

Connecticut's Response to Child Care and Education Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 Issues Conference
Office of Legislative Research

Challenges and Responses

OVERVIEW

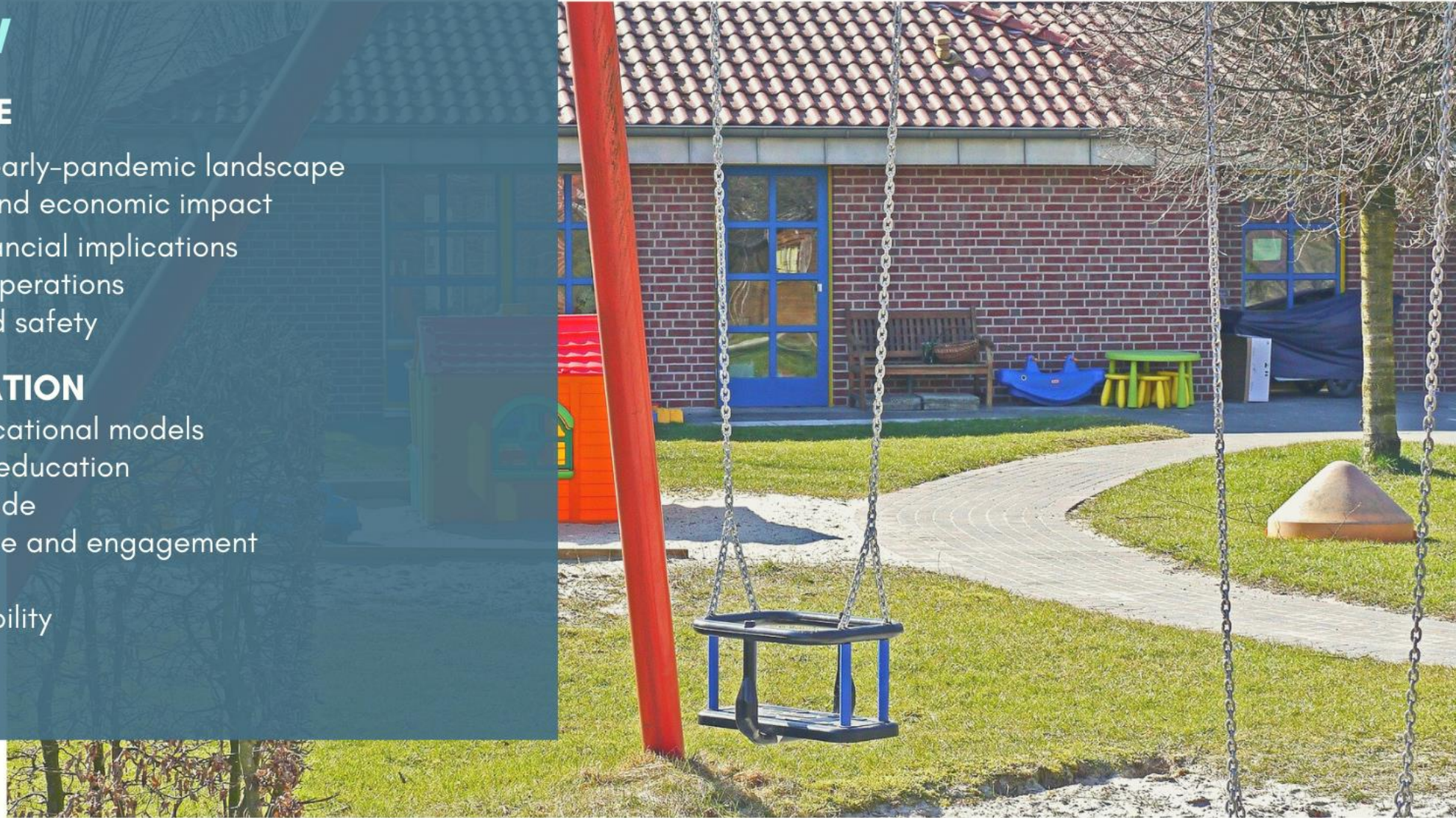
CHILD CARE

- Pre- and early-pandemic landscape
- Business and economic impact
- Family financial implications
- Program operations
- Health and safety

