



2026 Acts Affecting Education

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts) significantly affecting education enacted during the 2026 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Children and Acts Affecting Higher Education, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the [General Assembly's website](#) or the Connecticut State Library.

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Adult Education

Training on Adult Education Programs

A new law requires the state's chief workforce officer to develop training on adult education programs available in the state, including funding streams for them and performance measures to ensure informed collaboration. The training must be given to the state's regional workforce navigators by December 30, 2026 ([PA 26-12](#), § 28, effective upon passage).

Charter Schools

Charter School Planning Grants

Through the budget act, the legislature gave \$75,000 planning grants each to OLAM Public Charter School in Stamford, the PROUD Academy in Ansonia, and Taino CoLAB Academy in Waterbury ([PA 26-68](#), § 377, effective July 1, 2027).

New Charter School Approval Process

New legislation aligns the approval process for new charter schools with the governor's biennial budget process, rather than the annual process prior law used. Starting with the biennium beginning July 1, 2027, the new law requires the State Department of Education (SDE) commissioner to ensure that the timing for granting initial certificates of approval for charters coincides with the preparation of the state budget for that biennium ([PA 26-106](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Curriculum and Instruction

ASL Working Group

A new law requires the education commissioner to create an American Sign Language (ASL) working group to make recommendations to SDE on, among other things, teacher certification standards and curriculum guidance for ASL instruction. Starting by July 1, 2028, the working group must annually report on its work to the Education and Human Services committees. Then, by July 1, 2030, SDE must issue the curriculum guidance to school districts ([PA 26-151](#), § 2, and [PA 26-149](#), §§ 4 & 5, all effective January 1, 2027).

Computer Science in Public School Curriculum

Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, a new law adds computer science to the state's required program of instruction for public schools and specifies that computer science instruction must

cover artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. Existing law already requires public schools to provide instruction in computer programming ([PA 26-15](#), § 34, effective July 1, 2026).

Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education

A new law creates the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement that students can earn, and have placed on their diploma, to signify that they achieved high proficiency in civics education and engagement. SDE must establish criteria for awarding the seal, which must require students to complete at least two history or social science courses, participate in a civic engagement project, and demonstrate proficiency in civics knowledge ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 20 & 21, effective July 1, 2026).

Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Course Coordinator and Associated Fee Waiver Reimbursement Expansion

New legislation requires SDE to appoint a dual and concurrent enrollment course coordinator by January 1, 2027, to track these courses and their student outcomes, such as completion rates and grades, by school district. The new law also allows higher education institutions to apply for reimbursement for fee waivers given to a high-need student in an advanced class or program (under prior law, only school boards could apply for these reimbursements) ([PA 26-18](#), effective July 1, 2026).

Islamic and Arab Studies Curriculum

A new law requires the State Board of Education (SBE), within available appropriations and using available resource materials, to (1) make curriculum materials on Islamic and Arab studies available to local and regional boards of education (school boards) and (2) encourage them to provide instruction in this area ([PA 26-1](#), § 24, effective July 1, 2026).

Limiting Assessments and Approval to Amend ESSA Plans

A new law makes various revisions to the laws on academic assessments, including:

1. establishing a school district incentive program that limits broad assessments, integrates formative assessment tools, and increases teacher competency in the assessment process;
2. requiring SDE to give school boards guidance on reducing discretionary local student assessments; and
3. allowing SDE to ask the U.S. Department of Education to amend the state's approved plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to reduce the weight assigned to the academic achievement indicator and increase the weight for other relevant indicators, such

as college and career-oriented measures ([PA 26-139](#), §§ 7-9, effective July 1, 2026, except the provision about the state's ESSA plan is effective upon passage).

Mathematics Pathways, Instruction, and Specialist Guidance

The General Assembly passed a new law that requires SDE to (1) redesign the state's high school mathematics pathways (designed sequences of courses) for students; (2) develop a list of professional development providers for high quality mathematics instruction; (3) explore the feasibility of launching MathConn (a professional learning series for educators); and (4) develop mathematics specialist guidelines ([PA 26-139](#), § 10, effective upon passage).

Reading Interventions

A new law requires SDE to create guidance on implementing multitiered systems of support (MTSS) or response to intervention (RTI) frameworks for students identified as struggling in reading and distribute it to school boards. Generally, MTSS and RTI are educational approaches that identify struggling students and offer them targeted, personalized instruction to meet their needs, with services that increase in intensity (for example, in frequency or duration) as student need increases ([PA 26-149](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Background Check for Child Care Services Providers or Staff Members

By law, each of the following types of child care services providers or staff members must have a background check: (1) prospective employee at a child care center or group child care home; (2) person applying for a family child care home license; and (3) person, other than a relative, who provides child care services to a child and receives the Care 4 Kids child care subsidy.

