduating from a teacher preparation program. Any amounts repaid to the department must be deposited in the General Fund.

### *Scholarship Administration Policy*

The act modifies the scholarship administration policy that prior law required SDE to develop by January 1, 2023. But the act does not specify a deadline for SDE to update the policy. By law, the policy must address the payment and distribution of the scholarships. The act specifies that the policy must include payment and distribution through the teacher preparation programs the recipients are enrolled in.

Existing law also requires that the policy address notifying high school students in priority school districts about the scholarship program. The act adds that this must include the opportunity to apply for the program’s scholarship while enrolled in high school and before graduation if the student will be enrolled in a teacher preparation program during the following fall semester at a four-year higher education institution.

### *Reporting Requirement*

The act requires SDE, starting by January 1, 2024, to annually develop a report

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

that includes data on the race and ethnicity of the scholarship recipients and the teacher preparation programs in which they are enrolled. SDE must submit the report to the Education Committee.

### *Program Staff (§ 18)*

The act requires the Office of Policy and Management, in consultation with SDE, to reclassify at least four existing unfilled positions at SDE to administer the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program and implement recruitment and retention programs for diverse educators. Under the act, the reclassification is for FY 24, and SDE must use the funds appropriated to its personal services account to fill four reclassified staff positions.

The act specifies that one reclassified position must require experience in communications, be placed in the Talent Office, and be responsible for marketing the scholarship program and the recruitment and retention programs.

### §§ 12-14 — EDUCATOR DIVERSITY POLICY OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

*Changes the name of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council to the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council and the term “minority” to “diverse” regarding students and educators*

The act renames the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council as the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council. Under existing law, unchanged by the act, the council is a seven-member body within SDE charged with advising the education commissioner on ways to encourage minority students and professionals from other fields to pursue teaching careers. The act makes related changes by replacing the term (1) “minority” with “diverse” (without changing its underlying meaning) and (2) “teachers” with “educators.”

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 15 — ADJUNCT PROFESSOR PERMIT

*Allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time, nontenured college instructors to work part-time for a school district; establishes employment limits and criteria*

Under existing law, SBE may issue adjunct instructor permits allowing a person with specialized training, experience, or expertise in the arts to teach in certain interdistrict arts magnet high schools (CGS § 10-145n). Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, the act allows SBE to issue adjunct professor permits to allow part-time, nontenured college instructors to be employed by a school board and work part-time for a school district.

The act limits eligibility to instructors who work at either a public or independent higher education institution in Connecticut. It allows permit holders to teach in public high schools for up to 25 classroom instructional hours per week as part of college and career readiness programming, including advanced placement classes, career and technical education, and International Baccalaureate, dual

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

enrollment, dual credit, apprenticeship, and early college experience programs.

Under the act, the adjunct professor permit is valid for three years, and the education commissioner may renew it for good cause upon the request of the employing district's superintendent.

While working, permit holders must be under the supervision of the superintendent or a principal, administrator, or supervisor designated by the superintendent who must regularly observe, guide, and evaluate the permit holder's performance. Additionally, school boards that employ the permit holders must provide a program to assist them, including academic and classroom support services.

The act also requires permit holders to join the applicable exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees and be subject to the same bargaining contract unless the employing school board and the union agree otherwise. The act prohibits permit holders from filling a position that would displace a certified teacher already employed at the school.

Finally, the act makes these permit holders ineligible for membership in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) solely due to the permit; however, if permit holders already have regular SBE-issued teacher's certificates, then they cannot be excluded from the TRS.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 16 — ADDING CURSIVE WRITING AND WORLD LANGUAGES TO THE MODEL CURRICULUM

*Adds cursive writing and world languages to the kindergarten to grade eight model curriculum that SDE must develop*

The law requires SDE to develop a model kindergarten to grade eight curriculum by January 1, 2024, that school boards may use. The model curriculum must be rigorous, age-appropriate, meet state content standards, follow the state's required program of instruction, and integrate several specific additional topics throughout the curriculum (see *Background — Required Program of Instruction and Kindergarten to Grade Eight Model Curriculum Additional Topics*).

The act adds cursive writing and world languages beginning in kindergarten to the list of additional topics that must be included. It also specifies that school boards may choose to use all or parts of the curriculum. (State law does not mandate that districts use a specific curriculum.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### *Background — Required Program of Instruction and Kindergarten to Grade Eight Model Curriculum Additional Topics*

By law, the required program of instruction includes, among other subjects, the arts; career education; consumer education; health and safety; language arts; mathematics; physical education; science; and social studies, including citizenship, geography, government, history, Holocaust and genocide awareness, African American and Black studies, Puerto Rican and Latino studies, Native American

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

studies, computer programming, world languages for secondary education, vocational education, and (as of July 1, 2025) Asian American and Pacific Islander studies (CGS § 10-16b).

The additional topics that the model kindergarten to grade eight curriculum must already include are the following:

1. Native American studies;
2. Asian American and Pacific Islander studies;
3. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual orientations and gender identities studies;
4. climate change;
5. personal financial management and financial literacy;
6. the military service and experience of American veterans;
7. civics and citizenship, including instruction in digital citizenship and media literacy;
8. the principles of social-emotional learning; and
9. racism.

### § 17 — HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CREDIT FOR CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS

*Allows school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an approved credit recovery program*

The act allows local and regional school boards to award high school graduation credit for completing an education commissioner-approved credit recovery program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 19 — USE OF CERTAIN OPEN CHOICE FUNDS

*Changes terminology describing excess Open Choice funds from “nonlapsing” to “additional,” limits the amount of these funds for one earmarked use, and allows any remaining funds to lapse*

By March 1 each year, existing law requires the education commissioner to determine whether the number of students enrolled in the Open Choice program (see *Background — Open Choice*) is lower than the number used to set the appropriated funds for the program. If the enrollment is below this number, then she must use the additional funds in specific ways, such as to fund wrap-around services (e.g., academic tutoring, family support, and experiential learning opportunities).

The act limits the earmark for these services to \$2 million a year. It also eliminates terms and phrasing that describe the program’s excess funds as “nonlapsing” or “not lapsing” and instead refers to the funds as “additional.” By replacing these terms, the act allows any funds remaining after any mandated spending to lapse back into the General Fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### *Background — Open Choice*

Open Choice is a voluntary interdistrict attendance program that allows students from large urban districts to attend suburban schools and vice versa on a space-available basis. Its purpose is to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation; improve academic achievement; and provide public school choice (CGS § 10-266aa).

### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-204, § 313, requires the education commissioner to expend \$500,000 of any remaining Open Choice funds in FYs 24 and 25 for a grant to The Legacy Foundation of Hartford, Inc. to provide wrap-around services for Open Choice students.

### §§ 20-23 & 86 — IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS

*Requires a school board that received a waiver from using one of the state-approved reading models to implement its alternative model under the waiver by the 2024-25 school year; allows school boards without a waiver, but that have not adopted a state-approved model, to partially implement a state-approved model over time; eliminates a provision that allowed the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation due to insufficient resources or funding; extends a notification deadline*

The law requires SDE's Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success director to review and approve at least five reading curriculum models or programs for boards by July 1, 2022. The models or programs must be (1) evidence- and scientifically-based and (2) focused on competency in the following reading areas: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name or letter name fluency, and reading comprehension. By law, beginning with the 2023-24 school year, each school board generally must implement one of five approved reading curriculum models or programs for grades pre-kindergarten to three. The act removes pre-kindergarten from the grades subject to this requirement.

