



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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**TO:** Superintendents of Schools

**FROM:** Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education *Dianna R. Wentzell*

**DATE:** August 20, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Summary of Education-Related Legislation Enacted in the 2015 Regular and Special Sessions of the Connecticut General Assembly

The Connecticut General Assembly has adjourned its 2015 Regular and Special Sessions. The State Department of Education (SDE) is hereby providing you with a comprehensive summary of the public acts passed during the regular and special sessions that appear to be of applicability and interest to school districts.

In reviewing this summary, please keep the following in mind:

1. This document does not describe every 2015 public act affecting the operation of a school district or provide every detail of the summarized acts. Since this is only a summary of new legislation, each superintendent or designated district leader should review the actual text of any act that may impact his or her district.
2. If you are viewing this document electronically, clicking the Public Act number on the index page will allow you to view the full act, clicking the title of the act will bring you to that section of this document.
3. The summaries are organized by Public Act number.
4. Following the legislation index is a summary of each enacted bill, including the effective date. In some cases where only portions of a public act relate to education, only those sections of the act have been included in this summary.

If you have any questions, please contact Laura J. Stefon, Legislative Liaison, at 860-713-6493 or [laura.stefon@ct.gov](mailto:laura.stefon@ct.gov).

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### **Public Act 15-5, An Act Concerning The School Security Grant Program**

This act extends the deadline for school security infrastructure grant applications and awards by one fiscal year, from June 30, 2015 to June 30, 2016. The grants are for developing or improving security infrastructure in schools, based on the results of school building security assessments conducted under the supervision of local law enforcement agencies. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### **Special Act 15-17, An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Life-threatening Food Allergies In Schools**

This special act establishes an 11-member task force to study life-threatening food allergies in schools. The task force is charged with examining (1) the efficacy of the implementation, dissemination and enforcement of guidelines for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease developed by the Department of Education, (2) methods used by school districts to ensure the safety of these students as they are being transported to and from school, (3) plans for the management of these students that have been implemented by local and regional boards of education to ensure their safety and inclusion as fully participating members of the school community, (4) the emotional and psychological welfare of these students as it relates to their membership in the school community and how they are included or excluded from participating in school events, and (5) how instances of isolation or targeting of these students by other students, school staff or school policy are being addressed. The Task Force is to submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and education not later than January 1, 2016. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### **Public Act 15-17, An Act Concerning A Labor And Free Market Capitalism Curriculum**

This act requires the State Board of Education (SBE), within available appropriations and using available resource materials, to assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to include in their curricula (1) labor history and law, including organized labor, the collective bargaining process, and existing legal protections in the workplace; (2) the history and economics of free-market capitalism and entrepreneurialism; and (3) the role of labor and capitalism in developing the American and world economies. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-27, An Act Concerning The Implementation Of A Comprehensive Children's Mental, Emotional And Behavioral Health Plan**

This act establishes a 34-member Children's Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board. The board is charged with (1) advising on the execution of the comprehensive behavioral health plan that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) developed, (2) cataloging the mental, emotional, and behavioral services for Connecticut families with children to reflect capacity and utilization of services, (3) adopting standard definitions and measurements for the services delivered, when applicable, and (4) fostering collaboration among agencies, providers, advocates, and others interested in Connecticut child and family well-being to prevent or reduce the long-term negative impact of children's mental, emotional, and behavioral health issues. The Board is also charged with submitting a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance on matters relating to children by September 15, 2016, and annually thereafter detailing the status of execution of the implementation plan, level of collaboration among agencies and stakeholders,

recommendations for improvement of the plan and additional information it deems relevant. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-45, An Act Establishing A Home Visitation Program Consortium**

This act establishes a Home Visitation Program Consortium of up to 25 members to advise the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and the State Department of Education (SDE) on implementing OEC's recommendations to coordinate home visitation programs within the early childhood system. The Consortium is also charged with submitting a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having cognizance over matters relating to children, on the status of the implementation of the recommendations for the coordination of home visitation programs and related matters. The act also makes technical changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

#### **Public Act 15-59, An Act Concerning School-Based Health Centers**

This act establishes a statutory definition for a "school-based health center" (SBHC) and permits the Department of Public Health (DPH) to adopt regulations to establish minimum quality standards for these centers. The act prohibits anyone from using (1) the term SBHC to describe a facility or (2) any words or abbreviations that may be reasonably confused with this term, unless the facility meets the act's definition. Additionally, it establishes a statutory definition for an "expanded school health site" and extends to these sites certain statutory provisions regarding SBHCs. The bill also makes technical changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-94, An Act Concerning The Inclusion Of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training, The Safe Use Of Social Media And Computer Programming Instruction In The Public School Curriculum**

This act requires public schools to add the following subject areas to their curriculum beginning in the 2016-17 school year: (1) as part of the health and safety curriculum, (a) cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and (b) instruction on the safe use of social media, such as uploaded or downloaded videos or still photographs, blogs, video blogs, podcasts, instant messaging, and other electronic user-generated content and (2) computer programming instruction. The act requires that the CPR instruction in public schools be based on American Heart Association guidelines for emergency cardiovascular care, including hands-on training in CPR. It also allows local or regional boards of education to accept gifts, grants, and donations (including in-kind donations) to purchase equipment or material needed to provide CPR instruction in public schools. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2016, except the provision about gifts, grants, and donations takes effect July 1, 2015.