A new law specifies that this background check must include a check of (1) national and state criminal history records as required by state law (prior law based the checks on federal requirements); (2) national and state sex offender registries; (3) the state's child abuse or neglect registry; and (4) child abuse or neglect registries for any other state where the child care services provider or staff member lived within the last five years ([PA 26-105](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2026).

Early Childhood Education Endowment Changes

The Early Childhood Education Endowment, established in PA 25-93, is funded with the unappropriated budget surplus and used by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to support early care and education programs in the state. A new law requires OEC to make an annual spending

plan for released endowment funds, which must include OEC’s policy goals, the amount of planned expenditures, and a statement of how the spending will meet the policy goals ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 375 & 387, effective upon passage).

Notification of Child Care Employees on Child Abuse Registry

Newly enacted legislation requires child care providers to notify OEC if they have knowledge that a worker at their facility is listed on the child abuse and neglect registry (they must already do this if the owner, operator, or employee of the center or home is convicted of any crime). Failure to disclose knowledge of registry placement is subject to the same disciplinary measures as failure to disclose knowledge of criminal convictions. The new law sets similar requirements for family child care homes. ([PA 26-105](#), §§ 4 & 6, effective July 1, 2026).

Pediatrician Addition to Early Childhood Cabinet

A new law adds a licensed pediatrician, appointed by the governor, to the Early Childhood Cabinet, which brings the cabinet membership to 33. The cabinet advises the OEC commissioner and annually develops reports required under the federal Head Start program ([PA 26-105](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Education Oversight

Board of Education Financial Conditions and MARB Oversight

A new law creates a process by which a school board may ask the SDE commissioner for a fiscal intervention and oversight plan. The SDE-created plan is reviewed by the Municipal Accountability Review Board (MARB) and then must be approved by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary and SBE before the school board implements it. A plan must require the participating school board to meet with MARB to discuss its financial condition and compliance with the plan. The new law also adds the SDE commissioner to MARB ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 388 & 389, effective July 1, 2026).

Homeschooling

Starting with the 2027-28 school year, a new law requires parents seeking to withdraw a child from public school to go, in person, to the school district’s office and sign a withdrawal form. It also prohibits parents from withdrawing a child to switch to parent-managed learning (such as homeschooling) if Department of Children and Families (DCF) records show that any adult living with the child is on the state’s child abuse and neglect registry or currently under investigation for child abuse or neglect.

Starting with the 2028-29 school year, this new law also requires parents of most school-age children to annually complete an intent to educate form indicating whether their child will enroll in a public school, attend a nonpublic school, or be instructed through parent-managed learning. The new law (1) deems parents in compliance with this requirement if their child attends a public school or a nonpublic school that files the required annual attendance report and (2) does not apply to most children who began instruction through parent-managed learning before the 2028-2029 school year, with certain exceptions ([PA 26-37](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2027).

Grants and Funding

Grants for Health Services for Private School Students

State law authorizes grants for school districts that must provide health services to private school students under state law. A new law extends to FY 27 the requirement that these grants be proportionately reduced if the amount appropriated for them does not fully fund them according to the statutory formula ([PA 26-68](#), § 378, effective July 1, 2026).

Parent Training and Information Centers Grants

The budget act creates a new SDE grant to establish parent training and information centers to (1) train and assist parents of children with disabilities to help the children meet developmental, functional, and academic goals and (2) attempt to resolve special education complaints from students' families. It also repeals the law creating the Office of the Educational Ombudsperson (OEO), which was tasked with receiving and attempting to resolve education complaints from students' families (OEO was created last year under PA 25-93, but in practice, is not operational) ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 383 & 384, effective upon passage).

School Mapping Data Services Grants

Beginning with FY 27, new legislation allows the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to annually administer a program to give municipalities and municipal police departments grants for mapping data services for schools served by the police department, as long as the data meets certain criteria such as being compatible with software platforms used by public safety agencies. By October 1, 2026, DESPP must create eligibility criteria, develop application forms, and post a description of the program on its website. Starting by January 1, 2028, the department must annually report on the program to the Public Safety and Security Committee ([PA 26-116](#), effective July 1, 2026).

Supplemental Education Funding

As part of this year's budget adjustments, the legislature provided \$172.9 million in supplemental education aid grants to be distributed to towns in addition to Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds. Under the budget act, the one-time funds for FY 27 are not considered part of the minimum budget requirement for FY 28 town education budgeting (except for Bridgeport).