### *Waiver Implementation*

By law, school boards may request a waiver from the SDE commissioner to use an alternative reading curriculum model or program instead of an approved one. The act specifies that school boards that receive a waiver must implement their alternative models or programs according to their waivers' provisions starting in the 2024-25 school year.

It also eliminates a provision that allowed the commissioner to grant more time for implementation to a school board that (1) showed it had insufficient resources or funding for implementation and (2) demonstrated ongoing efforts to implement a model or program.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### *Partial Implementation for School Boards Without Waivers*

The act requires boards that have not been granted a waiver and have not fully implemented one of the SDE-approved reading models or programs by the 2023-24 school year to begin partially implementing one of the models or programs so long as the board fully implements it by the 2025-26 school year.

### *Notice to SDE on Chosen Model or Program*

Beginning July 1, 2023, prior law required each school board to notify the literacy center every two years about which model or program it is implementing. The act extends this deadline to July 1, 2025. It correspondingly extends the deadline, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2025, for (1) school boards to report to the literacy center on the models and programs they have implemented and (2) the literacy center to publish these choices.

### *Elimination of Director of Reading Initiatives Position*

The act eliminates the requirement that SDE have a director of reading initiatives (§ 86) and makes conforming and technical changes (§ 23).  
EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### § 24 — REVIEW OF ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE READING MODEL OR PROGRAM

*Requires SDE's literacy center to review issues related to implementation of the reading curriculum models and programs*

The act requires SDE's literacy center, in consultation with the Reading Leadership Implementation Council, to review issues related to the school boards' implementation of the comprehensive reading curriculum models or programs. The review must include the following:

1. an examination of technical assistance provided to boards that have been denied a waiver;
2. an examination of the impact of SDE's science of reading master class (see *Background — Science of Reading Master Class*) that uses all the components of reading such as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and
3. upon completion of SDE's independent impact evaluation, a determination of how to scale it for use to develop educators who are ready and able to support individual student learning and the science of reading.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### *Background — Science of Reading Master Class*

SDE's science of reading master class offers professional learning for educators from participating districts. The first master class began in 2022 with 11

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

participating districts and was funded with federal American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2) funds. The master class is a statewide professional learning program co-created with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents to develop local capacity for the science of reading and components of comprehensive kindergarten to grade three literacy instruction. Components include phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

### § 25 — STATEWIDE MASTERY TEST AUDIT

*Requires the education commissioner to audit statewide mastery test and local testing requirements along with the preparation and administration time associated with them*

The act requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2025, and within available appropriations, to audit state and local testing requirements and administration. The commissioner must submit a report on the audit to the Appropriations and Education committees by this date.

The audit must focus on the following:

1. the statewide mastery examination (see *Background — Statewide Mastery Exams*) and local standardized assessments used to monitor student and district academic progress and achievement;
2. the amount of time devoted to student preparation or educator instruction for the exam and assessments, including the amount of time taken away from regular instruction; and
3. recommendations on limiting the amount of time devoted to administering these exams and assessments.

Additionally, the act requires that the audit be done in a way that complies with certain requirements in federal law (e.g., including in the audit information on how teachers, principals, and other school leaders use assessment data to improve and differentiate instruction (20 U.S.C. § 6362(e))) so that the commissioner may apply for a grant to do the audit and related activities under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-150, § 5, contains substantially similar requirements.

#### *Background — Statewide Mastery Exams*

Public school students statewide must take the following SBE-approved mastery exams that measure essential and grade-appropriate skills:

1. for grades three through eight, exams measuring reading, writing, and mathematics skills;
2. for grades 5, 8, and 11, exams measuring science skills; and
3. for grade 11, a nationally recognized, SBE-approved college readiness assessment (i.e., the SAT) measuring reading, writing and mathematics skills (CGS § 10-14n(a)).

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### §§ 26 & 27 — LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM

*Creates in DoAg the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse eligible school boards for buying locally or regionally sourced food for school meal programs; sets reimbursement rates for locally- and regionally-sourced food; outlines the grant process and requires DoAg to develop guidelines; redirects unexpended CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program funds to the new program*

Beginning FY 24 and each year after, the act requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), in consultation with SDE, to administer the local food for schools incentive program to reimburse school boards for the purchase of locally sourced or regionally sourced food that may be used in an eligible school meal program.

The act entitles an eligible school board to reimbursement payments in (1) accordance with the guidelines the act requires to be developed and (2) amounts equal to (a) one-half of the board's expenditures for locally sourced foods and (b) one-third of the board's expenditures for regionally sourced foods. An "eligible board of education" is a board of education participating in the National School Lunch Program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### *Definitions*

Under the act, an "eligible meal program" is a meal program provided by an eligible school board to its students or a meal provided as part of the board's participation in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer Option, After School Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program, or the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program that the United States Department of Agriculture administers.

"Locally sourced food" is produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut that are grown or produced at, or sold by, a local farm. It includes value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed foods. A "local farm" is a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub, or wholesale distributor located in Connecticut.

"Regionally sourced food" is produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, or Maine that are grown or produced at, or sold by, a regional farm. It includes value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed foods. A "regional farm" is a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub, or wholesale distributor located in one of the six states mentioned above.

#### *Program Reimbursement Grant Process*

Under the act, DoAg must receive food reimbursement payment requests from eligible school boards, similar to how the department receives applications under the existing law for school meal programs.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Each eligible school board must keep its expenditure records for all locally or regionally sourced food, as well as documentation, as DoAg requires, confirming the food's origin. Boards must also submit these records and the documentation when DoAg requires it for review.

To be eligible for reimbursement, the locally or regionally sourced food must comply with the existing school meal nutrition standards.

### *Guidelines*

The act requires DoAg to develop guidelines that (1) set a maximum reimbursement amount based on total student enrollment for each eligible school board; (2) help eligible school boards participate in the program; and (3) promote geographic, social, economic, and racial equity, which may include a preference for socially disadvantaged farmers, as defined in federal law.

### *Program Survey*

The act requires DoAg to develop a survey to be distributed annually to any school board that gets reimbursement payments under the program. The survey must be designed to collect information to help the department implement and improve the program.

### *Supplemental Grants*

The act allows DoAg, within available appropriations, to give supplemental grants to eligible school boards in addition to the reimbursement payments. The supplemental grant funds may be used for buying kitchen equipment; engaging with school nutrition or farm-to-school consultants; or training on processing, preparing, and serving locally and regionally sourced food. When awarding supplemental grants, DoAg must give priority to an eligible school board for a town designated as an alliance district.

### *Related Provisions*

Beginning with FY 24, the act requires that the reimbursement payments be reduced proportionately if the total amount for reimbursement payments calculated in that year exceeds the amount appropriated for reimbursements for that year. Additionally, any unexpended funds appropriated for the reimbursement grants do not lapse at the end of the fiscal year; they instead remain available for expenditure during the next fiscal year.

DoAg may accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations, for administering the local food for schools incentive program and implementing the act's requirements.

### *Reporting Requirement*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Beginning by January 1, 2025, DoAg must annually submit a report on the local food for schools program to the Education Committee. The report must include an accounting of the funds appropriated to and received by the department for the program, descriptions of the reimbursement payments made, and an evaluation of the program.

### *Remaining Funds From the CT Grown for CT Kids Program (§ 27)*

Beginning with FY 24, the act also requires that any unexpended funds from the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program be used to administer the local food for schools incentive program created under the act. The CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program helps school boards develop farm-to-school programs to increase the availability of local foods in child nutrition programs and encourages educators to use hands-on educational techniques to teach students about nutrition and farm-to-school connections.