#### **Public Act 15-96, An Act Concerning Out-Of-School Suspensions And Expulsions For Students In Preschool And Grades Kindergarten To Two**

This act, with certain exceptions, prohibits local or regional boards of education from imposing out-of-school suspensions and expulsions on students in grades preschool through two. The exceptions are: (1) out-of-school suspensions may be imposed for local and regional board of education preschool through grade two students whose conduct is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers others, (2) expulsions may be imposed for local and regional board of education kindergarten through grade two students who (a) possess firearms or certain other weapons or (b) sell or distribute controlled substances, and (3)

expulsions may be imposed for preschool students who possess a firearm on or off school grounds or at a preschool program-sponsored event.

The act requires school-based primary mental health programs administered by local and regional boards of education to include a component for systematic early detection and screening to identify children experiencing behavioral or disciplinary problems. It also requires the (1) programs to include services to address those problems, and (2) education commissioner to consider, as an additional factor when awarding school-based primary mental health program grants to local or regional boards of education, the number of children enrolled in grades kindergarten to two who experience behavioral, disciplinary, or early school adjustment problems. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-97, An Act Concerning Students With Dyslexia**

This act requires: (1) the SDE to designate an employee to provide intervention and assistance to parents and boards of education relating to the detection and recognition of, and evidenced-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia, and (2) teacher preparation programs and in-service training programs to include training and instructions on these topics. The act also extends by two years, from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2016, the deadline for SDE to develop or approve reading assessments to identify students who are below proficiency in reading. It also extends, from February 1, 2013 to February 1, 2016, the deadline for the commissioner to submit the assessments to the Education Committee. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-99, An Act Concerning The Minimum Budget Requirement**

This act extends, for fiscal years 2016 and 2017, the minimum budget requirement (MBR) for local education spending and provides towns a greater ability to lower their MBR. It affords towns greater ability to lower their MBR by (1) increasing the per-student reduction allowed for decreased enrollment, (2) raising the overall cap on how much a town can reduce its MBR, and (3) removing the limit on how many ways a town can qualify for MBR flexibility. For reductions based on declining enrollment, the act creates a two-tiered mechanism that depends upon the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) under the federal school lunch law. The act completely repeals the MBR for school districts that have district performance index (DPI) scores in the top 10 percent of all districts in the state and prohibits the alliance districts from reducing their MBR. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-108, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements For Shortage Areas, Interstate Agreements For Teacher Certification Reciprocity, Minority Teacher Recruitment And Retention And Cultural Competency Instruction**

This act decreases, from three to two years, the number of years of teaching experience an out-of-state teacher needs to be exempt from completing the beginning educator program, upon a showing of effectiveness of a teacher. It also: (1) allows applicants in the certification endorsement areas corresponding to teacher shortage areas, to receive 90-day temporary teacher certificates when certain conditions are met, (2) requires the SDE to establish or join interstate agreements to facilitate certification of qualified out-of-state teachers, (3) creates an 11-member minority teacher recruitment, preparation and retention task force and requires it to submit its report and recommendations to the Education Committee by February 1, 2016, (4) requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to issue an annual demographics report on candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs, (5) adds training

in cultural competency to the teacher preparation and in-service training laws, and (6) makes minor, technical, and conforming changes to teacher certification law. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015, except the minority teacher recruitment task force section is effective upon passage.

### **Public Act 15-133, An Act Concerning Alternative Education**

This act defines the term “alternative education” as a school or program maintained and operated by a local or regional board of education offered to students in a nontraditional setting that addresses their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs. It replaces references to “alternative programs,” “alternative school programs,” and “alternative high school” in statute that are currently undefined.

The act also allows local and regional boards of education to provide alternative education to students using space in an existing school or by establishing a new school specifically for alternative education.