The act also addresses how towns and regional boards that had already adopted their FY 27 budgets before the state budget was passed can amend their budgets and tax levies if the state's budget provides more state aid than the board or municipality projected. It allows municipalities and boards to (1) amend their budget, in an amount not exceeding the increase in state aid to the board or municipality, and (2) by July 1, 2026, adjust tax levies and any remaining tax installments. This is permitted if the municipality or board does not reduce the amount it provides for education below the greater of the (1) local funding amount in the adopted budget or (2) minimum budget requirement for the town for FY 27 plus the amount of the supplemental education funds provided by the state budget adjustments.

The same legislation also gives certain education programs supplemental grants as follows: \$5.6 million for magnet school operators that are not boards of education, \$2.8 million for magnet schools operated by local or regional boards of education, \$8.7 million for charter school operators, and \$800,000 for boards that operate vocational-agricultural centers ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 178, 390, 391 & 393-395 and [PA 26-130](#), §§ 12-16, most provisions effective upon passage).

Therapeutic Arts Program Grants

A new law requires SDE to establish, within available appropriations, a grant program for a therapeutic arts program in public schools starting in the 2027-28 school year. Any school board or regional educational service center (RESC) is eligible for grants, but SDE must prioritize those serving school districts with high rates of exclusionary discipline (like suspensions), low access to behavioral health services, and an existing social-emotional learning program ([PA 26-139](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2026).

Health and Safety

Antisemitism Working Group

The legislature established a 15-member working group to address antisemitism in public schools. It tasked the group with developing guidance and resources to address antisemitism issues that affect students, families, educators, and school personnel, including (1) suggested amendments to district policies to ensure safety; (2) recommend antisemitism-related training for educators and

administrators; and (3) guidance for creating or providing curriculum materials and resources about antisemitism, Jewish heritage, and Holocaust and genocide education and awareness. The group must submit the guidance and resources it develops to the Education Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-1](#), § 25, effective upon passage).

Armed Security Guards in Schools

Under a new law, former parole officers meeting certain qualifications may provide armed security services in public schools. Under prior law, only sworn members of local police departments and qualified retired police officers could provide these services. The new law subjects former parole officers to the same annual training requirements that other retired officers must complete in order to qualify.

Retired police officers and parole officers must have retired or left service in good standing in order to be hired as an armed security guard. The new law specifies that good standing means the officer's employment did not end due to disciplinary action, while under investigation, or while a disciplinary action was pending. It also specifies that retired police officers cannot provide security services if they are prohibited from being hired as a police officer due to being dismissed for malfeasance or other serious misconduct or resigning while under investigation ([PA 26-139](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Athletic Health Assessments for High School Student Athletes

Starting in the 2027-28 school year, a new law generally requires public high school students, before participating in interscholastic sports, to have an annual athletics health assessment by a qualified health professional to screen for serious cardiac conditions. As with other student health assessments under existing law, schools must provide the assessment for free if the student is eligible for free or reduced price meals ([PA 26-13](#), §§ 15-17, effective July 1, 2026).

Crisis Response Drills

A new law establishes new protocols for school crisis response drills to ensure they are designed to prevent emotional harm and support psychological safety while improving preparedness. Among other things, it:

1. prohibits active assailant simulations or simulated violence when students are present (but staff and first responders may do them outside of school hours);
2. requires the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention at Western Connecticut State University, in collaboration with DESPP, to develop standard terminology for drills and guidance for crisis responses and crisis debriefing;

3. addresses education and communication between school personnel, students, and parents about the nature and purpose of crisis response drills; and
4. requires school boards to submit their school safety and security plans to DESPP ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 44-47, effective July 1, 2026).

CWCSEO Working Group on Eating Disorder Treatment and DCF Feasibility Study on Young Adult Inpatient Facility

New legislation requires the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) to establish working groups on treating eating disorders and developing a state-wide food education roadmap and a model school nutrition curriculum. The executive director must report the results of the working group studies to several legislative committees, including the Education Committee, by January 1, 2028 ([PA 26-62](#), §§ 1-3, effective upon passage).

