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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

### I. School finance

#### Funding for FY 2026 and FY 2027

- Extends the operation of the school financing system established in H.B. 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, with some changes, to FY 2026 and FY 2027.
- Extends to FY 2026 and FY 2027, with some changes, the payment of temporary transitional aid and a formula transition supplement.

#### Disadvantaged pupil impact aid

- Requires each school district, community school, or STEM school to spend at least 25%, or 50% if it is a school district or community school subject to a reading achievement improvement plan, of its disadvantaged pupil impact aid (DPIA) in a fiscal year on reading improvement and intervention and professional development in literacy instruction.
- Qualifies a community mental health prevention provider as one of the entities with which a school district, community school, or STEM school may develop its plan for using its DPIA.

#### Student wellness and success funds

- Requires each school district, community school, or STEM school to *annually* develop a plan to use its student and wellness and success funds (SWSF).
- Requires each district or school, in addition to coordinating with its selected community partners in developing a plan as under continuing law, to also cooperate and consult with them in doing so.
- Requires the planning process for SWSF to include opportunities for the district's or school's selected community partners to provide meaningful input and feedback to each of the required components of the plan.
- Requires a district or school's plan to identify certain components for the plan's initiatives, including the type, cost, community partners, goal, impact, and how the need for each initiative was identified.
- Requires each district and school to annually share its plan at a public meeting of its governing body and post the plan on its publicly accessible website within 30 days of the plan's creation or amendment for a particular school year.

#### Other career-technical education funds

- Modifies the purposes for which school districts may use career-technical education associated services funds.
- Permits the lead district of a career-technical planning district to use career awareness and exploration funds to provide mentorship opportunities through which students may learn about careers and workforce skills.

- Requires the lead district of each career-technical planning district receiving career awareness and exploration funds to report on the use of those funds to the Department of Education and Workforce (Department).

### **Quality Community and Independent STEM School Support Programs**

- Codifies the Quality Community School Support Program and the Quality Independent STEM School Support Program, both of which annually pay qualifying community and STEM schools an amount up to \$3,000 for each economically disadvantaged student and up to \$2,250 for each student who is not economically disadvantaged.

### **Facilities funding for community and STEM schools**

- Codifies the per-student facilities payment for community schools or STEM schools.

### **Auxiliary services funding for mental health services**

- Permits a chartered nonpublic school to use auxiliary services funds to provide diagnostic and therapeutic mental health services.

### **Payment for districts with decreases in utility TPP value**

- Requires the Department to make a payment, for FY 2026 and FY 2027, to each city, local, exempted village, or joint vocational school district that has at least one power plant within its territory and that experiences a 10% or greater decrease in the taxable value of utility tangible personal property (TPP) and an overall negative change in TPP subject to taxation.

## **II. Career-technical education and workforce development**

### **Waivers for middle school career-technical education**

- Eliminates waivers from a school district's obligation to provide a career-technical education to seventh and eighth grade students on and after July 1, 2026.

### **Approval deadlines for career-technical education programs**

- Eliminates the application and approval deadlines for new career-technical education programs.

### **Career-Technical Assurance Guides (CTAG)**

- Adds CTAG-aligned courses to the list of programs that may be considered an "advanced standing program" at school districts, other public schools, and chartered nonpublic schools.
- Requires each district and school that has students enrolled in CTAG-aligned career-technical courses to implement a policy for grading and calculating class standings for those courses in a manner that is equivalent to the district or school's policy for its other advanced standing programs.

## **Industry-recognized credentials**

- Eliminates the requirement for the Director of Education and Workforce’s industry-recognized credentials and licenses committee to establish a point value system for credentials to help determine whether a student qualifies for a high school diploma.
- Requires the Director’s committee to instead establish criteria under which a student may use industry-recognized credentials to help qualify for a high school diploma.