It also makes the following changes: (1) assigns new duties to local and regional boards of education, the SDE, and the State Board of Education (SBE) relating to alternative education and (2) allows two or more boards of education to form cooperative arrangements to provide alternative education. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-134, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators And Initiatives**

This act makes a number of changes in various early childhood education statutes. It requires: (1) the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to (a) collect and publicly post data for a trend analysis of regionally accredited bachelor's degree programs in early childhood education or child development, (b) review analysis results when considering for approval bachelors' degrees that lack state or regional accreditation, and (c) make school readiness staff qualification findings based upon trend analysis results, (2) local or regional boards of education and regional education service centers operating preschool magnet programs, as well as state or local charter school governing councils offering preschool programs, to obtain National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program accreditation beginning in the 2017-18 school year, (3) OEC to develop a plan to help early childhood education program providers implement staff qualification requirements already in statute and submit the plan to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016, (4) OEC to report to the Education Committee, by July 1 annually, on the status of school readiness program providers' compliance with staff qualification requirements, (5) local and regional boards of education to include OEC's preschool experience survey in its kindergarten registration materials, and (6) “grandfathering” certain school readiness staff into stricter staff qualifications until June 30, 2025.

The act also (1) extends by two years, from July 1, 2015 to 2017, the deadline by which certain school readiness staff must meet the first phase of heightened staff qualifications and (2) allows OEC to provide funding, within available appropriations, to local and regional early childhood councils for local implementation of early care and education and child development programs. It also makes various technical and conforming changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015, except the provisions (1) on OEC's plan to help early childhood program providers meet new staff qualifications, (2) postponing stricter school readiness staff qualifications, and (3) grandfathering school readiness staff are effective upon passage.

### **Public Act 15-137, An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Achievement Gap Task Force Concerning The Creation Of A Director Of Reading Initiatives At The Department Of Education**

This act creates a director of reading initiatives position in the SDE to: (1) administer the intensive reading instruction program to (a) improve literacy in grades kindergarten through three and (b) close the achievement gap, (2) assist with the development and administration of a teacher and principal professional development program about scientifically-based reading research and instruction, (3) administer the coordinated statewide reading plan for students in grades kindergarten through three, (4) administer the reading incentive program, (5) assist local and regional boards of education in (a) administering reading assessments and (b) implementing school district reading plans, (6) provide information on and assistance with reading and literacy to parents and guardians, (7) address English language learner reading and literacy issues, and (8) develop and administer any other statewide reading and literacy initiatives for grades kindergarten through 12. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-138, An Act Concerning Financial Literacy Education**

This act adds topics that must be included in any financial literacy instruction plan that the SDE, Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), and UConn Board of Trustees (BOT) develop in consultation with the Banking Department. By law, any such plan must include instruction on the use of credit and debit cards. The act adds instruction in banking, investing, saving, and handling of personal finance. By law, the State Board of Education, within available appropriations and using available material, must assist and encourage school districts to provide courses in personal financial management. Under the act, personal financial management courses must include any financial literacy instruction plan SDE, BOR, and UConn BOT develop. EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-141, An Act Concerning Seclusion And Restraint In Schools**

This act explicitly extends laws on restraint and seclusion to most public school students in grades Kindergarten through 12. Currently, these laws apply predominantly to students receiving special education services.

This act prohibits teachers, administrators, and other public school employees from using life-threatening physical restraints on any student, limits how long students can be kept in allowable physical restraints or seclusion, and specifies the types of locations in which a student may be secluded.

This act bars school employees from using physical restraints on students or placing students in seclusion, unless the employees have been properly trained, and requires school boards to provide this training. School boards are required to develop policies and procedures to establish monitoring and internal reporting of the use of physical restraints and seclusion. It requires training for school professionals, paraprofessionals, and administrators to be phased in over three years, beginning with the July 1, 2015 school year. It requires school boards to notify parents and guardians no later than 24 hours after a child has been placed in physical restraint or in seclusion, and to make a reasonable effort to notify them immediately after beginning the physical restraint or seclusion. It requires school boards to take certain steps for students placed in physical restraint or seclusion four or more times in 20 school days. This act also limits when school employees may administer certain medication to students.



Among other things, the bill also (1) requires school boards to identify, by July 1, 2015, the same date the bill takes effect, crisis intervention teams to respond to incidents of physical restraint or seclusion, (2) adds reporting requirements, (3) requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt or revise regulations on the use of physical restraint and seclusion, and (4) makes conforming changes.