Deploying Behavioral Health Professionals After Mass Shootings

A new law requires the DESPP commissioner to coordinate with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services commissioner, in addition to the Department of Public Health (DPH) commissioner as under existing law, when deploying grief counselors and mental health professionals to provide mental health services to mass shooting victims' family members and other people with a close association to them. By law, these deployments must be made to (1) any school or higher education institution where a mass shooting victim or perpetrator was enrolled and (2) local community outreach groups in and around the impacted area ([PA 26-38](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

Misconduct-Related Information Disclosure During Prospective School Employee Hiring Process

New legislation makes various revisions to the laws on disclosing certain misconduct-related information when hiring a prospective school employee who will have contact with children (applicant). These include:

1. expanding the scope of what the applicant, current and former employers, and SDE must disclose about the applicant to include allegations currently under investigation;
2. requiring the applicant's written statement and the forms that previous and current employers must complete to include a disclosure of whether the applicant was, or is currently, facing an allegation involving the injury or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of, a minor;

3. allowing school operators to request information from SBE on whether SDE has been notified by a former employer that the applicant is under investigation for abuse, neglect, or sexual misconduct unless the investigation resulted in a finding that all allegations were false; and
4. extending similar provisions to cover school contractors and their applicants ([PA 26-139](#), §§ 11-13, effective July 1, 2026).

Peace Officer Civil Offense Custody Actions at Schools

The legislature passed restrictions on peace officers detaining, arresting, or taking someone into custody based on a civil offense in certain locations, including at schools, playgrounds, before- or after-school care centers, and school bus stops when children are there. To do so, the peace officer must be acting in his or her official capacity and have a judicial warrant for the individual. This restriction applies to the buildings or locations, their grounds, and garages or parking lots that are used as part of their operation ([PA 26-14](#), § 7, effective October 1, 2026).

Public School Access to Opioid Antagonists

Two new laws expand the instances when an opioid antagonist (such as Narcan) may be administered to students in public schools to reflect the recent availability of a non-legend (over the counter) opioid antagonist nasal spray approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration. Specifically, the new laws allow any person to give someone an over the counter opioid antagonist to treat or prevent an opioid drug overdose, including in a school, and give them immunity from civil and criminal liability for doing so. They also exempt anyone who distributes these medications from needing a drug permit ([PA 26-38](#), §§ 1 & 2, and [PA 26-68](#), § 165, most provisions effective upon passage).

School Health Assessments

A new law specifically allows school nurses to reject results of required health assessments (including lists of immunizations) if they are submitted in a format other than the form developed by SBE (sometimes called the “blue” form). It also requires an asthma action plan to be submitted with any health assessment form indicating an asthma diagnosis ([PA 26-1](#), § 39, effective July 1, 2026).

School Resource Officers

By law, each school board that assigns a school resource officer (SRO) to its schools must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a local law enforcement agency that outlines the SRO’s role and responsibility in the school. A new law sets a deadline of January 1, 2027, for school boards to meet existing law’s requirements to (1) post the MOUs on their websites and (2) include

information in the MOUs on the officer's daily interactions with students and staff and graduated discipline response models. The new law also requires MOUs to be updated at least every three years ([PA 26-1](#), § 34, effective July 1, 2026).

School Safety Plans

A new law sets requirements for health care providers to share certain minors' safety plans with schools. Starting April 1, 2027, it requires each health care provider who prepares a safety plan for a minor patient who received at least 12 consecutive days of inpatient behavioral health care treatment to send the plan to the minor's school or school district using a secure messaging system or in a way that complies with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Providers may only do this if the minor's parent or legally authorized representative (or the minor if they are at least age 16) gives written consent ([PA 26-13](#), §§ 19-22, most provisions effective upon passage).

State Immunization Standards

In response to recent changes in federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccine standards, the legislature enacted a law requiring DPH to establish immunization standards of care for all Connecticut residents, instead of only children and adolescents. In developing these standards, DPH may consider recommended vaccine schedules from several medical professional organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Family Physicians.

Among other things, the new law also (1) expressly specifies that the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act does not apply to school and child care facility immunization requirements and (2) requires the Connecticut Vaccine Program to give health care providers all children's vaccines included under DPH's standard of care, instead of only those recommended by the CDC ([PA 26-3](#), various effective dates).

Vision Screenings in Schools

A new law allows school boards to offer vision screenings to students in preschool and second grade. By law, schools must offer these screenings to students in kindergarten, first grade, and third through fifth grades ([PA 26-1](#), § 36, effective July 1, 2026).

Magnet Schools

Bridgeport Military Academy and Fairchild Wheeler Magnet

A new law allows the SDE commissioner to authorize temporary placement of students enrolled in the Bridgeport Military Academy in available classroom space at the Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus to facilitate construction of a permanent facility for the Bridgeport Military Academy. The authorization is limited to the academy's SDE-approved grades and programs and does not alter Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus's magnet school status or magnet grant funding eligibility. SDE must, among other things, create guidelines to ensure students in the two schools do not commingle in core academic courses or programs unless doing so is approved by SDE ([PA 26-139](#), § 5, effective upon passage).