## §§ 28 & 33 — AEROSPACE AND AVIATION TRAINING

*Allows school boards to partner with local businesses to provide aerospace and aviation apprenticeship training programs to students; requires creation of a working group to study the feasibility of an aviation and aerospace high school*

The act allows a board of education to partner with local employers in the aviation or aerospace industry to develop and offer an apprenticeship training program for students within its school district. The program must give students (1) on-site training where they learn immediate job skills and earn course credits, (2) information on the CT Aero Tech School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians' educational programs, and (3) help completing the school's admissions application.

The act requires a school board that offers this apprenticeship program to start annually reporting to the Education Committee within 60 days after the first student cohort completes the program. The report must include the number of students who (1) participated in and completed the program and (2) enrolled in the CT Aero Tech School for Aviation Maintenance Technicians after doing so.

### *Aerospace Advanced Manufacturing High School Working Group (§ 33)*

The act requires the Connecticut Technical Education Career System executive director to convene a working group to determine the feasibility, cost, and plan to develop an aerospace advanced manufacturing high school.

It requires the executive director to serve as the working group's chairperson and appoint its members, which must at least include representatives of (1) the Governor's Workforce Council, (2) the Department of Economic and Community Development, and (3) business and community organizations related to the aerospace industry.

The act requires the executive director to report the working group's conclusions and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2025.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except that the provision convening the working

group takes effect upon passage.

§ 29 — MODEL PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to develop a model paraeducator training program for high school students*

The act requires the SDE commissioner, by January 1, 2024, and in consultation with the School Paraeducator Advisory Council, to (1) develop a model program for paraeducator training for students in grades 9-12 that would qualify them to work as paraeducators after graduating from high school and (2) distribute the program to each board of education.

The act allows school boards to adopt the program. After doing so, they must annually report to the Education Committee, beginning within one year after adoption, on the number of students who (1) participated in and completed the program by grade and (2) found employment as a paraeducator after graduation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 30 — DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON SCHOOL OPTIONS

*Requires school boards to annually distribute information on vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education school options to middle school students*

By law, each local and regional school board must require its school counselors to give middle and high school students and their parents information on the availability of (1) vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education and training at technical education and career schools and (2) agricultural science and technology education at regional agricultural science and technology education centers.

The act also requires each school board to annually distribute this information to middle school students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 31 — HIGH SCHOOL PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM

*Requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education that have DOL-registered pre-apprenticeship programs in their high school curriculum*

The act requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program within available appropriations. Under the program, the department must award grants to any local or regional board of education that incorporates a pre-apprenticeship program in its curriculum for grades 9-12, so long as the program is registered with the Department of Labor (DOL) and meets any related criteria SDE establishes. Under the act, SDE must award grants of at least \$1,000 for each student who completes the program.

The act requires SDE, starting by January 1, 2025, to annually report to the

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Education Committee on the grant program, including the amount of grants awarded and types of pre-apprenticeship programs students completed during the prior year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 32 — EXPANSION OF DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

*Requires SDE, in partnership with boards of education and public higher education institutions, to expand opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment for high school students, including courses required for health care occupations*

The act requires SDE, by January 1, 2024, to expand dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities for students in grades 9-12 in various subject areas, including courses required to pursue health care occupations. The department must do this (1) within available funding limits and (2) in partnership with local and regional boards of education and public and independent higher education institutions.

Under the act, SDE must include the following in the expanded opportunities:

1. new resources, such as an online inventory of dual credit and dual enrollment programs, and model agreements to promote information sharing between boards of education and higher education institutions;
2. support for curriculum development and teacher and faculty professional development to create new career pathways for in-demand industries, such as health care; and
3. tuition assistance for students who enroll in dual credit and dual enrollment programs.

The act requires SDE to report to the Education Committee on its efforts to expand dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities by January 1, 2024.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 34 & 35 — SCHOOL NURSES AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS

*Exempts school nurses and nurse practitioners from the work experience requirement in state regulations; requires employing boards of education to provide 15 hours of professional development biennially to school nurses and nurse practitioners beginning with the 2024-25 school year*

#### *Appointment Qualifications (§ 34)*

Prior law required all school nurses and nurse practitioners who local or regional boards of education appoint to meet the qualifications set in state regulations, which SBE adopted in consultation with the Department of Public Health (see Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-212-2). The act creates an exception to the work experience requirement in state regulation, specifically by exempting appointed or contracted school nurses or nurse practitioners from having at least the equivalent of one year of full-time work experience as a registered nurse in the five years immediately before their appointment or employment in the position.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

### *Professional Development (§§ 34 & 35)*

Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, the act requires each school nurse or nurse practitioner appointed by or under contract with a board of education to complete at least 15 hours of professional development programs or activities biennially. The employing board must annually approve and provide these programs or activities, which must include training and instruction in implementing individualized education programs (IEP) and 504 plans (see *Background — IEPs and 504 Plans*).

Additionally, for any new school nurse or nurse practitioner, the board must provide the IEP and 504 plan training within 30 days after the person is appointed by or begins a contract with the board.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Background — IEPs and 504 Plans*

An IEP is a written statement detailing the student's academic achievement level, goals for future achievement, and specialized educational services needed to reach the goals. Federal law requires school boards to develop IEPs for students eligible to receive special education and related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.).

Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in public schools (29 U.S.C. § 794). Students who receive school accommodations under this law have them memorialized in a written plan, commonly known as a "504 plan."

## § 36 — COMMISSION TO STUDY EDUCATION FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

*Creates a new commission to study various educational issues, including funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools, and related accountability measures*

The act creates the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission to study various educational issues, including (1) funding for local school districts, charter schools, and magnet schools and (2) accountability measures for alliance districts (educational reform districts and legacy alliance districts, under the act), charter schools, and magnet schools.

It must also study the adequacy of financial reporting by (1) school boards, including the reporting associated with participation in the Open Choice program; (2) the governing councils of state and local charter schools and charter management organizations; and (3) operators of interdistrict magnet school programs. Additionally, the study must include the financial impact of interdistrict magnet school programs, charter schools, and the Open Choice program on school boards, including Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant amounts; transportation costs; special education services; and other general educational costs for children who live in the school district but do not attend a school under the school board's jurisdiction.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act specifies four parts of the study. The first part examines school district, charter school, and magnet school funding entitlements and must at least include the following:

1. the compensation, benefits, retention, and recruitment of teachers, paraprofessionals, and social workers;
2. restrictions on the use of, and reporting requirements for, any additional funds received under the act (both ECS funds and the new grants);
3. optimal class sizes; and
4. the inclusion of special education as a need factor in the ECS grant formula.

The second part focuses on alliance districts and must at least include (1) an analysis of how school boards develop alliance district plans and how the education commissioner reviews and approves the plans and (2) recommendations for narrowing the focus of or replacing the plans. The study must also consider the following:

1. whether to eliminate SDE's authority to withhold a portion of an alliance district's ECS grant for failing to comply with specified requirements,
2. the feasibility of creating independent financial audits of the expenditures under the entire budget of an alliance district's school board,
3. the feasibility of requiring alliance district school boards to hold hearings on interventions and annually evaluate any new programming established in the school district,
4. guidelines for hiring non-classroom personnel, and
5. interventions that SDE may take regarding an alliance district's operations.

The third part addresses charter schools and must include the following:

1. the feasibility of a full grade expansion of existing charters, including grade expansion;
2. an examination of the impact of moratoriums on any new charter school approval, as well as new magnet school program approval; and
3. a consideration of the duration of a charter's validity and SBE's standards used to determine whether to renew a charter.