K-12 EDUCATION

- Local educational models
- In-person education
- Digital divide
- Attendance and engagement
- Staffing
- Accountability

FUNDING



Child Care

PANDEMIC CHALLENGES, STATE RESPONSES

Child Care: Pre-Pandemic Landscape

Prior to COVID-19, Connecticut was already short approximately 50,000 child care slots statewide.



Office of Early Childhood (OEC) commissioner Beth Bye discussed challenges facing child care providers during a May 26, 2020, panel discussion:

- Connecticut was already losing slots prior to the pandemic due to tight operating budgets
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conducted a survey about challenges facing child care providers during the pandemic

Child Care: Early-Pandemic Landscape

**Despite the state's efforts,
families were facing a
significant shortage of child
care options.**

naeyc National Association for the
Education of Young Children

A State-by-State Look at Child Care in Crisis

Understanding Early Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic

March 27, 2020

In Connecticut, of the 114 providers who responded:

- 25% say they would not survive closing for more than two weeks without significant public investment and support
- 44% have parents who cannot pay fees or co-pays
- 22% have lost income because they are paid by attendance, not enrollment
- 60% have lost income based on families' inability to pay

Child Care: Business and Economic Impact

CHALLENGE: CHILD CARE PROVIDERS
OPEN DESPITE FAMILIES LEAVING

Child care no longer needed due to job loss and health concerns

RESPONSE

OEC created economic assistance programs to help child care providers:

- CTCARES for Child Care Businesses offers subsidies, trainings, and other opportunities to help child care businesses maintain operations
- CTCARES for Family Child Care offers child care home providers additional resources to guide them during the COVID-19 pandemic



CTCARES
Child Care Businesses



CTCARES
Children and Families

Child Care: Business and Economic Impact

Care 4 Kids Program Enrollment (March-August 2020)

Month	Total Number of Children Receiving Services*
March	17,643
April	16,562
May	16,858
June	17,362
July	14,835
August	14,989

*Counts for some towns included in statewide total are suppressed

Source: Care 4 Kids Program Enrollment Reports

CHALLENGE: LOSS OF CARE 4 KIDS SUBSIDIES

Job loss or furlough as a result of COVID-19 leads to loss of CARE 4 KIDS subsidies, impacting child care enrollment numbers

RESPONSE:

The Care 4 Kids program allows job search as a temporary approved activity for families who are:

- experiencing job loss or furlough due to COVID-19 and
- up for redetermination

Child Care: Financial Implications for Family



CHALLENGE: SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN NEED CARE WHILE LEARNING REMOTELY

Working parents and guardians may require care for school-aged children who are enrolled in public or private school but not physically attending

RESPONSE:

Care 4 Kids extends program eligibility

- School-age children are eligible to receive Care 4 Kids subsidies for care during school hours if they are distance learning or hybrid learning while in care

Child Care: Program Operations

CHALLENGE: MAINTAINING ADEQUATE STAFFING

Child care centers must maintain appropriate staffing levels to ensure licensing requirements are met