Multilingual Learners

Multilingual Learner Data

New legislation expands the state-wide public school information system to include data on the (1) academic progress of students in bilingual education programs, including mastery exam results, and (2) evaluation of these programs. It also requires SDE's bill of rights for parents and guardians of multilingual learner students to include the right of these students and their parents and guardians to access publicly available data on bilingual students and programs ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 22 & 23, effective July 1, 2026).

Open Choice Program

Open Choice Program in Madison

A new law adds the town of Madison to the Open Choice program as a receiving and sending district with New Haven beginning the 2026-27 school year. This addition allows students from Madison to attend school in the New Haven system and vice versa ([PA 26-1](#), § 37, effective July 1, 2026).

Regional School Districts

Regional School District Reserve Funds

Starting with FY 26, a new law explicitly allows regional boards of education to deposit funds previously appropriated to and currently in a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures into a reserve fund for educational expenditures ([PA 26-1](#), § 35, effective July 1, 2026).

Regional School District Study Reporting

As part of the planning process to form a regional school district, state law requires the creation of a regional school district study committee to evaluate the district's feasibility. In its report to SDE, if the committee believes the new district should move forward, it must include educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period with projected enrollments and staff needs. A new law requires that the budget plan consider transportation costs and, when feasible, be reviewed or audited by an independent third party to determine its viability ([PA 26-106](#), § 7, effective upon passage).

School Buses/Transportation

Failure to Stop for a School Bus

A new law requires the motor vehicles commissioner, without a hearing, to issue a six-month suspension of the driver's license or operating privilege of someone who, for the third or subsequent time, violates the state law on failing to stop for a school bus ([PA 26-95](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Student Bus Passes and Fares

New legislation requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) commissioner to administer a program to give school boards grants for (1) purchasing passes for public buses, including those operated by transit districts, and (2) distributing them without cost to their high school students. It also (1) authorizes the commissioner to develop guidelines and grant criteria to administer the program, including setting the application process, and (2) requires him, starting by July 1, 2027, to annually report on the program to the Education and Transportation committees, including on the number of grants awarded during the prior year and the program's impact on student outcomes.

Another new law relatedly requires DOT to spend \$2.5 million of its FY 27 bus operations appropriation from the Special Transportation Fund to (1) give grants under the student bus pass program described above and (2) provide discounted CTtransit bus fares for public school students in grades 9 through 12 ([PA 26-21](#), § 7, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 64, effective July 1, 2026; and [PA 26-76](#), § 65, effective upon passage).

Zero-Emission School Buses and DEEP Working Group

Existing law requires school districts to gradually transition to zero-emission school buses and sets deadlines for doing so. New legislation generally (1) requires 90%, rather than 100%, of school buses to be zero-emission by 2040 and sets an interim deadline for distressed municipalities; (2) eliminates the requirement that environmental justice communities fully transition to zero-emission

school buses by 2030; and (3) requires schools to implement safety plans before using a zero-emission school bus. It also modifies the zero-emission school bus grant program requirements, including broadening its purposes beyond providing matching funds for federal grant applications to include state or other funding or financing ([PA 26-63](#), §§ 24 & 37, effective July 1, 2026, except the safety plan requirement is effective upon passage and [PA 26-124](#), § 4, effective upon passage).

The new law additionally requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to create a working group to evaluate and make recommendations on Connecticut school bus fleets' increased use of alternative fuels and technologies, including biodiesel, propane, and electric school buses. It requires the working group, by February 1, 2027, to submit a report to the Environment, Energy and Technology, and Transportation committees with the group's findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for regulatory or legislative action ([PA 26-63](#), § 36, effective upon passage).

School Construction

DRIP Grants

This session, the legislature delayed, from March 1 to April 1, the annual deadline for OPM to notify school operators of their District Repair and Improvement Project (DRIP) grant allocation and post related information online. DRIP grants are formula grants awarded to public school operators (such as school boards) to help construct, renovate, repair, and enlarge public school buildings, grounds, and infrastructure ([PA 26-137](#), § 1, effective October 1, 2026).

Endowed High Schools and School Construction Grants

By law, an endowed high school or academy that has been recognized by SBE as the public high school for that town enrolls students from the town at no cost to the student or family (currently, there are three: the Gilbert School in Winchester, the Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, and the Woodstock Academy in Woodstock). This session's budget act authorizes the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) commissioner to waive any school construction grant requirement that is inconsistent or incompatible with the educational or administrative structure of these schools or academies in order to provide a school construction grant ([PA 26-68](#), § 404, effective upon passage).

Renaming and Revising the School Building Projects Advisory Council

Through legislation, the General Assembly renamed the School Building Projects Advisory Council as the School Safety and Security Infrastructure Advisory Council and revised its responsibilities. The legislation shifts the council's focus from school building projects in general to the safety and security aspects of projects including by changing (1) members and their qualifications and (2) the chairperson from the DAS commissioner or her designee to the DESPP commissioner or his designee ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 398-403, effective upon passage).