The fourth part of the study looks at magnet schools and must include oversight policies on tuition increases, enrollment, and funding caps for magnet school programs operated by regional education service centers (RESC).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### *Commission Membership*

Under the act, the House speaker, Senate president pro tempore, education commissioner, and Office of Policy and Management secretary, or their respective designees, are commission members. The table below shows the 16 additional members, their appointing authorities, and any required organizational affiliations.

**Table: Commission to Study Education Funding Membership and Appointing Authority**

<i>Appointing Authority (Appointments)</i>	<i>Member Organization or Position</i>
House speaker (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents representative</li> <li>• RESC Alliance representative</li> </ul>
Senate president pro tempore (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Equity for Kids representative</li> <li>• Center for Children’s Advocacy representative</li> </ul>
House majority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut School Counselor Association representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Education Association representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Voices for Children representative</li> </ul>
Senate majority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut representative</li> <li>• ConnCAN representative</li> <li>• School and State Finance Project representative</li> </ul>
House minority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Association of School Administrators representative</li> <li>• Connecticut Association of School Business Officials representative</li> <li>• Local or regional board of education member for an alliance district, selected in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education</li> </ul>
Senate minority leader (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Charter School Association representative</li> <li>• Executive director of an agricultural science and technology education center</li> <li>• Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education representative</li> </ul>

*Organizational Matters and Report Deadline*

Under the act, appointing authorities must make all initial commission appointments by July 28, 2023, and fill any vacancies. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore, or their designees, serve as the chairpersons. They must schedule and hold the commission’s first meeting by August 27, 2023. The Education Committee’s administrative staff must serve as the commission’s administrative staff.

The commission must submit the part of its study on funding for local and regional boards of education, charter schools, and magnet schools, with findings and recommendations, to the Appropriations and Education committees by February 1, 2024. It must submit the remaining parts to the Education Committee by January 15, 2025. The commission terminates when it submits the last report or on July 1, 2025, whichever is later.

§ 37 — ANNUAL ENROLLMENT REPORTS

*Requires local and regional boards of education, magnet school operators, and charter school governing councils to annually report enrollment data as of April 1 to SDE*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act requires each local and regional board of education, interdistrict magnet school operator, and state or local charter school governing council to submit to SDE by May 20 each year the number of students enrolled in their schools (as of April 1).

The act also imposes an additional reporting requirement on any local or regional board of education that (1) is a sending district or receiving district participating in the statewide interdistrict public school attendance program (i.e., Open Choice) or (2) operates an interdistrict magnet school program or an agricultural science and technology educator center. These boards must annually submit to SDE the number of students participating in the applicable program as of April 1. The data must be reported separately for in-district and out-of-district students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 38-40 — RENAMING AND REVISING THE ALLIANCE DISTRICTS

*Renames the alliance districts as the educational reform districts and reduces the number of these designated districts to 20; makes conforming changes in ECS and tiered PILOT grants law*

Beginning in FY 25, the act renames the alliance districts as “educational reform districts” and revises the alliance district program. The act reduces the number of districts with this designation from 36 to 20. It also defines a “legacy alliance district” as a school district for a town that was designated as an alliance district for FYs 13-24. This means the legacy alliance districts include all the educational reform districts and the 16 other districts that are no longer designated alliance districts. (PA 23-208, § 12, repeals these changes.)

By law (and now unchanged due to PA 23-208), an alliance district is a school district that (1) is among the towns with the 33 lowest accountability index (AI) scores as calculated by SDE or (2) was previously designated as an alliance district from FYs 13-22. Additionally, the law requires the education commissioner to designate 36 alliance districts for the five-year period from FYs 23-27.

The act requires the education commissioner to designate as educational reform districts the districts among the towns with the 20 lowest AI scores for a two-year period beginning with FY 25. It also repeals the definition of “educational reform district,” which is an alliance district that is among the 10 lowest AI scores in the state.

Under prior law, the state comptroller must withhold from an alliance district town any increase in ECS funds that exceeds the amount the town received in FY 12 (the year the alliance district program began). But, for districts designated as alliance districts for the first time for FY 23, the comptroller must withhold ECS funds over the FY 22 amount. The comptroller must transfer the money to the education commissioner to withhold until she approves the district’s alliance district application and plan to improve academic performance.

Under the act, beginning with FY 25, the amount that must be withheld for the 20 educational reform districts is the amount of ECS funds they are entitled to that exceeds the amount the town received in FY 12.

By law, the alliance districts must spend their alliance funds (1) according to

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

the plan submitted with the application; (2) on the minority candidate certification, retention, and residency program; (3) on ECS spending requirements; and (4) for any other items allowed under SDE guidelines. The act refers to the plan specifically as an “improvement plan.”

The act requires each participating school board to submit the improvement plan to SDE. Under prior law, this was just referred to as a plan, but it is the same requirement.

The act also allows a school district that has not been designated an educational reform district, but is among the 50 towns with the lowest AI scores, to request technical assistance or other interventions from SDE to provide student academic support services. (PA 23-208, § 12, repeals the changes made in § 38.)

*Conforming Changes for ECS and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Funds (§§ 39 & 40)*

The act makes conforming changes in two laws that reference alliance districts.  
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-208, § 12, repeals the changes made in §§ 39-40, except the language specifying the alliance district plan is an “improvement” plan.

### § 41 — ALLIANCE DISTRICT HOLDBACK FOR MINORITY TEACHER PROGRAM FUNDING

*Requires SDE to calculate alliance districts’ funding holdback for minority teacher residency candidates using a new formula for FY 24; limits this formula to FY 24 only*

Existing law requires each alliance district to partner with a minority teacher residency program operator to enroll minority candidates and place them in the district for a 10-month residency. SDE withholds from each alliance district 10% of an increase in alliance aid for grant payments to cover costs associated with these candidates’ (1) enrollment in a residency program, (2) teacher certification process, (3) hiring after successful program completion, or (4) retention as certified employees (CGS § 10-156gg).

Prior law required the education commissioner, beginning in FY 23, to withhold 10% of any increase in funds that the district receives for that FY that exceeds the amount of funds it received in FY 20. The act instead (1) limits this withholding requirement to FY 24 only and (2) for FY 24, requires the commissioner to calculate the withheld amount as 10% of any increase in funds the alliance district received in FY 21 over the amount of funds it received in FY 20.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Background — Alliance Districts*

By law, alliance districts are the 36 school districts that have the lowest

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

achievement, as rated by the state's accountability index (CGS § 10-262u(b)(3)). Calculated by SDE, the accountability index ranks school districts by combining various measures of student performance, primarily standardized assessment scores, into a single score (CGS § 10-223e).

### § 42 — INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP

*Expands the school indoor air quality working group's charge and extends its reporting deadline*

PA 22-118 created a 23-member working group on school indoor air quality to study and make recommendations on various related issues, such as (1) optimal temperature ranges to ensure healthy air and promote student learning; (2) emergency air quality conditions that warrant temporary school closures; and (3) best practices for properly maintaining school heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) systems. For the third issue, the act specifies that the group's recommendations must also include the frequency and scope of the maintenance.

The act also requires the working group to study and recommend (1) a needs-based system for equitably distributing funds under the HVAC system grant program for schools and (2) ways to make accessible and searchable the reports and results of the uniform inspections and evaluations of the indoor air quality and HVAC systems.

The act extends, from January 4, 2023, to July 1, 2024, the deadline by which the working group must report to the Education, Labor and Public Employees, and Public Health committees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### §§ 43 & 44 — SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROGRAM

*Requires more frequent indoor air quality inspections; requires the inspection reports to be submitted to DAS on a form the agency creates*

The act requires school districts to do more frequent inspections and evaluations of public school indoor air quality and to submit the inspection results to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which must post them on its website. Prior law required these inspections every three years for any school constructed, extended, renovated, or replaced on or after January 1, 2003. The act instead requires them annually beginning January 1, 2024.