The bill does not limit the justified use of physical force by local, state, or federal law enforcement officials performing their duties. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-143, An Act Concerning The Legislative Commissioners' Recommendations For Technical Revisions To The Education And Early Childhood Statutes**

This act makes numerous technical and grammatical changes to (1) education statutes governing the State Education Resource Center, magnet school operation grants, and safe school climate plans, and (2) early childhood statutes governing local school readiness councils, child care providers, the Office of Early Childhood, child abuse protection, and the early childhood information system. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

#### **Public Act 15-157, An Act Concerning Developmental Screenings For Children**

This act requires a health care provider, when completing the state's (1) early childhood health assessment record form or (2) public school health assessment form for a child age five or younger, to indicate on the form whether he or she performed a developmental screening during the related examination. Under the act, a developmental screening is one that uses a method recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to identify concerns with a child's physical and mental development, including the child's sensory, behavioral, motor, language, social, perceptual, or emotional skills. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **Public Act 15-168, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards Of Education And School Resource Officers And The Collection And Reporting Of Data On School-Based Arrests**

This act requires a local or regional school board that assigns a sworn police officer to a school (i.e., school resource officer) to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local police department or the Division of State Police that defines the officer's role and responsibilities. The MOU must address daily interactions among students, school personnel, and police officers, and can include a graduated response model for student discipline. By law, each local and regional school board must submit to the education commissioner an annual strategic school profile (SSP) with certain required data (e.g., student performance and school resources) for each of its schools and the district as a whole. The act adds to this requirement data on (1) in-school and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, and (2) school-based arrests.

As a separate reporting requirement, the SDE must disaggregate the new data the act requires by school, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, English language learner (ELL) status, free and reduced price lunch eligibility, offense type, and the number of arrests at each school. By law, an ELL is a student that a local or regional board of education reports to SDE as an ELL student. SDE must report annually to the SBE on the disaggregation of the data and make the report available to the public on the department website. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015 **\*\*The education implementer bill removed the reference to the State Police and amended this act to require the above referenced MOU to include a**

**graduated response model for student discipline. Public Act 15-168 previously provided that the inclusion of this information was discretionary, rather than mandatory.**

**Public Act 15-177, An Act Requiring The Commissioner Of Education To Develop And Submit A Comprehensive State-Wide Interdistrict Magnet School Plan**

This act sets a new deadline by which the education commissioner must develop and submit to the Education Committee a comprehensive statewide plan for interdistrict magnet schools, from January 1, 2011 to October 1, 2016. By law, and unchanged by the act, the commissioner cannot accept applications to establish new magnet schools outside the *Sheff* region until this plan is developed. Applications for new magnet schools within the *Sheff* region are not subject to this moratorium. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

**Public Act 15-189, An Act Concerning The Development Of A Rolling Three-Year Capital Improvement And Capital Equipment Plan For The Technical High School System**

This act requires the SBE to maintain a three-year, rather than five-year, rolling capital improvement and capital equipment plan for the state's technical high school system. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

**Public Act 15-205, An Act Protecting School Children**

This act increases, from a class A misdemeanor to a class E felony, the penalty for a mandated reporter who fails to report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), if the (1) violation is a subsequent violation, (2) violation is willful, intentional, or due to gross negligence, or (3) mandated reporter had actual knowledge of a sexual assault of a student by a school employee or actual knowledge of the abuse or neglect of a child. The act expands the reporting requirement for school employees and subjects violators to the penalties described above. The act requires school employees to report to DCF the suspected sexual assault of any student who is not enrolled in adult education - - regardless of the student's age. It also establishes a non-exhaustive set of factors on which a mandated reporter may base his or her suspicion. Under the act, it is a class D felony for anyone, other than a child or a student who is not enrolled in adult education, to intentionally and unreasonably interfere with or prevent such reporting or conspire or attempt to do so.

By law, (1) DCF must make available educational and refresher training for all mandated reporters of abuse and neglect, and (2) school employees must participate in the training course when hired and the refresher training every three years. Under the act, the principal for each school under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education must annually certify to the superintendent that school employees complete such training and the superintendent must certify compliance to the SBE.

The act extends DCF's investigation and notification requirements under existing law in reported child abuse or neglect cases to include cases of reported sexual assault of students by school employees. It requires each local or regional board to (1) update its written policy, by February 1, 2016, to include the new school employee reporting requirements, and (2) establish a confidential rapid response team, by January 1, 2016, to coordinate with DCF to ensure prompt reporting and provide immediate access to information and individuals in connection with a DCF investigation. It also prohibits boards from hiring any person whose employment was previously terminated by a board, or who resigned from such employment, if the individual has been convicted of a violation of the mandatory reporting laws - -

whether or not an allegation of abuse or neglect or sexual assault has been substantiated. In addition, under the act boards may not employ a person who was terminated, or who resigned following a suspension, if the person was convicted of a crime involving an act of child abuse, neglect or sexual assault against a student. EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015; however, a provision on DCF's training program (§ 1); provisions on rapid response teams (§ 9); rehiring prohibitions (§ 10); and SBE's certification, authorization, and permit practices (§§ 12 & 13) are effective July 1, 2015.

### **Public Act 15-209, An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Program Review And Investigations Committee Concerning Transitional Services For Youth And Young Adults With Autism Spectrum Disorder**

This act requires the SBE, by July 1, 2015, to draft a bill of rights for parents of children receiving special education services to guarantee that the rights of these students and their parents are protected when receiving these and related services.