RESPONSE

OEC CTCARES for Child Care Businesses

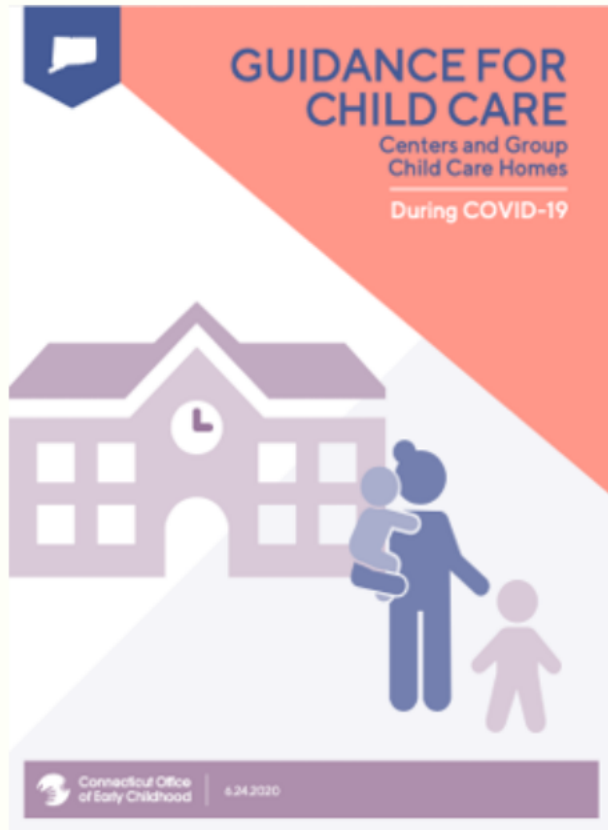
- Program training and background check subsidies

OEC Coronavirus Memo #27

- OEC will cover costs of fingerprint processing fees for all OEC-required criminal history records checks



Child Care: Health and Safety



CHALLENGE: OBTAINING PPE AND CLEANING SUPPLIES

Child care providers must intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts

RESPONSE:

OEC created:

- Comprehensive guides for child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes
- CT CARES programs include supply subsidies to cover costs of maintaining clean center environments

Child Care: Health and Safety



CHALLENGE: MAINTAINING HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Child care facilities need to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread while operating

RESPONSE:

OEC Coronavirus Memo #29:

- OEC and the State Department of Education (SDE) issued guidance for allowable group sizes and the use of face coverings in school

K-12 Education

PANDEMIC CHALLENGES, STATE RESPONSES

K-12: Local Educational Models

CHALLENGE: DISTRICTS CHOOSING EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR SCHOOL REOPENING

RESPONSES:

- SDE issued reopening school guidance and gave districts until July 24 to submit reopening plans
- Each plan must include three scenarios:
 - 1) Full in-person opening
 - 2) Hybrid of in-person and remote classes
 - 3) Completely remote learning
- SDE had numerous requirements for each plan, including that all students and staff wear face coverings while at school

