
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5180

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

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Modifies the statutory definition of “transition service”; transfers responsibility for developing and maintaining an accessible online listing of transition resources and services from SERC to SDE’s transition services coordinator; makes minor and conforming changes

BACKGROUND

SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes to education statutes related to the Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy, Goodwin University Magnet Schools, Sheff magnet schools, the Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, and transition services for students receiving special education

services.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024, except the provisions on Goodwin University Magnet Schools take effect upon passage.

§ 1 — STATE SEAL OF BILITERACY

Allows a broader range of schools to award the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diplomas

The bill expands the types of schools that are allowed to affix the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy to the high school diplomas of students who achieve a high level of proficiency in English and one or more foreign languages.

It does this by allowing the governing body of any school that awards diplomas, instead of only local and regional boards of education, to use criteria the State Board of Education sets for awarding this designation. (Presumably, this includes private schools in addition to public schools authorized under current law.) The bill also expands the definition of “foreign language” to include any language spoken by a Native American tribe, instead of only tribes that are federally recognized as under current law.

§§ 2 & 3 — GOODWIN UNIVERSITY MAGNET SCHOOLS TUITION AUTHORITY

Authorizes Goodwin University Magnet Schools (“Goodwin”) to charge tuition to boards of education whose students attend grades kindergarten to 12

The bill extends to Goodwin the same authority to charge tuition for its magnet schools, and the same conditions, as regional educational service centers (RESCs). Goodwin currently operates three magnet schools.

Under the bill, Goodwin is authorized to charge per student tuition to sending districts whose students attend grades kindergarten to 12. The tuition equals the difference between (1) the school’s average per pupil expenditure for the previous fiscal year and (2) the magnet school grant amount received, plus any revenue from other sources, calculated on a per pupil basis. By law, starting in FY 25, the tuition charged for all magnet schools is capped at 58% of the per student tuition charged for

FY 24, which the bill applies to Goodwin.

By law, RESC magnet schools that help the state meet its obligations under the *Sheff v. O'Neill* Connecticut Supreme Court desegregation decision (see BACKGROUND) may charge tuition of up to \$4,053 to parents or guardians of children attending preschool at these schools, but they are prohibited from charging tuition to any parent or guardian with a family income that is at or below 75% of the state median income. The state is required to cover the unpaid tuition for these parents, within available appropriations. The bill adds Goodwin to the group that may charge preschool tuitions and applies the same limitations.

§§ 4 & 5 — SHEFF MAGNET SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Renews until June 30, 2025, the (1) requirement that Sheff magnet schools meet the required enrollment standards and (2) commissioner's authority to assess a financial penalty on noncompliant schools; makes technical changes

The bill reinstates until June 30, 2025, the requirement that the education commissioner consider whether a *Sheff* magnet school meets the reduced-isolation standards required under *Sheff* to award grants to the school. The requirement had expired at the end of FY 21. A magnet school that does not meet the standards can still receive grants if the commissioner (1) finds that it is appropriate to award a grant for an additional year or years and (2) approves a plan to bring the school into compliance with the standards.

It also renews until June 30, 2025, the commissioner's authority to impose a financial penalty on a magnet school that does not meet the reduced-isolation standards for two or more consecutive years. Specifically, the commissioner may impose the penalty on the school's operator or, after consulting with the operator, take other appropriate steps to help the operator comply.

The bill also makes related technical changes.

§ 6 — CONNECTICUT-GROWN FOR CONNECTICUT KIDS WEEK

Requires SDE to provide technical assistance and support for schools to arrange for interactions between students and farmers, including field trips and presentations, as part of Connecticut-Grown for Connecticut Kids Week

The bill modifies State Department of Education's (SDE's) current

responsibilities regarding the Connecticut-Grown for Connecticut Kids Week. Among other things, this annual, week-long event promotes Connecticut agriculture and foods to children through school meal and classroom programs and at farms, farmers' markets, and other community locations. Current law requires SDE to arrange for interaction between students and farmers, including field trips to farms and in-school presentations by farmers. The bill instead requires SDE to provide technical assistance and support for schools to do this.

§§ 7-11 — TRANSITION SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Modifies the statutory definition of "transition service"; transfers responsibility for developing and maintaining an accessible online listing of transition resources and services from SERC to SDE's transition services coordinator; makes minor and conforming changes

Transition Service Definition (§ 7)

The bill modifies the statutory definition of "transition service" for purposes of planning and providing these services to special education students who are leaving, or about to leave, the K-12 education system.

Current law defines a transition service as a service for special education students that facilitates their transition from school to postsecondary activities such as education, training, employment, or independent living.

The bill expands the definition to include coordinated activities including, at a minimum, instruction, community experiences, employment development, and other adult living objectives for a special education student. The activities must focus on improving the student's academic and functional achievement to help them transition from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The activities must also be based on the individual student's needs, strengths, and interests.

Online Transition Resources and Services Listing (§ 9)

The bill transfers, from the State Education Resource Center (SERC)

to SDE's transition services coordinator, responsibility for developing and maintaining an easily accessible online listing of transition resources, services, and programs.

Under current law, SERC must develop and maintain the listing in collaboration with SDE, the departments of Developmental Services, Social Services, and Aging and Disability Services, and the offices of Policy and Management and Workforce Strategy.

The bill transfers this responsibility to SDE's transition services coordinator and instead requires the coordinator to collaborate with the following agencies: the departments of Developmental Services, Aging and Disability Services, Children and Families, the Labor, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, Social Services, and Correction and the Office of Early Childhood. Existing law already requires these agencies to each appoint an employee to act as a liaison with the transition services coordinator.

The bill also makes a corresponding change to require the above list of agencies that must collaborate with the SDE transition services coordinator to post a link to the online listing in an easily accessible location on their respective agency websites.

BACKGROUND

Sheff v. O'Neill State Supreme Court Decision

In this 1996 decision, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the state had a constitutional obligation to remedy the educational inequities in the Hartford schools caused by racial and ethnic isolation (238 Conn. 1 (1996)). The court ordered the state legislature and the governor to craft a solution, and legislation was passed to create voluntary desegregation in Hartford by creating interdistrict magnet schools and using programs such as Open Choice.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44 Nay 1 (03/06/2024)