The act requires the SDE, starting with the 2015-16 school year, to annually distribute the bill of rights to local and regional boards of education. The bill of rights must be provided to parents at planning and placement team (PPT) meetings for special education students in Grades 6 through 12.

The act also requires the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) commissioner, in consultation with the developmental services (DDS), SDE, labor, and mental health and addiction services commissioners, or their designees, to develop a proposed definition for "competitive employment" for each agency to use in relation to state matters. By February 1, 2016, the DRS Commissioner must report on the proposed definition to the Education, Human Services, Labor, and Public Health committees of the General Assembly. The act also requires DDS, by February 1, 2016, to begin reporting annually to the Public Health Committee on the activities of the department's Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services and Advisory Council. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-215, An Act Concerning Various Revisions And Additions To The Education Statutes**

This act makes numerous changes to the education statutes, including: (1) granting agricultural science and technology education center internship providers civil liability immunity from students and their parents or guardians for student interns' personal injuries, except in the limited circumstances specified in the law (§ 10); (2) specifying that the required union representation on a school district's professional development and evaluation committee include at least one representative from each of the teachers' and administrators' unions (§ 11); and (3) requiring the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) board, rather than the SBE, to (a) adopt its long-range plan and biennial report and (b) maintain a rolling capital improvements plan (§§ 14 & 15).

It also makes a number of minor changes to the education statutes including: (1) changing the title of "special master" for a district under state supervision and control to "district improvement officer" (§§ 1-3); (2) decreasing the number of required hearing, vision, and postural screenings for public school students and adding new parental notice requirements for these screenings (§ 4); (3) indemnifying teacher mentors and reviewers against lawsuits (§ 5); (4) allowing the SDE to use a nationally recognized exam as part of a program that allows boards of education to permit high school students to substitute certain evidence of academic achievement for existing high school graduation requirements (§ 7); (5) specifying that agricultural science center equipment and facilities purchased with certain state grants

must be used exclusively for such centers, for the expansion or improvement of existing facilities or for the replacement or improvement of equipment therein (§ 8); (6) requiring parents to notify a student's home district when the student will enroll in or has been placed on the waiting list for an interdistrict magnet school (§ 9); (7) adding additional criteria that SDE must consider for proposed administrator alternative route to certification (ARC) programs (§ 12); (8) requiring SDE, through local and regional school districts, to provide information about how to qualify for the supplemental assistance nutrition program (SNAP) to the parents and guardians of public school students (§ 13); (9) requiring boards of education to prescribe rules for internet access and content at school media library centers (§ 17); (10) allowing a board of education that cannot find a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) -certified teacher to employ a person enrolled in an armed forces JROTC instructor program to teach the JROTC program at a public school; (11) changing the minimum budget requirement, calculation for net expenses, and teacher tenure law requirements for newly formed regional school districts; and (12) creating new requirements for the selection and training of school employees who administer anti-epileptic medications to students in schools. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015, except for the provisions regarding indemnity, teacher tenure, and appointments to the administrator standards council, which are effective on passage.

### **Public Act 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism**

This act requires local and regional boards of education to monitor and address absenteeism rates in schools. Specifically, it requires boards of education to: (1) establish attendance review teams for their school district or individual schools when chronic absenteeism rates reach a certain percentage, and (2) annually report to the education commissioner the number of truant and chronically absent students for each school and the entire district.

The act also requires the SDE, along with the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap, to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by January 1, 2016 for local and regional school boards to use.

Finally, the act expands the children's probate court truancy clinics that currently are pilot programs limited to the Waterbury and New Haven probate courts. The bill instead allows the probate court administrator to establish truancy clinics without pilot limitations within probate courts serving towns designated as alliance districts.

The act makes several minor, conforming, and technical changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-232, An Act Concerning Trauma-Informed Practice Training For Teachers, Administrators And Pupil Personnel**

By law, local and regional boards of education must provide in-service training on certain topics (e.g., CPR, bullying prevention) for certified teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel (i.e., school employees). The SBE, within available appropriations and using available materials, must assist and encourage the school boards to provide in-service training on additional topics (e.g., mental health first aid training).

This act requires SBE to assist and encourage school boards to also include training on trauma-informed practices for the school setting, so that school employees can more adequately respond to students

with mental, emotional, or behavioral health needs. The bill does not define “trauma-informed practice.” EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-237, An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements**

This act delays, by one year, implementation of the scheduled changes to the state's school requirements that (1) increase the minimum number of credits, from 20 to 25, required for high school graduation; (2) require students to pass state examinations in certain courses and complete a senior project in order to graduate; and (3) require school districts to offer students support and alternative ways to meet the new graduation requirements. These requirements are set in statute and are currently set to apply to the 2020 graduating class (the current seventh grade class). Under the act, they apply to the 2021 graduating class (the current sixth grade class).