It also gives school districts more time to have a less frequent HVAC inspection that must be done by a certified technician, certified industrial hygienist, or a mechanical engineer. Prior law required these inspections to be done before January 1, 2024, and every five years after that. The act moves the deadline to January 1, 2025, and creates a waiver process for certain situations.

#### *Annual Air Quality Inspection or Evaluation*

Prior law required school districts to do uniform indoor air quality inspections

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

and evaluations every three years for any school built or renovated on or after January 1, 2003. It allowed them to do so using the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Indoor Air Quality Tools for School Program (see *Background — Tools for Schools*). The act instead makes the inspections annual and requires the inspections to use this EPA program.

By law, unchanged by the act, the inspection or evaluation must cover the following, among other things: HVAC systems; radon levels; potential for exposure to microbiological airborne particles, including fungi, mold, and bacteria; chemical compounds of concern to indoor air quality, including volatile organic compounds; pest infestation, including insects and rodents; the degree of pesticide usage; plumbing, including water distribution and drainage systems; and indoor air quality maintenance training for staff.

By law, the inspection results must be made public at a school board meeting and posted online.

### *HVAC Inspection by Certified Technician or Hygienist or Mechanical Engineer*

The act extends, from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2025, the deadline for school districts to start having five-year HVAC inspections done by a certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technician; industrial hygienist certified by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene or the Board for Global EHS Credentialing; or a mechanical engineer.

By law, a “certified testing, adjusting and balancing technician” is (1) a technician certified to do testing, adjusting, and balancing of HVAC systems by the Associated Air Balance Council, the National Environmental Balancing Bureau, or the Testing, Adjusting and Balancing Bureau (TABB) or (2) someone training under the supervision of a (a) TABB-certified technician or (b) person certified to do ventilation assessments of HVAC systems through a certification body accredited by the American National Standards Institute.

### *Waiver*

The act creates a process for DAS to grant one-year waivers for the January 1, 2025, deadline.

Upon a school board's request, DAS may waive the deadline if it finds that:

1. there are not enough certified testing, adjusting, and balancing technicians; certified industrial hygienists; or mechanical engineers to do the inspection and evaluation or
2. the board scheduled the inspection and evaluation for a date after January 1, 2025.

The act also allows school boards that had an inspection done in a different format that DAS deems equivalent to use the inspection instead of the uniform inspection and evaluation required under the law.

### *School Indoor Air Quality and HVAC Reporting Forms (§ 43)*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act requires DAS to develop standard school building indoor air quality reporting forms for boards of education to use when conducting either the annual air quality inspection or five-year HVAC inspection. DAS must make the forms available on its website, and it may consult with representatives from the indoor air quality and HVAC industry to develop them.

The act requires that school boards submit the report and results for both inspections to DAS using these standard forms.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Background — Tools for Schools*

The EPA’s Tools for Schools program helps schools identify and address indoor air quality issues, including by using its action kit, which has guidance for existing school staff to do practical inspections and take other steps at little or no cost.

### § 45 — OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE COMFORT RANGE GUIDELINES

*Requires DPH to develop temperature comfort range guidelines for school buildings*

The act requires the Department of Public Health (DPH), by July 1, 2024, to develop guidelines for an optimal temperature comfort range of 65 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit in school buildings and facilities. It allows gymnasiums and natatoriums to have a larger range.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### § 46 — PATHWAYS IN TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANT

*Requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts*

The act requires SDE to create a grant for new or expanded pathways in technology early college high school programs in alliance districts. Under the act, a “pathways in technology early college high school program” is an instructional program in which students in grades 9-12, inclusive, complete high school and college-level coursework while also engaging in industry-guided workforce development.

Starting with FY 2024, SDE must annually issue a request for proposals to alliance district school boards to (1) enhance an existing pathways in technology early college high school program or (2) establish a new public-private partnership (i.e., a relationship between an alliance district board of education, a community college, and a private entity to create a pathways in technology early college high school program). (PA 23-208, § 6, changes the program start date to FY 2025.)

The department must review the proposals and award a grant to two school boards for the costs associated with establishing a new public-private partnership or enhancing a pathways in technology early college high school program.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 47-71, 74 & 87 — CHANGES TO SCHOOL CLIMATE DUTIES AND PROCEDURES

*Makes various changes to school climate duties and procedures, including defining “school climate” and related terms; requires (1) the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to develop school climate standards based on national guidelines; (2) each school district to have a school climate coordinator and each school to have a school climate specialist and a school climate committee; (3) each school climate committee to biennially administer a school climate survey; and (4) the creation of a school climate improvement plan that aligns with the state’s school climate standards*

The law imposes various duties and procedures on school employees, local and regional boards of education, SDE, and other entities aimed at creating safe school climates and preventing and investigating bullying. The act changes these duties and procedures by, among other things, requiring (1) the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to develop school climate standards based on national guidelines, (2) the creation of a school climate improvement plan to enhance classroom safety, (3) each school district to have a school climate coordinator and each school to have a school climate specialist and school climate committee, and (4) the SDE commissioner to establish a working group to study current school discipline practices.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except the provisions modifying or repealing existing statutes (§§ 56-70 & 87) are effective July 1, 2025.

*Connecticut School Climate Policy and the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative (§§ 47-49, 65-66 & 87)*

Under the act, the “Connecticut school climate policy” is the school climate policy developed, updated, and approved by a Connecticut association representing boards of education. Also, the policy must (1) be adopted by the collaborative; (2) have a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that implements the Connecticut school climate standards; and (3) include a continuous cycle of planning and preparation, evaluation, action planning, and implementation (§ 47).

The act creates a transition period before its new provisions are required to be implemented. Over the next two school years (2023-24 and 2024-25), the act allows local and regional boards of education to adopt and implement the Connecticut school climate policy. Under the act, boards that do so are no longer required to, among other things:

1. implement a safe school climate plan and administer school climate assessments (CGS § 10-222d);
2. use bullying and teen dating violence prevention and intervention strategies (CGS §§ 10-222d & 10-222g); and
3. appoint a district safe school climate coordinator to work with safe school climate specialists and safe school climate committees for the schools in their respective districts (CGS § 10-222k).

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

By the 2025-26 school year, the act requires, rather than allows, all boards of education to adopt and implement the Connecticut school climate policy, since the act repeals the above statutes effective July 1, 2025 (§§ 49 & 87).

Relatedly, the act requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative to convene a subcommittee to do the following:

1. provide guidance to local and regional boards on implementing the Connecticut school climate policy;
2. develop Connecticut school climate standards based on nationally recognized school climate research and best practices by February 1, 2024; and
3. create a uniform bullying complaint form for SDE and local and regional boards of education to include on their websites and student handbooks (§ 48).

The act also makes minor and conforming changes to the collaborative's statutes to reflect other changes in the act (§§ 65 & 66).

*Definitions.* Under the act, "school climate" is the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, reflecting the school community's norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. The "school community" is the (1) people, groups, businesses, public institutions, and nonprofit organizations invested in the school system's welfare and vitality; (2) students and their families; (3) board of education members; and (4) school volunteers and employees (§ 47). This school climate definition is similar to the one under current law that the act repeals (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222d(a)(9)).