## **Graduation and career plans**

- Requires public and chartered nonpublic high school student graduation plans to also identify post-graduation career goals and to align the student’s high school experience with these goals.
- Permits plans to be developed jointly by a student and a representative of an organization that has partnered with the school to provide career planning and advising supports.
- Requires a public school to ensure a graduation and career plan for a student aligns to the student’s success plan.
- Requires the Department to adopt rules regarding the content of graduation and career plans.

## **Career pathways resource**

- Requires the Department to develop a career pathways resource and requires public schools annually to distribute it to all students in grades 6-12.

## **Work-based learning hours**

- Specifies that, for the purposes of meeting the state’s high school graduation requirements, a student’s completion of 250 hours of work-based learning experience is a “foundational” option to demonstrate competency, rather than a “supporting” one as under current law.

# **III. Assessments, instruction, and tutoring**

## **Diagnostic assessment**

- Requires the Department to, by June 30, 2026, adopt a diagnostic assessment for reading and math for each of grades K-3.
- Requires the diagnostic assessment for reading to be designed to measure student comprehension of foundational reading skills aligned to the science of reading.
- Requires public schools to administer the diagnostic assessments to their students by September 30 of each year, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

## **Kindergarten readiness assessment**

- Requires public schools to administer the kindergarten readiness assessment (KRA) to each kindergarten student between the first day of July of the school year in which the student enrolls in kindergarten and the 20<sup>th</sup> day of instruction of that school year.
- Requires public schools to utilize and score the KRA in accordance with rules established by the Department of Children and Youth.
- Eliminates KRA data on the state report cards.

## **State assessments as public records**

- Reduces from 40% to 20% the percentage of state assessment questions that must be made a public record.

## **Core curriculum and evidence-based reading programs**

- Limits the requirement for a school district, community school, or STEM school to use core curriculum and instructional materials from the Department's approved list by only applying it to curricula and materials for students in grades pre-K-5.
- Expressly requires a district or school to use evidence-based reading intervention programs from the Department's approved list for students in grades pre-K-12.

## **Wellness instruction**

- Changes the focus of annual evidence-based instruction on suicide prevention provided to students in grades 6-12 to mental health promotion from safety training and violence prevention.
- Eliminates the requirement that students receive evidence-based social inclusion instruction and instead requires students attending a district or school to receive annual evidence-based instruction in universal prevention practices or programs that teach students the necessary knowledge and skills to improve health and wellness outcomes.

## **Approved evidence-based training programs**

- Requires the Department to maintain a list of approved evidence-based training programs that districts and schools must use when providing instruction on mental health promotion, suicide prevention, and health and wellness outcomes.

## **Youth peer-led programming**

- Permits each public school to provide youth peer-led programming based on relational connections and youth empowerment models, instead of designating a student-led violence prevention club.

## **Advanced math learning opportunities**

- Requires school districts to provide advanced math learning opportunities to students who achieve an advanced level of skill on either a math achievement assessment or an end-of-course exam.

- Exempts school districts from providing advanced math learning opportunities if the district does not offer any advanced math learning opportunities in the grade level in which the student is enrolled for the next school year.
- Requires districts to notify the parent or guardian of a student who qualifies for advanced math learning opportunities and permits a parent or guardian to opt out their student from those opportunities.

### **Reporting of math curriculum and materials**

- Requires each public school to report its math core curriculum and instructional materials for grades pre-K through 12 through EMIS.

### **Provision of high-dosage tutoring**

- Permits a public school to incorporate high-dosage tutoring into a student's regular instruction time for each student on reading improvement and monitoring plans.
- Requires a locally approved high-dosage tutoring program to align with best practices identified by the Department.

### **High-quality tutoring program list**

- Requires the Department's request for qualifications for high-quality tutoring programs to include a request for program efficacy data or other evidence of program effectiveness for participating students.
- Requires the Department to remove from the high-quality tutoring program list any program that is not aligned to the science of reading or uses a three-cueing approach.
- Requires the Department to, at least every three years, update and provide an opportunity for entities to submit their qualifications for consideration to be included on the list posted to the Department's website.