School Construction Grant Reimbursement Rate Cap

The DAS school construction grant program reimburses school districts for eligible school construction project costs. New legislation caps the total reimbursement percentage a board of education may receive at 95% of eligible costs. By law, the top standard reimbursement rate is 80% for renovation projects. However, there are additional provisions that allow for reimbursement rate bonuses, and the new law prohibits combining any available bonuses in a way that leads to more than 95% reimbursement for a single project.

The legislation also establishes a new bonus of 20% for any school district that has increased enrollment by 20% or more over the 10-year period immediately preceding the date the school construction project application is submitted. This is also subject to the 95% cap ([PA 26-68](#), § 397, effective July 1, 2026).

School Construction Priority List Grants and Notwithstanding

The legislature authorized school construction state grant commitments totaling \$150.6 million toward total estimated project costs of \$305.6 million for the six projects on DAS's 2026 priority list. It also exempted school construction projects in 28 towns and three regional school districts from statutory and regulatory requirements to allow them to, among other things, (1) qualify for state reimbursement grants, (2) receive higher reimbursement percentages for the grants, or (3) have their project reauthorized due to a change in scope or cost. These exemptions are commonly referred to as "notwithstanding" ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 10 & 14-19, [PA 26-68](#), §§ 396 & 405-441, and [PA 26-76](#), § 45, most provisions effective upon passage).

School Districts and Boards of Education

Information in Itemized Estimates of School Expenses

A new law requires certain information on prior and current fiscal year line item appropriations and actual spending to be included in the itemized estimate of school expenses that local school boards

must prepare during the local budget process. Under the new law, the superintendent must give the information to the board, and the board must include the information in the itemized estimate. By law, school boards must submit these estimates to the board of finance or other authority making appropriations to the school district at least two months before the meeting at which appropriations will be made. The new law also requires regional school boards to include this information in the budget they present at annual meetings ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 31-33, effective July 1, 2026, except that the provision on information superintendents must give the board is effective January 1, 2027).

Kindergarten Waivers

By law, children must be at least age five by September 1 of the school year to enroll in public school kindergarten. Under prior law, school districts were required to have a waiver process allowing children under age five to enroll in kindergarten if the (1) child's parent or guardian makes a written request to the school principal and (2) principal and an appropriate certified school staff member do an assessment that shows the child is developmentally ready. New legislation makes this process optional for school districts for one year starting July 1, 2026, and eliminates the process entirely starting July 1, 2027 ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 26 & 27, effective July 1, 2026, and July 1, 2027, as applicable).

Racial Imbalance Law Pause

The legislature paused enforcement of the state's racial imbalance law until July 1, 2030. Under the racial imbalance law, when SBE finds a that the proportion of minority students in one school substantially differs from than the proportion of minority students in the district's total student population, it must notify the school's board of education in writing. In response, the notified school board must prepare a plan to correct the imbalance and submit it to SBE for approval (the legislature previously paused enforcement of this in 2024, but that ended July 1, 2025) ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 28-30, effective upon passage).

School Board Member Attendance at Union Negotiations

A new law requires at least one school board member to be present during teacher and administrator union negotiations, but no school board member who is also a member of the teachers' or administrators' union may be present during the negotiations ([PA 26-1](#), § 38, effective July 1, 2026).

School Budget Referenda Notifications

State law generally prohibits spending government funds to send unsolicited electronic or automated communications about school budget referenda or to advocate for or against a

referendum, except for certain notices. A new act explicitly allows a school superintendent to give written notice through the schools within the district to inform parents or legal guardians that a referendum about the school district is coming up.

This notice may only include (1) the referendum's time and location; (2) a statement of the question as it will appear on the ballot; and (3) if applicable, the explanatory text or other material prepared and approved under state law. It may not advocate for or against the question or try to influence its success or defeat ([PA 26-68](#), § 252, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 107, effective upon passage).

Students

Academic Standards for Participation in Athletics

Starting July 1, 2027, a new law prohibits school boards from requiring students in grades 9 to 12 who participate in interscholastic athletics to meet academic eligibility standards that are higher than those set by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). In practice, CIAC's current standards generally require students to have earned a passing grade in at least four quarter credits at the end of the most recent marking period or, for fall sports, at least four credits toward graduation during the prior school year or marking period ([PA 26-139](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2026).