The act also creates a nine-member task force to study (1) the alignment of the high school graduation requirement changes with the Common Core State Standards adopted by the SBE, and (2) the feasibility of adding training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as a high school graduation requirement.

The act also requires SBE to grant a student a community service recognition award if he or she satisfactorily completes at least 50 hours of community service and meets statutory criteria to earn one-half credit toward graduation. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015, except the task force is effective upon passage. \*\*This act was modified in the implementer and now requires the task force to study the feasibility of substituting a student's participation in interscholastic athletics for the physical education credit in order to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.

### **Public Act 15-238, An Act Concerning Students Assessments**

By law, public school students in certain grades must take mastery exams designed to measure grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing, math, and science. Currently, high school students must take the exams in 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The act eliminates the option of students taking the reading, writing, and math exams in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and instead requires they be taken in 11<sup>th</sup>. The SBE must approve and pay for the exams which must be nationally-recognized college readiness assessments that measure essential and grade-appropriate skills. The act eliminates the option that the science exam be given in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and instead requires students take this exam in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (P.L. 107-110) allows the high school exams to be given between grades 10 and 12. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Passage and applicable on and after the effective date of an agreement between SBE and a provider of a nationally recognized college readiness 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessment.

The act also requires SBE, by January 1, 2016, to enter into an agreement with a provider of a nationally recognized college readiness assessment to provide and administer the 11th grade exam in Connecticut if certain conditions are met, including federal approval. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

The act establishes the Mastery Examination Committee within the SDE and specifies its membership and mission. The committee must study various aspects of Connecticut's mastery test system and make the following reports to the Education Committee: (1) an interim report by February 15, 2016, and (2) a final report with recommendations by January 15, 2017. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon Passage.

## PA 15-239, An Act Concerning Charter Schools

This bill makes the following changes to the laws governing state and local charter schools:

- redesigns SBE's and the legislature's roles in the charter school application approval process, providing that the SBE may grant an initial certificate of approval for charters and such initial certificate is then submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly (§ 2);
- narrows the definition of "charter management organization" (CMO) in current law to mean a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, rather than any entity (§ 1);
- defines "charter," which is undefined in current law, as a contract between the governing council of a charter school and the SBE that establishes the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations of each party to the contract (§ 1);
- expands SBE's duties in the charter renewal process (§ 2);
- adds SBE-developed academic and organizational performance goals to initial certificates and charters granted to charter schools (§ 2);
- requires each charter school governing council's annual report to the education commissioner to describe the school's progress in meeting the academic and organizational goals set forth in its charter (§ 3);
- requires the education commissioner to monitor the auditor that she selects to randomly audit one state charter school each year, and requires the auditor to be independent (§ 4);
- requires, beginning October 1, 2015, each charter school governing council member to complete training about governing council responsibilities and best practices at least once during the charter's term (§ 5);
- requires, beginning October 1, 2015, each charter school governing council to adopt anti-nepotism and conflict of interest policies aligned with state law and nonprofit corporate governance best practices (§ 5);
- requires each CMO, or governing council in the absence of a CMO, to annually submit to the education commissioner a (a) certified audit statement of revenues from public and private sources and expenditures, and (b) complete copy of its most recent Internal Revenue Service Form 990, with all its parts and schedules (§ 6);
- requires the education commissioner to post online (a) any reports, certified audit statements, or forms that CMOs or governing councils submitted to SDE within 30 days of receipt, and (b) the names of any CMOs or governing councils that failed to submit these documents within 30 days of failure of receipt (§ 7);

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- requires, beginning July 1, 2015, various individuals who manage and work in charter schools to submit to several types of background checks (§ 8);
- establishes a process that governing councils must follow if they wish to make a material change in the charter school's operations (§ 9); and
- limits the type of contract a governing council may enter into with a CMO to one for whole school management services, and establishes new guidelines for the establishment of these contracts (§ 10).

The bill also makes various conforming and technical changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **Public Act 15-243, An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficacy**

This act delays, from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016, the requirement that all teacher preparation programs in the state place their students in four semesters of field work or clinical or student teaching classroom experience. The act also requires that the students gain this experience at (1) a school in a school district in one of the five highest school district reference groups (DRG) (nine groups of districts based on factors such as family income and parental occupation and education), and (2) a school in a district in one of the four lowest DRGs.