## **IV. Educators**

### **Use of seniority in teacher assignments**

- Prohibits the use of seniority or continuing contract status as the primary factor when assigning teachers and instead requires assignment on the basis of the best interests of students.
- Specifies that the provisions pertaining to teacher assignment prevail over conflicting provisions of collective bargaining agreements entered into after the bill's effective date.

### **School district employment data**

- Requires the Department annually to collect school district employment and vacancy data and to aggregate and report the data on its public website.

## **Principal Apprenticeship Program**

- Requires the Department to establish a Principal Apprenticeship Program to provide pathways for qualifying individuals to receive school leadership and administration training and development, and an optional master's degree.
- Requires the State Board of Education to issue a professional administrator license for grades pre-K-12 to individuals who successfully complete the program.

## **Science of Reading professional development**

- Requires the Department to maintain an introductory Science of Reading training course and develop a competency-based training course that updates and reinforces educators' knowledge in the Science of Reading.
- Requires each teacher, administrator, or speech-language pathologist employed by a public school to complete the Department's Science of Reading training by a specified date dependent upon when the individual was hired, and every five years thereafter.

## **Educator in-service training**

- Requires each public school to develop its own youth suicide awareness and prevention in-service educator training curriculum instead of adopting or adapting curriculum developed by the Department.
- Eliminates the requirement that child sexual abuse in-service training for educators be provided by law enforcement officers or prosecutors and instead requires a district board to develop its own curriculum in consultation with public or private agencies.

## **V. Community schools**

### **High-performing community school definition**

- Revises the definition of "high-performing community school" in the law regarding the right of first refusal to purchase school district property and the involuntary disposition of school district property.

### **Dropout prevention and recovery community schools**

- Redefines a dropout prevention and recovery community school and requires each community school that primarily serves students enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program to comply with that definition by July 1, 2027.
- Requires the Department to assign any separate community school created in compliance with the new definition its own internal retrieval number.

### **Involuntary sale of unused school facilities**

- Modifies the definition of "unused school facility" for purposes of the law regarding the involuntary sale of unused school district real property.
- Requires the Department to annually publish by December 31 a list of unused school facilities in each district.

- Requires that the property be sold by lottery for a price that is not lower than the property's appraised value as an educational facility.
- If no high-performing community school within the district offers to purchase or lease a property, requires the district to offer it to high-performing community schools located outside of the district prior to offering it to other start-up community schools, college-preparatory boarding schools, and STEM schools.

## **VI. School policies**

### **Absence intervention, truancy, and chronic absenteeism**

- Modifies the process school districts, brick-and-mortar community schools, and STEM schools must follow when addressing student absences.
- Aligns the definition of "chronic absenteeism" with federal law.
- Permits grade level promotion of certain truant students enrolled in community schools.
- Eliminates the timeline under which a school district attendance officer must file a complaint and instead bases the filing solely on whether a student is making satisfactory progress in improving attendance.
- Clarifies that certain required notices to parents regarding truancy and consequences that are sent by email or text message are legal notices.

### **Student cellphone use**

- Requires each public school to adopt a policy prohibiting the use of cellphones by students during instructional hours.

### **Artificial intelligence policies**

- Requires the Department to adopt a model policy by December 31, 2025, on the use of artificial intelligence in schools.
- Requires public schools to adopt a policy by July 1, 2026, on the use of artificial intelligence.
- Permits the Department to collect data from districts and schools on their use of artificial intelligence.

## **VII. Other initiatives**

### **State report card**

#### **Early Literacy component**

- Eliminates the percentage of students promoted to the fourth grade under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee as a performance measure for the Early Literacy component on the state report card for public schools.
- Assigns the proficiency rate on the reading segment of the third grade English language arts assessment and the progress in improving literacy in grades kindergarten through

three performance measures each a weight of 50% for calculating the Early Literacy component's performance rating.