Notification of Restraint and Seclusion

A new law requires schools to notify the parent or guardian of a student placed in physical restraint or seclusion on the day it happens, rather than within 24 hours after it happened as prior law required. The existing requirement that a school make a reasonable attempt to notify parents or guardians immediately after a restraint or seclusion begins continues to apply under this new law ([PA 26-1](#), § 42, effective July 1, 2026).

Out-Of-School Suspension in Early Grades

A new law limits the circumstances under which schools may give out-of-school suspension to students in grades preschool through two. Under prior law, school administration could do so if an administrator found, at the student's informal disciplinary hearing, that the suspension is appropriate due to evidence that the student's conduct on school grounds was behavior that causes physical harm. Under the new law, the administrator must find that the physical harm was serious ([PA 26-1](#), § 40, effective July 1, 2026).

Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness

Existing state law requires boards of education to provide educational services to homeless children and youths in conformity with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This session, the legislature specified that these services must be provided as established in federal law as of December 23, 2022 ([PA 26-125](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Transfer of Education Records

A provision in the annual court operations act eliminates a requirement for the judicial branch to notify the local or regional school board when a child is placed in a juvenile residential center. Instead, the act requires DCF to do this. It must be done immediately upon placement which is in line with DCF's existing requirements to ask for the transfer of school records for students placed in juvenile justice facilities or who are incarcerated ([PA 26-92](#), § 16, effective January 1, 2027).

Twice Expelled Students

Under a new law, school boards must offer an alternative education opportunity to students ages 16 to 18 who are expelled for the first or second time and wish to continue their education. Under prior law, this was only required for those expelled for the first time ([PA 26-1](#), § 41, effective July 1, 2026).

Studies and Reports

Repealing Reporting Requirements

The legislature repealed various (mostly annual) reports that SDE was previously required to submit to the Education Committee, or other General Assembly committees (noted below), including those addressing:

1. school boards that have adopted the uniform regional school calendar and any related recommendations;
2. the surrogate parent program (a joint program with DCF), which is also submitted to the Committee on Children;
3. the commissioner's network of schools program reports that are required at certain steps of the process including a (a) one-time report on the turnaround plan for a school participating in the program, (b) report analyzing the academic performance of all schools in the program, and (c) final report at the conclusion of the turnaround plan evaluating the plan and performance for each participating school; and

4. the status of educational technology and the level of funding needed to assure technology needs are met in the public schools (reported biennially) ([PA 26-106](#), §§ 3-6, effective upon passage).

Also, legislature repealed a requirement that school boards annually report to the Commission for Educational Technology certain information on their use of internet websites, online services, or mobile applications that are not covered by a contract that meets the standards required under the state data privacy laws information ([PA 26-1](#), § 98, effective upon passage).

Teachers and Other School District Staff

Aspiring Educator Scholarship

New legislation makes “aspiring educators,” rather than “diverse educators,” eligible for the existing teacher recruitment scholarship, potentially broadening the pool of eligible candidates. Under prior law, the scholarship targeted “diverse students,” which are those whose race is other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino. Under the new law, an “aspiring educator” is someone from a population subgroup that (1) is underrepresented in the teaching profession in Connecticut and (2) has been identified under state law as a teacher shortage area. The new legislation also broadens the eligibility criteria by giving eligibility to graduates of any high school in the state, rather than just high schools in alliance districts. The scholarships are up to \$10,000 a year for those enrolled in good standing in a teacher preparation program at any four-year institution of higher education ([PA 26-149](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective July 1, 2026).

Enhanced Workers’ Compensation Benefits for Teachers Assaulted at Work

A new law allows certain teachers and related employees to receive enhanced workers’ compensation benefits if they are unable to work as a result of a physical or negligent assault upon them while performing their work duties. More specifically, it qualifies them to receive a workers’ compensation benefit that equals 100% of their gross (rather than net) average weekly earnings, with no cap on the benefit amount, plus their reasonable expenses for medical or other services needed due to the assault, and any lost wages due to an absence for a court appearance connected to the assault ([PA 26-12](#), §§ 1 & 75, effective October 1, 2026).

Paraeducators Health Insurance Subsidy

New legislation makes permanent two health care subsidy programs for paraeducators employed by school boards and expands the programs to include paraeducators at charter schools. The legislation also requires the comptroller to report to the Education and Appropriations committees

by January 1, 2027, on the cost of expanding the programs for paraeducators at charters ([PA 26-149](#), §§ 6 & 7, effective July 1, 2026, except the cost study provision is effective upon passage).

Private Sector Educator Externships

A new law requires the education commissioner to establish a two-year pilot program for educator externships for certified educators. The program must allow the educators to participate in experiential learning with private sector employers so they can align classroom instruction with current industry standards and workforce needs ([PA 26-12](#), § 26, effective upon passage).

