

# Latest Developments From The Connecticut General Assembly: The Education Committee Passes More Bills

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## Education Law Notes

03.25.2015

By Mark Sommaruga

On **March 18, 2015**, the General Assembly's **Education Committee** voted favorably on and advanced out of committee the following proposed bills:

1. **H.B. No. 6974 (RAISED) 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 bill would create a director of reading initiatives position within the State Department of Education.
2. **H.B. No. 6975 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS.** This bill would establish a task force to study life-threatening food allergies in schools.
3. **H.B. No. 6976 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS.** This bill would require the State Department of Education to conduct a study of recovery high school programs for students recovering from substance abuse and dependence.
4. **H.B. No. 6977 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION.** This bill would require the Commissioner of Education to possess 1) a master's degree (or higher) in an education-related field, 2) five or more years' experience as a teacher in this state or another state, and 3) three or more years' experience as an administrator of a school or school district in this state or another state.
5. **H.B. No. 6978 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND SUBMIT A COMPREHENSIVE STATE-WIDE INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL PLAN.** This bill would require the Commissioner of Education to develop and submit a "comprehensive state-wide inter-district magnet school plan" to the General Assembly by October 1, 2016. Parenthetically, the current statutory timeline for submitting such a plan (January 1, 2011) has long ago come and gone.
6. **H.B. No. 6979 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY DECLINING STUDENT ENROLLMENT.** This bill would establish a task force to study declining enrollment in school districts.
7. **S.B. No. 944 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN REQUIREMENT.** This bill would require school districts to maintain full-day kindergarten programs.

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8. **S.B. No. 1054 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA.** This bill would require an employee of the State Department of Education to be responsible for providing information and assistance to the public relating to dyslexia, include specific programmatic requirements for teacher preparation courses relating to dyslexia and include dyslexia instruction as part of the in-service training for educators.
9. **S.B. No. 1055 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS.** This bill would require an employee of the State Department of Education to be responsible for providing information and assistance to the public relating to gifted and talented students and to require the Department to conduct a study that examines the best practices in the provision of services to gifted and talented students
10. **S.B. No. 1056 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXCESS COST THRESHOLD AND THE COLLECTION OF DATA RELATING TO PER PUPIL COSTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION.** This bill would phase in a change to the excess cost threshold for special education (i.e., by lowering the threshold) and require the State Department of Education to annually collect and report data relating to local special education expenditures.
11. **S.B. No. 1057 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A ROLLING THREE-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND CAPITAL EQUIPMENT PLAN FOR THE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM.** This bill would require the State Board of Education to maintain a rolling three-year capital improvement and capital equipment plan for the technical high school system
12. **S.B. No. 1058 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.** Among other things, this bill would require school districts that have “high” rates of chronic absenteeism to establish a district school attendance review team, require the State Department of Education to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan, require the State Board of Education to define "disciplinary absence" and require school boards to report data relating to student attendance
13. **S.B. No. 1059 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.** This bill would delay implementation of the new high school graduation requirements for one year, permit students to earn physical education credit for participation in interscholastic athletics, permit students to earn credit for college coursework completed during summer break and award a community service recognition award to students who complete fifty or more hours of community service.

Previously, on **March 11, 2015**, the Education Committee voted favorably on and advanced out of committee the following proposed bills:

1. **H.B. No. 6834 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.** Among other things, this bill would require a board of education that assigns a school resource officer to any of its schools to enter into a memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement or the State Police regarding the school resource officer’s roles and responsibilities.

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2. H.B. No. 6836 **(RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE TIMING OF CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECKS FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEES.** This bill would shorten the period of time that a person hired by a board of education is required to submit to a criminal history records check from thirty days to five business days and require the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to conduct expedited criminal history records checks for such persons and to waive the fee for such expedited service
3. S.B. No. 962 **(RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM.** This bill would include instruction in computer programming, the safe use of social media, investigative detention and arrest and cardiopulmonary resuscitation as part of the middle school curriculum in the public schools.
4. S.B. No. 963 **(RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A LABOR AND FREE MARKET CAPITALISM CURRICULUM.** This bill would require the State Board of Education to make available materials relating to labor history and law and free market capitalism to school districts.
5. S.B. No. 964 **(RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD STATUTES.** As indicated in the title, this bill would make technical revisions to the education and early childhood statutes

The 2015 session of the Connecticut General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn on June 3, 2015; we will see if any of the above bills are approved by both houses of the General Assembly prior to adjournment and then sent to the Governor's desk for signature.

The deadline for the Education Committee to approve and "forward" more bills out of Committee is March 30, 2015. Stay tuned.

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