"Bullying" is unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to 12, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. This definition is different from the one under law that the act repeals. Under current law, "bullying" is a severe, persistent, or pervasive direct or indirect act that (1) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual, (2) places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm, or (3) infringes on an individual's rights or opportunities at school. It includes a written, oral, or electronic communication or a physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability; or by association with an individual or group who had or was perceived to have one or more of these characteristics (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222d(1)).

### *School Climate Personnel (§§ 47, 50-52 & 87)*

Current law establishes a hierarchy of people within schools and school districts responsible for developing and implementing safe school climate plans, biennial school climate assessments, and other reporting requirements (CGS § 10-222k). The act sunsets this hierarchy (§ 87), and beginning with the 2025-26 school year,

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

requires district- and school-level administrators and staff to assume similar roles to implement the act's replacement provisions (§§ 50-52).

*District School Climate Coordinator (§ 50).* Under the act, each school district's superintendent, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, must serve as the district's school climate coordinator. This differs slightly from current law, which requires the superintendent to appoint a district safe school climate coordinator from among existing school district staff (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222k(a)). Under the act, the school climate coordinator's duties include the following, which are similar to those for district safe school climate coordinators under current law:

1. giving all schools district-level leadership and support for implementing their school climate improvement plans (see § 54 below);
2. collaborating with each school's school climate specialist to (a) develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, including alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (b) communicate the strategies to the school community, including through publishing them in the district student handbook;
3. collecting and maintaining data about school climate improvement, including school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types of bullying complaints submitted by school community members, types of challenging behavior addressed using the restorative practices response policy (see § 74 below), and data on the implementation of restorative practices; and
4. meeting at least semiannually during the school year with each school's school climate specialist to (a) identify strategies to improve "school climate" (see above), including by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices; (b) propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan; and (c) help complete the school climate survey (see § 53 below).

Under the act, "challenging behavior" is behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee (§ 47). This term is somewhat similar to "hostile environment" under current law that the act repeals, which is a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222d).

The "school environment" under the act is a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program done on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a local or regional board of education. It may also include other activities, functions, and programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program if the bullying done at it negatively impacts the school environment (§ 47). Current law does not have an equivalent definition.

*School Climate Specialist (§ 51).* Under the act, each school's principal must serve as the school climate specialist for the school unless he or she designates a

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

professionally certified school employee trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices to be the specialist. This is similar to current law, which requires each principal to be the safe school climate specialist unless he or she designates someone else (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222k(b)). Under the act, the school climate specialist's duties include the following, which are similar to those for safe school climate specialists under current law:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including reports of alleged bullying and harassment;
2. implementing evidence- and research-based interventions, including restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. leading the school climate improvement plan's implementation.

*School Climate Committee* (§ 52). The act requires each school to have a school climate committee with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse members who are appointed by the school climate specialist and representative of various roles in the school community. The specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator, must annually review and approve the committee's membership, which must consist of the following people:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the certified employees' union;
3. a group of students (of an unspecified number) that is demographically representative of the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. enrolled students' families; and
5. other school community members whom the school climate specialist wishes to appoint.

Current law requires schools to have similar committees, although the act does not continue the current requirement that the school's medical and mental health personnel serve on the committee (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222k(c)).

Under the act, the school climate committee's responsibilities include the following, which are similar to those for committees under current law:

1. helping with the annual school climate survey's development, scheduling, and administration;
2. reviewing and using school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate;
3. creating or proposing revisions to the school climate improvement plan;
4. helping with the school climate improvement plan's implementation;
5. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including restorative practices, in the school community;
6. annually notifying the school community about the uniform bullying complaint form or a similar form used by the school; and
7. engaging the school community in the school climate improvement plan's implementation at meetings during the school year held at least semiannually.

Among other differences, the act does not continue the following duties for committees under current law:

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

1. receiving copies of completed reports after bullying investigations and
2. implementing the school security and safety plan's provisions that govern the collection, evaluation, and reporting of information on instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222k(c)).

### *School Climate Survey (§§ 47, 53 & 87)*

The act requires each school's school climate committee, beginning in the 2025-26 school year, to biennially administer a school climate survey to students, their families, and school employees. Students' parents or guardians must (1) receive prior written notice that the survey is being administered and about its content and (2) have a reasonable opportunity to opt students out of the survey (§ 53).

Under the act, a "school climate survey" is a research-based, validated, and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, their families, and school employees in the predominant languages of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan (see § 54 below) (§ 47).

The surveys under the act replace the requirements on school climate assessments and related analyses under current law that the act repeals. Among other things, current law requires SDE to distribute department-approved school climate assessments to all public schools, schools to biennially administer the assessments, and SDE to analyze district efforts to prevent and respond to bullying in schools and annually report on this analysis to the Education and Children's committees (see § 87 and CGS §§ 10-222d & 10-222h).

### *School Climate Improvement Plan (§§ 47, 54, 71 & 87)*

Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the act requires each school's school climate specialist, in collaboration with the district's school climate coordinator, to develop a school climate improvement plan and update it as needed (§ 54).

Under the act, "school climate improvement plan" is a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and other relevant information through a process that engages and involves all school community members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, schoolwide instructional practices, and relational practices that prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, including alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment (§ 47).

The plans under the act replace the requirement for schools to develop safe school climate plans, which the act repeals. Among other things, current law requires:

1. local and regional boards of education to develop and implement safe school climate plans that generally address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence in their schools;
2. district safe school climate coordinators to implement their district's safe

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

- school climate plan; and
3. SDE to review safe school climate plans submitted by boards of education for approval or rejection (see § 87 and CGS §§ 10-222d, 10-222k & 10-222p).

The act requires each school climate improvement plan to align with the Connecticut school climate standards and be based on (1) the results of its school climate survey, (2) any recommendations from its school climate committee, (3) certain protocols and supports, and (4) any other data its school climate specialist and school climate coordinator consider relevant (§§ 54 & 71). The plan must be submitted to the school climate coordinator by December 31 each year for review and approval. Once approved, the plan must be made available to the school community in written or electronic form and be used to prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior (§ 54). (The act does not give a deadline for the climate coordinator to act on the submitted plan and does not indicate what happens if the plan is not approved.)

*School Climate Improvement Plans' Protocols and Supports.* Under the act, school climate improvement plans' protocols and supports must enhance classroom safety and address challenging behavior. They must also at least include the following:

1. contact information for (a) the administrator the school climate specialist designates to be notified by school employees about any challenging behavior incidents that result in student discipline or removal from the classroom and (b) any other administrator or school employee to be notified of these incidents in the designated administrator's absence;
2. the process the designated administrator will use to assess the facts, severity, and intentionality of a challenging behavior incident;
3. each designated location where a student may be sent when he or she is temporarily removed from a classroom, and the supports the student may receive there, including (a) intervention from a trained school employee, (b) therapeutic resources, (c) available mental health supports, (d) instructional materials, and (e) technology or other resources to address the student's temporary needs;
4. ways to address challenging behavior, enhance resiliency, increase the use of de-escalation strategies, and improve social and emotional skills, including training, therapeutic mental health supports, restorative practices, or trauma-informed instructional strategies;
5. the safeguards established to ensure that any supports, services, or interventions given to any student who receives special education or accommodation for a disability comply with the student's individualized education program under state special education law or an accommodation plan under federal law; and
6. a prohibition on discriminating or retaliating against anyone who reports or assists in the investigation of a challenging behavior incident.

*Protocols and Supports Tiered Responses.* The act further requires the protocols and supports to specify tiered responses to challenging behavior incidents, based on their level of impact or frequency, that:

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

1. require temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students to reduce likelihood of injury;
2. indicate credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others; or
3. result in an injury that requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, or less severe injuries caused by the same person on more than one occasion, verified by the school nurse or other medical professional.