- If either the proficiency rate or the progress in improving literacy measures is not included on a district's or school building's report card, requires performance ratings for the Early Literacy component to be prescribed by rule of the Department

### **College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness component**

- Requires the Department to report the College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness (CCWMR) component as report-only data on school district and school building report cards for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Requires the Department to assign a performance rating for the CCWMR component on district and school building report cards, and factor the component into the calculation a district's or building's overall rating, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.
- Eliminates the requirement that the Department develop and propose rules for a method to assign a performance rating for the CCWMR component and a related requirement that the method not include a tiered structure or per student bonuses.

## **Educational Regional Service System**

### **Initiatives**

- Requires the Educational Regional Service System (ERSS) to support state and regional workforce development initiatives in addition to supporting education initiatives.

### **Service providers**

- Expands ERSS service providers to include career-technical planning districts, county boards of developmental disabilities, Ohio college tech prep regional centers, and community colleges.

### **Services for STEM schools**

- Requires ERSS to provide services to STEM schools.
- Permits STEM schools to enter service agreements with information technology centers.

### **Regions**

- Eliminates the 16 statutorily established ERSS regions and instead requires the Department to establish up to 16 regions within 180 days of the bill's effective date.
- Requires the Department to notify affected regions of subsequent changes at least 90 days before the fiscal year in which those changes will take effect.

### **Regional advisory councils**

- Eliminates ERSS regional advisory councils and subcommittees.



### **Fiscal agents and performance contracts**

- Permits career-technical planning districts, county boards of developmental disabilities, Ohio college tech prep regional centers, and community colleges to be the fiscal agent for an ERSS region.
- Changes the criteria the Department must consider in selecting an ERSS fiscal agent by requiring an entity to provide an assurance it will limit aggregate fees for administering a performance contract to 5% of the contract's value, rather than a demonstrated intent to limit those fees to 7% as under current law.
- Permits the Department to select an entity located in another ERSS region to be a fiscal agent for a region where no entity responded to or met the requirements in the Department's request for proposals.
- Decreases the threshold to require Controlling Board approval for aggregate personnel and program costs to be charged by an ERSS fiscal agent or its subcontractors from 4% to 3% of the value of a performance contract.
- Eliminates the requirement that, when entering into performance contracts with a fiscal agent and allocating state funds for ERSS, the Department consider the services that will be provided in a region from the Department's system of intensive, ongoing support for the improvement of school districts and school buildings.

### **Competency-based adult education programs**

- Eliminates the Adult Diploma Program and 22+ Adult High School Diploma Program, but permits an individual enrolled in either of them to complete that program by June 30, 2027.
- Permits an eligible school district, community school, community college, state community college, technical college, university branch campus, or Ohio technical center ("provider") to establish a competency-based educational program for eligible individuals to earn a high school diploma.
- Qualifies individuals who are at least 18 years old, have officially withdrawn from school, and who have not received a high school diploma or certificate of high school equivalence to participate in a competency-based educational program.
- Permits a provider to generally enroll an eligible individual in a program for three school years and request extension from the Department for an individual due to a hardship that necessitates additional time to meet the diploma requirements.
- Requires a provider to contact individuals who receive a diploma under a program to collect data on the individual's career and educational outcomes and report that data to the Department.
- Requires the Department to award a high school diploma to enrolled individuals who demonstrate competency through specified activities or earn specified course credits.

- Requires the Department to pay each provider up to \$7,500 per school year for each enrolled individual based on the extent of the individual's successful completion of the program's diploma requirements.

### **Free school breakfast and lunch**

- Requires public schools that participate in the federal school breakfast or lunch program and have an identified student percentage of at least 25% to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision and provide a free breakfast or lunch, respectively, to each student.

### **Payment of tuition for students in residential treatment facilities**

- Assigns responsibility for payment of tuition for a child that is parentally placed in a residential treatment facility in consultation with and upon recommendation of the OhioRISE Program to the school district in which the child's parent resides.
- Exempts a school district from the responsibility to pay tuition for a child who has been awarded a state scholarship.

### **School bus driver training**

- By July 1, 2026, requires employed school bus and motor van drivers to annually complete six hours of in-service training, rather than four hours as under current law.
- Authorizes the classroom portion of school bus driver recertification training to be conducted online.