“Reasonable Assurance” of Returning to Work for Paraeducators

A new law requires school districts, at least 10 days before the last day of regular school sessions, to give the Department of Labor lists of their paraeducators who have and do not have “reasonable assurance” (as defined in the act) of returning to work for the district once courses resume. In general, school employees are ineligible to receive unemployment benefits for a school break if they have a “reasonable assurance” of returning to work for the school when courses resume ([PA 26-12](#), § 51, effective July 1, 2026).

Repeal of Educator Preparation Regulations

PA 24-41, § 51, repealed numerous SBE educator preparation program and certification regulations such as regarding certification requirements and the educator preparation program approval, effective July 1, 2026. A new law delays the effective date to July 1, 2027 ([PA 26-139](#), § 6).

School Administrator Mentorship Program

A new law requires the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards, in consultation with the Connecticut Association of Schools, to create a pilot program for a new school administrator mentorship program. The pilot program must include supports, training, and professional development for new school administrators. The council must (1) submit a pilot program implementation plan to the Education Committee by July 1, 2027; (2) implement the program for the 2027-28 school year in the districts it identifies in the plan; and (3) by January 1, 2029, report to the Education Committee on the pilot’s results ([PA 26-139](#), § 2, effective July 1, 2026).

Teacher Termination

A new law sets the standard of review for tenured public school teacher terminations to be the same standard applied in other disciplinary actions under the teacher’s collective bargaining

agreement. The same law changes, from the local school board to an impartial hearing officer, who makes the final decision when a tenured teacher is under consideration for termination and it goes to a hearing. Also, for court appeals of a termination decision, it changes the standard of appeals to the standard under the laws for court consideration of arbitration awards ([PA 26-12](#), § 8, effective July 1, 2026).

Working Group to Study Co-Instruction Teaching Models

The legislature created a working group to study the effectiveness and benefits of co-instruction teaching models used by public schools, including models that allow people who do not have a professional teaching certification to teach collaboratively with a certified teacher. The working group must submit the study's results to the Education Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-12](#), § 29, effective upon passage).

Technical High Schools

RESC and CTECS Report on Work-Based Learning Programs

A new law requires each RESC and the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System's (CTECS) executive director to annually give the Education and Labor and Public Employees committees a report on the high school work-based learning programs they offer. The report must include (1) an inventory of the programs; (2) the number of students enrolled in them; and (3) the total cost to CTECS and each school district for each program ([PA 26-12](#), § 25, effective July 1, 2026).

Windham Technical High School Site

New legislation requires the OPM secretary, by September 1, 2026, and before the final selection of a site for the replacement or relocation of Windham Technical High School (the technical high school serving the Windham, Willimantic, and Mansfield region), to give the chief elected officials and state legislators of those municipalities an opportunity to submit recommendations for alternative sites to consider. It also requires the secretary to evaluate any of the alternative sites located closer to the existing school than the site the secretary previously identified and prepare a written comparative analysis. The secretary must submit the results of the evaluation and analysis to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee by November 1, 2026 ([PA 26-68](#), § 353, effective upon passage).

Miscellaneous

Sales Tax Exemption for Nonelectronic School Supplies

Under a new law, nonelectronic school supplies that are purchased for nonbusiness purposes are exempt from the state's 6.35% sales and use tax as of July 1, 2026. The Department of Revenue Services must issue policies and procedures that (1) identify which school supplies qualify for the exemption and (2) set criteria for determining when a purchase is for business purposes ([PA 26-68](#), § 272, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 101, effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to sales occurring on or after that date).

Additional Minor Acts

Various Acts

In addition to the acts summarized above, several other acts make minor changes affecting education. These act include the following:

1. [PA 26-1](#), § 43 (specifies that when the education commissioner allocates funds to State Education Resource Center, as required by law, she must allocate the amount stated in SDE's annual budget);
2. [PA 26-12](#), § 52 (requires the School Paraeducator Advisory Council to have five paraeducator members from the state-wide bargaining organizations that represent paraeducators with instructional responsibilities and that they be nominated by the Connecticut American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO));
3. [PA 26-15](#), § 27, allows educator certification preparation programs to include instruction on responsible use of emerging technologies;
4. [PA 26-52](#) (makes technical changes to the education and early childhood statutes);
5. [PA 26-68](#), § 381 (starting in FY 27, requires SDE to administer a teacher apprenticeship program within available appropriations; the program was already in place); and
6. [PA 26-106](#), § 2 (requires SDE to annually pay, by October 31, up to 50% rather than 50% of the costs for *Sheff*-region magnet school transportation grants).

JM:co