These tiered responses must include at least the following:

1. for a single incident, the school principal must notify the parents or guardians of each student involved in a way that complies with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA);
2. for each following incident, the school principal must invite the parents or guardians of each student involved to a meeting (either in person at the school or virtually) to discuss the specific supports or interventions that are applicable to the student, including restorative practices; and
3. for multiple incidents, or a single incident that causes severe harm, the school principal must give notice to the parents or guardians of each student involved about other resources for supports and interventions, including the 211 Infoline program, Behavioral Health Partnership services or programs, or other resources for professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

*Protocols and Supports Reports and Meetings.* Relatedly, the act requires the protocols and supports to also have a requirement for the superintendent to, at least annually, report the number of challenging behavior incidents that occurred the previous year to the school board. This report must also include the grade level of each student involved and the supports, services, or interventions given in response to address the needs of the students and school employees. The report must be made in a way that does not result in the disclosure of identifiable student data in keeping with FERPA and federal Department of Education data suppression guidelines.

Lastly, for challenging behavior incidents, the act requires the protocols and supports to require a meeting, within two days after the incident, between an administrator and the school employee who witnessed the incident to determine the supports and interventions required to address the students' and school employees' needs. If a student who receives special education is involved, notice about the incident must be submitted to the student's planning and placement team within two days after the incident and the student's supports and interventions must be determined by his or her team. The protocols and supports must also specify a process for a teacher to request a behavior intervention meeting with the school's crisis intervention team (§ 71).

*Comparison to Current Law.* Among other things, the act's school climate improvement plans do not continue the following elements that current law explicitly requires for safe school climate plans:

1. enabling students to anonymously report, and parents or guardians to report in writing, acts of bullying to school employees;
2. including language about bullying in student codes of conduct;
3. establishing a procedure for each school to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school, make this list available for public inspection, and annually report this number to SDE; and

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

4. requiring the principal of a school, or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when the principal, or the principal's designee, believes that any bullying is criminal conduct (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222d(b)).

### *Training Resources (§§ 47, 55 & 87)*

Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the act requires each local and regional board of education to provide training and resources to school employees on (1) school climate and culture; (2) social and emotional learning; and (3) evidence- and research-based interventions, including restorative practices (see § 74 below). The act allows the resources and training to be made available at each school under the board's jurisdiction and to include technical assistance for implementing a school climate improvement plan. The school climate coordinator must select and approve the training providers, and any school employee may participate in the training (§ 55).

Under the act, a "school employee" is any of the following people:

1. a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator, or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or
2. anyone else who, under contract with a board of education, (a) has duties that bring them in regular contact with students and (b) provides services to, or on behalf of, students enrolled in a public school.

"Social and emotional learning" is the process by which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Under the act, "emotional intelligence" is the ability to do the following:

1. perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others;
2. use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication;
3. understand and identify emotions; and
4. manage emotions in oneself and others (§ 47).

These definitions are substantially similar to ones under current law that the act repeals (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222d). The act also relatedly repeals from current law the statewide safe school climate resource network, which SDE had to establish to make available to all schools information, training opportunities, and resource materials to improve the school climate and diminish bullying and teen dating violence (see § 87 and CGS § 10-222i).

### *Restorative Practices Response Policy (§ 47 & 74)*

Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the act requires each local and regional board of education to adopt a restorative practices response policy to be implemented by school employees for challenging behavior incidents or nonviolent student conflict that does not constitute a crime. The act prohibits the policy from

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

including the involvement of a school resource officer or other law enforcement official unless the challenging behavior or conflict escalates to violence or constitutes a crime (§ 74).

Under the act, “restorative practices” are evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on the following:

1. building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community;
2. holding the student accountable for challenging behavior; and
3. ensuring the student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community (§ 47).

### *Minor, Conforming, and Technical Changes (§§ 47, 56-64, 67-70 & 87)*

The act makes minor, conforming, and technical changes in the education laws relating to statutes the act repeals and the new school climate personnel and plans the act creates. These include the following:

1. carrying forward definitions for “cyberbullying,” “teen dating violence,” “mobile electronic device,” and “electronic communication” under current law that the act repeals (see §§ 47 & 87 and CGS § 10-222d);
2. revising the school climate personnel for purposes of training by SDE and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (§§ 61 & 70);
3. replacing the safe climate plan that provides the basis for the bar on damage claims against school employees and others for responding to bullying or teen dating violence (§ 62); and
4. prohibiting parents and guardians serving as school security and safety committee members from accessing information reported to the committee that would violate FERPA (§ 63).

### §§ 72 & 73 — SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

*Requires that the MOU that assigns an SRO to schools specify the SRO’s duties and procedures; requires school boards to post the MOUs on their website and in the SRO’s assigned school; requires each SRO to submit a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts*

By law, each local and regional board of education that assigns a school resource officer (SRO; i.e., sworn police officer) to its schools must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SRO’s local law enforcement agency. The MOU must address the SRO’s role and responsibility in the school, including the officer’s interactions with students and staff, and training requirements.

Starting July 1, 2023, the act requires that these MOUs also include provisions that specify the SRO’s duties and procedures for restraining students, using firearms, making school-based arrests, and reporting on investigations and behavioral interventions. It also requires school boards to (1) post their MOU on their website and in the school where the SRO is assigned and (2) maintain the MOU in a central location in the school district.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act additionally requires each SRO to give his or her agency's police chief a report for each investigation or behavioral intervention the SRO conducts within five days after doing so. Under the act, an "investigation or behavioral intervention" is a circumstance in which an SRO is conducting (1) a fact-finding inquiry on student behavior or school safety, including emergency circumstances, or (2) an intervention to resolve violent or nonviolent student behavior or conflicts. The report must include at least the following:

1. the date, time, and location of the investigation or behavioral intervention;
2. the SRO's name and badge number;
3. the race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability status for each student involved in the investigation or intervention;
4. the reason for and nature and disposition of the investigation or intervention; and
5. whether any student involved in the investigation or intervention was (a) searched; (b) informed about their constitutional rights; (c) issued a citation or a summons; (d) arrested; or (e) detained, including the duration of the detainment.

Police chiefs must submit SROs' reports to their school districts' superintendents at least monthly. Superintendents must submit them to their school districts' local or regional board of education.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-208, §§ 9 & 10, limit this act's SRO reporting provisions to just investigations and behavioral interventions that involve challenging behavior or conflict that escalates to violence or constitutes a crime. It also requires that the MOU provisions on SRO duties be in keeping with any laws or policies concerning police officer duties.

### § 75 — SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES WORKING GROUP

*Requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group, under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, to study current school discipline practices and report the study's results to the Education Committee*

The act requires the SDE commissioner to establish a working group under the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative to study current school discipline practices, including those that lead to students becoming "justice-involved" (i.e., involved with the juvenile justice system due to being accused of a delinquent or criminal act).

Under the act, the working group's members must be appointed by the commissioner and representative of students, educators, community members, child welfare and development experts, mental health care providers, and restorative practices experts. The working group must submit a report to the Education Committee on the study's results and any recommendations for school discipline reform by July 1, 2024.

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

### §§ 76-82 — SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

*Makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion*

The act makes various changes in the education statutes governing suspension and expulsion. Specifically, it requires the following:

1. school districts with high rates of in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion to (a) develop strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions and (b) submit these strategies to SDE (§§ 76 & 77);
2. SDE to report to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC; see *Background — JJPOC*) on expulsions and related alternative education program placements (§ 81); and
3. SDE to provide, and allows school boards to use, recommended assessments for screening students who exhibit mental health distress or who have been identified as at risk for suicide (§§ 79 & 80).