The act also requires the SDE, beginning July 1, 2015, to annually report on the quality of in-state teacher preparation programs to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015, except the teacher preparation quality report provision is effective upon passage

### **June Special Session**

### **Public Act 15-5, An Act Implementing Provisions Of The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, Concerning General Government, Education, Health And Human Services And Bonds Of The State**

This act contains over 500 sections that deal with a variety of topics. Included below is a summary of education-related portions of the act that may be of interest to Superintendents. It does not include a summary of every section of the bill, please refer to the act itself for additional information.

### **§§ 264-285 — Duties Related To Special Education – MORE Commission Bill**

These sections create various duties relating to special education and assigns them to the SDE, the education commissioner, the Department of Social Services (DSS), regional educational service centers (RESCs), the SBE, the Auditors of Public Accounts, the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and local and regional boards of education.

It requires SDE to:

- report annually to the Education Committee, beginning FY 16, on the amount of federal funds received under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (§ 264);
- purchase digitized Individualized Education Program (IEP) form software to create, submit, and share digital copies of students' IEPs and provide the software at no cost to local and regional boards of education and the technical high school system, or, if such purchase is not possible, conduct a study of the feasibility of the Department creating and administering its own digitized IEP form (§§ 269-270);
- distribute upon request complete and accurate information about special education programs and services offered by the state, local and regional boards of education, RESCs, and other providers to organizations representing or providing services to parents and guardians of children requiring special education services, unless they are prohibited from doing so by state or federal law (§ 272); and
- have a memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with various state agencies regarding the provision of special education, health care, and transition services to be updated/renewed at least every 5 years (§ 282).

It requires the education commissioner to design a new, user-friendly IEP form with the help of a new IEP Advisory Council and submit the new IEP form to the Education Committee by January 1, 2017 (§§ 267-268).

It requires DSS to conduct a study of the feasibility of compiling an annual report on the amount of federal Medicaid funds it received for special education services and submit findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 (§ 265).

It requires each of the six RESCs to:

- participate in a special education funding working group to survey special education funding and expenditures and report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by July 1, 2016 (§ 274);
- develop, in consultation with SDE, their own regional model for providing special education transportation, training, and therapeutic services and submit their models to the Education Committee by October 1, 2016 (§ 275);
- survey, in consultation with SDE, the special education services and programs provided in their respective regions to identify the need for enhanced or new services by July 1, 2016 (§ 284); and
- study the feasibility of providing and administering new special education services and programs that are of equal or greater quality than those currently provided in their respective regions by local or regional boards of education or private providers and submit their findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by October 1, 2016 (§ 285).

It requires the SERC to:



- conduct a study of assistive technology (AT) equipment sharing programs in Connecticut and submit its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2016 to the Education Committee (§ 271);
- create a calendar of legitimate special education learning and training opportunities for the public that it receives from advocacy groups, boards of education, RESCs, or other providers (§ 273); and
- conduct a study on the collection, assimilation, and reporting of longitudinal student data related to special education outcomes and submit its findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2016 (§ 283).

The act also:

- requires SBE to collaborate with other state agencies on special education transition services for students who are graduating from, or aging out of, the public school system (§ 266);
- requires the Auditors of Public Accounts to examine the records and accounts of private providers of special education services at least once in a 7 year period (§ 278-281);
- expands special education coursework requirements for teacher certification, beginning July 1, 2016 (§ 276); and
- clarifies and expands parents' and guardians' rights during special education Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings at which their child's IEP is developed, reviewed, or revised (§ 277).

### **§§ 286-298 — Bilingual Education And English Language Learners**

These sections establish a process under which, if certain criteria are met, a student may receive more than the current maximum of 30 months of bilingual education.

Under current law, each local or regional board of education must limit the time an eligible student spends in a bilingual education program to 30 months (three school years). Under the act, an eligible student may spend up to an additional 30 months in a bilingual education program if (1) the board of education responsible for educating the student asks the SDE for an extension and the SDE grants such a request using standards the bill requires SDE to develop, or (2) SDE determines, without a request from a local board, that an extension is necessary using the same standards.

By law, an eligible student is a public school student whose (1) dominant language is not English and (2) proficiency in English is not sufficient to assure equal educational opportunity in the regular school program (CGS § 10-17e).

The act also makes other changes in the laws regarding bilingual education and English language learners (ELL), including requiring:

- boards of education to apply to the education commissioner for permission to use a certified teacher of English as a second language if the board does not have a sufficient number of certified bilingual education teachers for the school year (§286);
- SDE to establish an ELL pilot program for certain school districts with high percentages of ELL students for 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years (§294);
- SDE to develop state mastery examinations in the most common native languages of students eligible for bilingual education. Beginning July 1, 2015, mastery examination scores of ELL students enrolled in school less than 20 months will be excluded from school and district performance indexes (§295);
- each of the state’s RESCs to survey ELL and bilingual education programs provided in the region serviced by the RESC for the purpose of identifying the need for enhanced or new ELL services and bilingual education programs provided by the RESCs (§297);
- each of the state's RESCs to study the feasibility of the RESC providing and administering new ELL services and bilingual education programs at least equal to those the local or regional boards of education provide (§298); and
- SDE to monitor and annually report on the academic progress of students in bilingual education programs (§293). EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

**§ 299 — High School Graduation Requirements Task Force**

This section adds an additional duty to the high school graduation requirements task force created by Public Act 15-237. It requires the task force to study the feasibility of substituting a student’s participation in interscholastic athletics for the physical education credit in order to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.