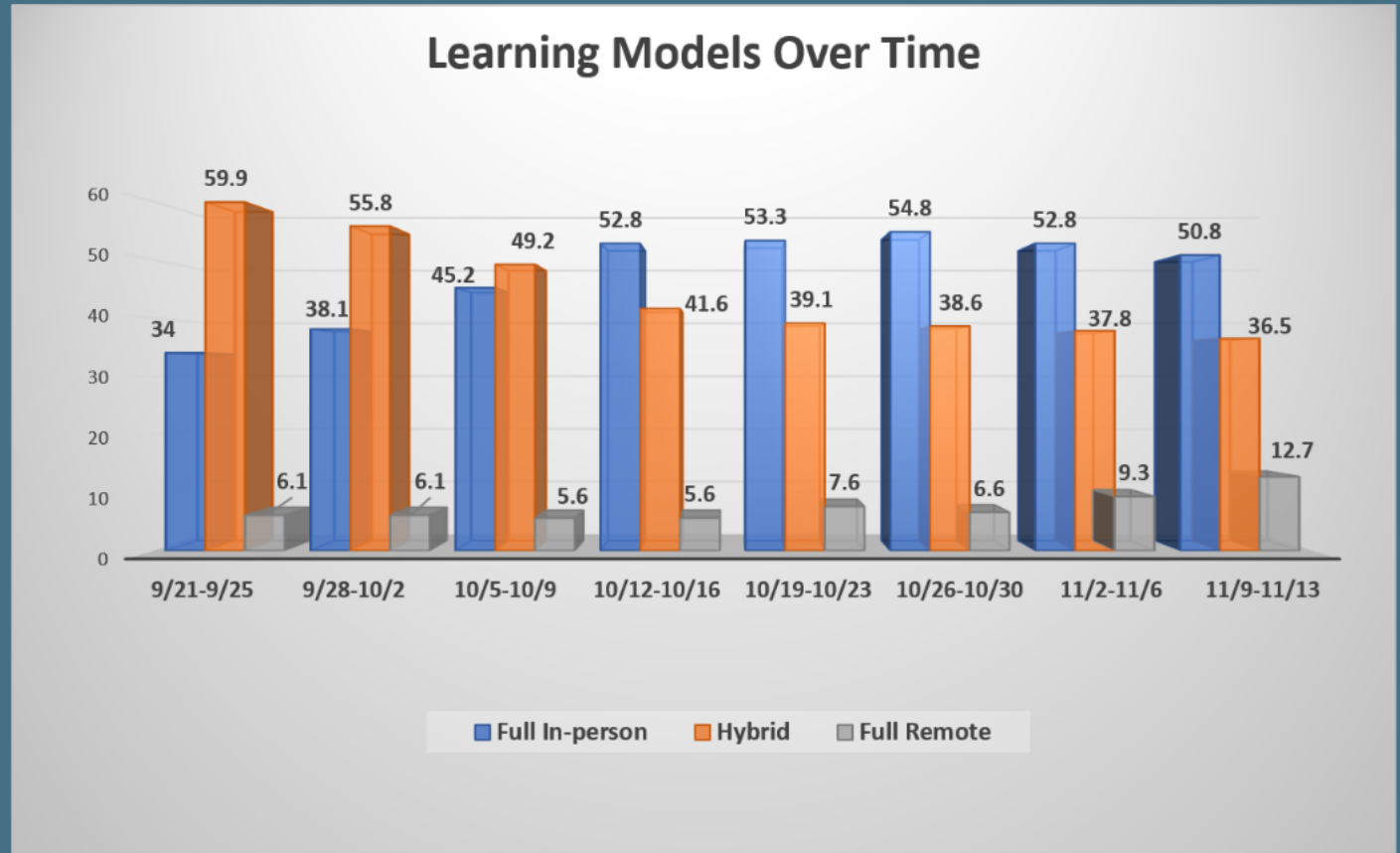


K-12: Local Educational Models

CHALLENGE: DISTRICTS
CHOOSING EDUCATIONAL
MODELS FOR SCHOOL
REOPENING

RESPONSES:

- SDE and the governor urged districts to begin the year with in-person learning, but ultimately left the decision up to local districts
- Chart collectively shows which mode districts chose and changes in the choices over time



K-12: Local Educational Models

CHALLENGE: DISTRICTS CHOOSING EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR SCHOOL REOPENING

RESPONSES:

- SDE and the Department of Public Health (DPH) provided a School Learning Model Indicators System, updated in October, to help local districts make decisions
- Leading indicator to guide in-person education decisions: The updated 14-day average of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population (see left)
- Secondary indicators: rates for 14-day average positivity, hospitalizations, and number of COVID and flu-like symptoms

Leading Indicator	MORE In-Person Learning	Re-assess strategies to determine appropriate balance of in-person and remote learning (hybrid learning)	LESS In-Person Learning
Number of new cases of COVID-19 (14-day average of new cases per 100,000 population per day)	< 10 new cases per 100,000 per day	10 to < 25 cases per 100,000 per day	25+ cases per 100,000 per day

Reduce Person-Density in School Buildings



K-12: Local Educational Models

CHALLENGE: DISTRICTS CHOOSING
EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR SCHOOL
REOPENING

RESPONSES:

- The leading indicator for in-person education recommended by DPH and SDE
- State recommends those with leading indicator in the high risk category move toward more remote learning