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2024, except the provisions on (1) expulsion and alternative education reporting and the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative's duties take effect upon passage and (2) student mental health assessments take effect July 1, 2023.

#### *Strategies to Reduce Suspensions and Expulsions (§§ 76-78)*

By law, local and regional boards of education must annually submit certain data on each of their schools to SDE in their strategic school profile report. This data includes the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (CGS § 10-220(c)(3)).

Beginning July 1, 2024, the act requires districts with a rate of suspensions and expulsions that is high or disproportionate, as determined by the education commissioner, to (1) develop strategies to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions, and (2) submit these strategies to SDE in the form and manner the commissioner prescribes. Starting that same date, SDE must, within available appropriations, provide support, on-site monitoring, and oversight of schools implementing these strategies.

By law, SDE must annually examine the suspension and expulsion data submitted as part of the strategic school profile report, disaggregate the data, and submit a report to the State Board of Education (SBE). The act requires SDE to post this report on its website and include the above strategies and the results from them.

#### *Assessments Addressing Suicide Risks (§§ 79 & 80)*

Under the act, by January 1, 2024, SDE must give local and regional boards of education a list of recommended assessments for determining the suicide risk of students who (1) exhibit mental health distress, (2) have been identified as at risk of suicide, or (3) are considered to be at an increased risk of suicide based on certain risk factors. The risk factors must be based on the state-wide strategic suicide

prevention plan developed by the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board, and must include at least youth who are:

1. bereaved by suicide;
2. disabled or have chronic health conditions, such as mental health or substance use disorders;
3. involved in the juvenile justice system;
4. experiencing homelessness or placed in an out-of-home setting, such as foster care; or
5. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

The list may include the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (see *Background — Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale*).

Relatedly, the act allows boards to use an assessment from the SDE-provided list to screen identified students beginning July 1, 2023. The act requires students who are assessed based on the risk factors based on the suicide prevention plan developed by the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board to receive heightened consideration during their mental health assessment.

#### *Student Expulsion and Alternative Educational Opportunities Reporting (§ 81)*

The act requires SDE, by January 1, 2025, to report to JJPOC on the educational experiences and outcomes of students who are expelled and placed in alternative educational opportunities, and how these opportunities compare to the standards adopted by SBE. The report must include at least the following:

1. the number of students who were expelled and placed in alternative educational opportunities during the previous school year,
2. the types of alternative educational opportunities in which the students were placed, and
3. any engagement and outcome measures for these students.

#### *Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative Advisement on Suspensions and Expulsions (§ 82)*

The act requires SDE's Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative to advise the SDE commissioner and SBE on strategies to reduce the overall and disproportionate use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Beginning by October 1, 2023, the act makes the collaborative responsible for the following duties concerning grades preschool through two:

1. developing guidance to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in these grades;
2. providing evidence-based and developmentally appropriate definitions and examples of conduct that is violent or sexual in nature that may allow an out-of-school suspension for students in these grades; and
3. recommending developmentally appropriate interventions for students in these grades as an alternative to out-of-school suspension.

#### *Background — JJPOC*

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

State law charges JJPOC with evaluating policies related to the juvenile justice system and the expansion of juvenile jurisdiction to include 16- and 17-year-olds. Its members include legislators, judicial branch leaders, state agency heads, and child and victim advocates, among others (CGS § 46b-121n).

### *Background — Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale*

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale is a short questionnaire that can be administered quickly in the field by responders with no formal mental health training, and it is relevant in a wide range of settings and for people of all ages.

### §§ 83 & 84 — GRANTS FOR HIRING VARIOUS SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL

*Removes in two SDE grant programs for hiring school mental health personnel the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts; delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer the school mental health therapist grant program; adjusts education commissioner reporting dates*

Prior law required SDE, for FYs 23 to 25, to administer grant programs for local and regional boards of education to (1) hire and retain more school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, nurses, and licensed marriage and family therapists and (2) hire additional school mental health specialists.

### *School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Counselors, Nurses, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists Grant Program (§ 83)*

For the grant program to hire and retain school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, nurses, and licensed marriage and family therapists, the act removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts to SDE. However, by law and unchanged by the act, recipients must refund amounts not spent according to the plan in the board's approved grant application.

### *School Mental Health Specialists Grant Program (§ 84)*

For the grant program to hire additional school mental health specialists, the act delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer the program from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26. It correspondingly delays by one year the requirements that the commissioner must follow in each of these fiscal years when determining grant award amounts.

The act also makes corresponding changes to reporting deadlines for the education commissioner. Under the act, the commissioner must report to the Children's and Education committees on each grant recipient's utilization rate and the grant program's return on investment beginning by January 1, 2025, rather than

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

2024, and then annually through January 1, 2027, rather than 2026. Additionally, the commissioner must develop recommendations by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026, on (1) whether the grant program should be extended further and (2) the grant award amount under the program.

Additionally, the act removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts to SDE. However, by law and unchanged by the act, recipients must refund amounts not spent according to the plan in the board's approved grant application.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-204, §§ 335 & 336, are identical to these provisions.

### § 85 — GRANT FOR DELIVERY OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

*Delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer a grant program for boards of education and youth camp and summer program operators to provide mental health services; removes the requirement that grant recipients refund unexpended grant amounts to SDE*

Prior law required SDE to administer a program to award grants in FYs 23-25 to local and regional boards of education, youth camp operators, and other summer program operators for delivering mental health services to students. It also required grant recipients to refund to the department any unspent grant amounts at the end of the fiscal year when it was awarded.

The act (1) delays by one year the dates when SDE must administer the grant program, from FYs 23-25 to FYs 24-26, and (2) removes the requirement that grant recipients refund the unexpended amounts. It correspondingly delays by one year the requirements that the commissioner must follow in each of these fiscal years when determining grant award amounts.

The act also makes corresponding changes to reporting deadlines for the education commissioner. Under the act, the commissioner must report to the Children's and Education committees on each grant recipient's utilization rate beginning by January 1, 2025, rather than 2024, and annually through January 1, 2027, rather than 2026. Additionally, the commissioner must develop recommendations by January 1, 2027, rather than 2026, on (1) whether the grant program should be extended further and (2) the grant award amount under the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### *Background — Related Act*

PA 23-204, § 337, is identical to this provision.

### § 87 — REPEALER

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

*Repeals laws containing school climate requirements for school boards and SDE that conflict with the act's provisions*

Prior law required local and regional boards of education to follow various provisions for creating a safe school climate and preventing and investigating bullying, cyberbullying, and teen dating violence. The act creates new provisions and repeals, effective July 1, 2025, laws with the following requirements for boards of education:

1. implementing a safe school climate plan and submitting it to SDE for approval and administering school climate assessments (CGS § 10-222d);
2. using bullying and teen dating violence prevention and intervention strategies (CGS § 10-222g); and
3. appointing a district safe school climate coordinator, safe school climate specialists, and safe school climate committees for the schools in their respective districts (CGS § 10-222k).

It also repeals laws containing the following requirements for SDE:

1. analyzing district efforts to prevent and respond to bullying in schools and annually reporting on this analysis to the Education and Children's committees (CGS § 10-222h),
2. disseminating grade-level-appropriate school climate assessments to all public schools (CGS § 10-222h),
3. establishing and maintaining the statewide safe school climate resource network (CGS § 10-222i), and
4. reviewing safe school climate plans submitted by boards of education for approval or rejection (CGS § 10-222p).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025