Under Public Act 15-237, the task force must also study (1) the alignment of the high school graduation requirement changes with the Common Core State Standards, and (2) the feasibility of adding training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation as a high school graduation requirement. Its report is due to the Education Committee on January 1, 2016. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 301 — School Districts Of Innovation**

This section creates a process by which local and regional boards of education may obtain waivers from state statutory and regulatory requirements in exchange for demonstrating innovative ideas in place of the requirements (i.e., “innovation waivers”).

The act requires the education commissioner to establish a process, by September 15, 2015, to invite innovation waiver requests from local and regional boards of education for waivers of statutory provisions in Title 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes or related agency regulations under Title 10 for

purposes of stimulating innovation. The Act prohibits waiving any federal law requirements and certain state statutes. The commissioner determines the form and manner by which boards must make their requests.

The Act also instructs the commissioner and SBE to review waiver requests and recommend whether the General Assembly should approve them. Waivers are valid for up to two years, and no more than 20 waivers or one-time waiver renewals may be in effect simultaneously.

The act establishes guidelines for the process of granting and approving innovation waivers and requires participating boards of education and the education commissioner to produce progress reports on the success of the waivers and offer recommendations for legislation based upon their success. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **§§ 338 & 339 – Bilingual Teacher Certification**

#### ***Temporary Certification***

These sections make several changes to the bilingual teacher certification and the international teacher permit laws, making it easier for applicants to obtain these credentials.

By law, SBE may grant one-year nonrenewable temporary certifications to applicants if they meet certain requirements (e.g., are certified to teach in another state and completed a year of successful teaching in that state in the year immediately preceding the application). Under the Act, the SBE can extend a certificate in the bilingual education endorsement area an additional two years if the applicant is employed by a local or regional board of education and teaching in a bilingual education program.

#### ***Certification***

Under the Act, an applicant for a bilingual teacher certification can qualify for certification without passing an oral competency test for English, but must demonstrate oral and written competency in the language of instruction. The Act requires showing oral competency in the non-English language by an appropriate method specified by SDE. By law and unchanged by the bill, applicants must pass a (1) written competency English test, and (2) written competency test in the other language.

Under current law, successful applicants must meet certification and subject-area endorsement requirements. The Act reduces the certification requirements and, instead, requires that applicants meet only endorsement area requirements. Specifically, the Act allows SBE to issue an endorsement in bilingual education to an applicant who has: (1) completed coursework requirements in (a) elementary education and bilingual education or (b) for secondary level education, the subject area they will teach and bilingual education, and (2) passed SBE-approved examination requirements for bilingual education. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

### **§ 340 – International Teacher Permit**

The law allows SBE to issue a one year international teacher's permit, renewable for one year, in teacher shortage areas when the applicant meets certain criteria. The local or regional board of education

requesting that SBE issue the permit must attest to a plan for the supervision of the teacher and the teacher, among other things, must hold a proper visa and a bachelor's degree or the equivalent. Shortage areas are teacher certification or endorsement areas that SDE has documented a shortage of available teachers.

For applicants who do not hold a bachelor's degree, the Act permits individuals who will be teaching as part of a bilingual education program to substitute the bachelor's degree requirement with, completion of SBE-prescribed coursework or training to achieve proficiency deemed equivalent to a bachelor's degree. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **§ 341 — SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS ON TEACHER EVALUATIONS**

This section extends the deadline by which local and regional public school district superintendents must annually report to the education commissioner about the implementation status of the teacher evaluation and support program, including evaluation frequency, aggregate evaluation ratings, the number of unevaluated teachers, and any other topics the State Department of Education requires. Current law requires superintendents to report on these topics annually by June 30, but the Act extends this deadline to September 15. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

#### **§ 342 — School Resource Officers**

PA 15-168 requires a local or regional school board that assigns a school resource officer to a school to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local police department or State Police to define the officer's role and responsibility. PA 15-68 defines a school resource officer as a local or state police officer who has been assigned to a school. The Act limits the definition of school resource officer to local police officers and eliminates the option of entering an MOU with the State Police.

The Act also requires, rather than allows, the MOU to include a graduated response model for student discipline.

It also makes minor and technical changes. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

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