County	New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 Population Per Day (based on two weeks of data as of 11/14)	Leading Indicator Risk Category
Fairfield	49.3	High
Hartford	37.5	High
Litchfield	34.8	High
Middlesex	34.5	High
New Haven	43.6	High
New London	28.4	High
Tolland	24.8	Moderate
Windham	28.4	High

K-12: In-Person Education



CHALLENGE: MAKING IN-PERSON
EDUCATION SAFE

RESPONSE:

SDE requirements for school opening include:

- Face coverings for all students and staff
- School compliance with cleaning and disinfecting guidance
- Staff training in public health protocols
- Clear communication between schools and families
- Health monitoring and COVID containment plans for each district

K-12: In-Person Education

Connecticut School COVID-19 Weekly Summary (Nov. 12-18)

Source: DPH and SDE dashboard

	Total	Difference from Previous Week	% Increase from Previous Week
New Staff Cases	487	+159	49%
New Student Cases	1,146	+471	70%
Student Cases by Learning Model			
In-person	348	+117	51%
Hybrid	508	+186	58%
Remote	274	+159	138%

CHALLENGE: MAKING IN-PERSON EDUCATION SAFE

RESPONSE:

DPH and SDE launch dashboard for public reporting of COVID-19 school cases

- Includes data on every public and private school
- Updated weekly on Thursdays
- Searchable by individual school

K-12: Eliminating the Digital Divide



CHALLENGE: ENSURING STUDENTS LEARNING REMOTELY HAVE PROPER DEVICES AND RELIABLE INTERNET ACCESS

RESPONSES:

- Provide laptops and Chromebooks to students; estimated total distribution 142,000 devices
- Provide means to connect to the Internet:
 - 1) agreements with major cable providers
 - 2) 12,000 mobile Internet hotspot devices distributed to districts
 - 3) community Internet hotspots at schools, libraries, and other public locations

K-12: Student Attendance and Engagement

CHALLENGE: ADDRESSING CHRONIC
ABSENTEEISM DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

RESPONSES:

SDE guidance:

- Daily attendance tracking
- Using and calculating the State Board of Education's 1/2 day definition of "present"
- District and school attendance teams
- Tiered interventions aligned with remote learning
- Planning and Placement Team referrals
- Trauma-informed approach before declaring truancy

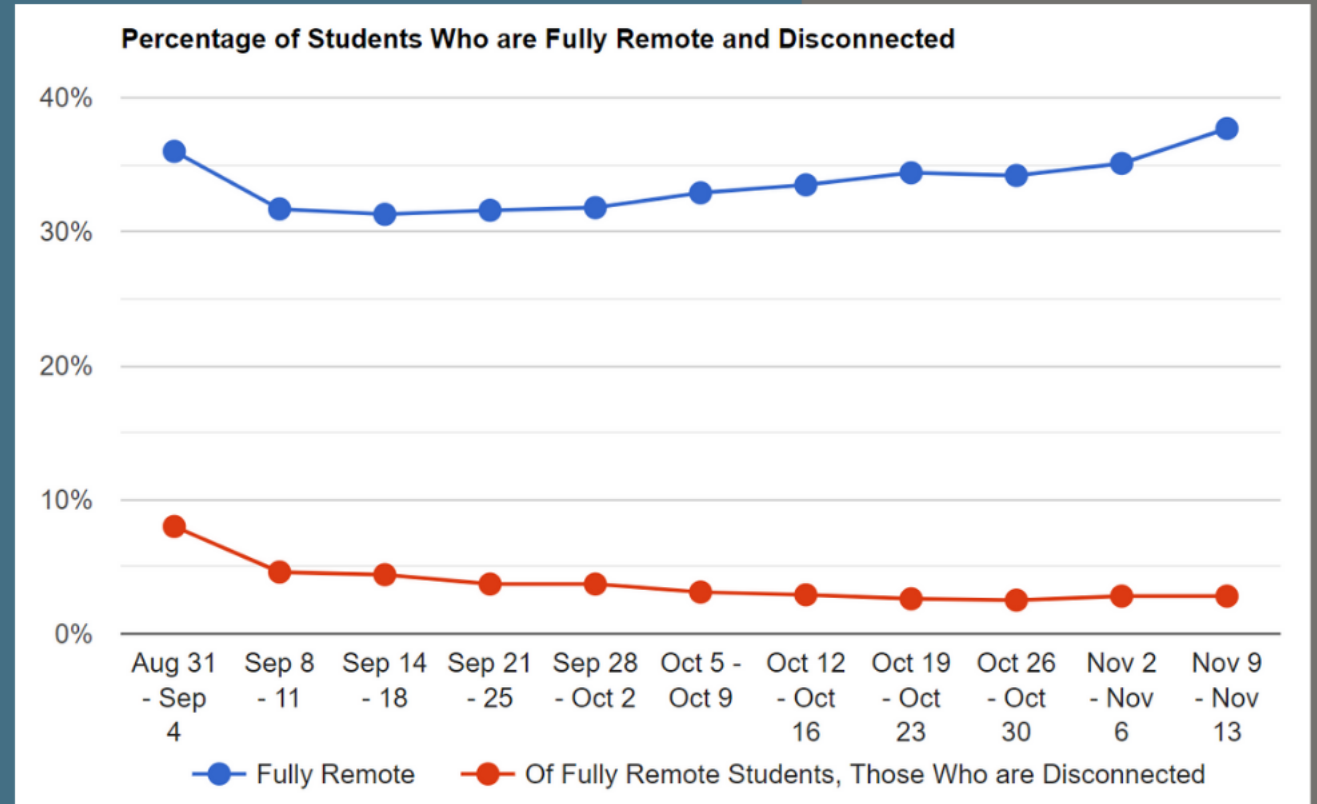


K-12: Student Attendance and Engagement

CHALLENGE: ADDRESSING CHRONIC
ABSENTEEISM DURING DISTANCE
LEARNING

RESPONSES:

- Transparent data-tracking through SDE's public EdSight data portal: "Supporting Student Participation in 2020-21"



K-12: School District Staffing



CHALLENGE: STAFF SHORTAGES

Staff shortages due to quarantines or exiting the profession

RESPONSE:

SDE guidance allows districts to consider three other hiring pools for substitute teachers:

- high school diploma, age 18 or older
- bachelor degree with 12 credits in content area
- durational shortage area permit (DSAP) holders

K-12: School District Staffing



CHALLENGE: STAFF SHORTAGES

Staff shortages due to quarantines or exiting the profession

RESPONSE:

SBE resolution on temporary certification endorsements:

1. Emergency Generalist, PK-8
2. Emergency Generalist, 7-12
3. Emergency Teacher of English Language Learners, PK-12

K-12: Student Accountability



CHALLENGE: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
STATEWIDE STANDARDIZED
ASSESSMENTS

RESPONSES:

SDE guidance:

- Recommends year-long, small-scale assessments on narrow content
- Requires end-of-year summative assessments
- Seeks federal exemption from using results for district/school accountability

K-12: Teacher Accountability

CHALLENGE: EDUCATOR EVALUATION AND
SUPPORT PLAN ADMINISTRATION

RESPONSES:

SDE guidance allows one-time flexibility for this school year:

- Student learning indicators
- In-class observation frequency/formality
- Summative rating waiver
- Improvement and remediation plans



Child Care and K-12: Funding



Office of Fiscal Analysis

November 13, 2020
Updated

FEDERAL STIMULUS FOR CONNECTICUT

CHALLENGE: MEETING THE COST OF THE RESPONSE

States need assistance to meet the cost of the pandemic response

RESPONSE:

Federal stimulus funding, as outlined by the Office of Fiscal Analysis, which includes:

- Coronavirus Relief Fund
- Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund
- Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
- Child Care and Development Block Grant



THANK YOU

JESSICA CALLAHAN
Legislative Analyst

JOHN MORAN
Principal Analyst

MARYBETH SULLIVAN
Senior Legislative Attorney