## **I. School finance**

### **Funding for FY 2026 and FY 2027**

(R.C. 3314.08, 3317.011, 3317.012, 3317.014, 3317.016, 3317.017, 3317.018, 3317.019, 3317.0110, 3317.02, 3317.021, 3317.022, 3317.024, 3317.026, 3317.0212, 3317.0213, 3317.0215, 3317.0217, 3317.0218, 3317.051, 3317.11, 3317.16, 3317.162, 3317.165, 3317.20, 3317.201, 3317.25, 3317.31, and 3326.44; Sections 265.220, 265.230, and 265.450)

The bill extends the operation of the current school financing system to FY 2026 and FY 2027, but with the following changes:

1. Increases the general phase-in and disadvantaged pupil impact aid phase-in percentages from 66.67% in FY 2025 to 83.33% in FY 2026 and 100% in FY 2027;
2. Increases the minimum transportation state share percentage from 41.67% in FY 2025 to 45.83% in FY 2026 and 50% in FY 2027;
3. Eliminates gifted professional development funding for school districts;
4. Requires a district's building leadership support in the base cost calculation to be calculated using the number of school buildings in the district for the preceding fiscal year;
5. Requires the base cost and state share percentage for joint vocational school districts to be calculated in a similar manner as city, local, and exempted village school districts;

6. Requires the use data from the previous fiscal year to establish the target number of qualifying riders per bus for each city, local, and exempted village school district;

7. Requires the Tax Commissioner to certify the median federal adjusted gross income of a district's residents for use in making computations for the district, instead of the total federal adjusted gross income of residents as under current law;

8. Codifies and incorporates into the system the \$650 per student equity supplement for community schools that are not internet- or computer-based community schools and extends that payment to STEM schools; and

9. Extends the uncodified requirement that the academic co-curricular activities, supplies and academic content, athletic co-curricular activities, and building operations cost components of the base cost calculation for city, local, and exempted village school districts be based on the sum of the enrolled ADM of every district that *reported* data, rather than on *every* district as otherwise required under continuing law.

In addition, the bill extends to FY 2026 and FY 2027 the payment of temporary transitional aid based on the payment of the following funding bases:

1. For FY 2026, 95% of the FY 2020 funding base for temporary transitional aid and temporary transitional transportation aid;

2. For FY 2027, 90% of the FY 2020 funding base for temporary transitional aid and temporary transitional transportation aid;

3. For FY 2026, 95% of the FY 2021 funding base for a formula transition supplement;

4. For FY 2027, 90% of the FY 2021 funding base for a formula transition supplement.

For background information on the school financing system, see:

1. The LSC [Final Analysis for H.B. 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly \(PDF\)](#), which enacted the system;

2. The LSC [Final Analysis for H.B. 583 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly \(PDF\)](#), which made a number of corrective and technical changes to it; and

3. The LSC [Final Analysis for H.B. 33 of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly \(PDF\)](#), which extended the system to that biennium.<sup>39</sup>

### **Disadvantaged pupil impact aid**

(R.C. 3302.13 and 3317.25)

The bill makes two changes to the use of disadvantage pupil impact aid (DPIA) by school districts, community schools, and STEM schools. First, it adds community mental health prevention providers to the list of entities with which the district or school may partner in developing its plan to use its DPIA.

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<sup>39</sup> All final analyses are available on the General Assembly's website: [legislature.ohio.gov](http://legislature.ohio.gov).

Second, the bill requires each district or school to use a specified amount of its DPIA on initiatives in reading improvement and intervention and professional development in literacy instruction for teachers of students in grades K-3.

Generally, a district or school must spend at least 25% of its DPIA in a fiscal year on those initiatives. However, a school district or a community school subject to a reading achievement improvement plan in the prior fiscal year must spend at least 50% of its DPIA on those initiatives in the current fiscal year and specify in its improvement plan how those funds will be used.

Under continuing law, initiatives in reading improvement and intervention and initiatives in professional development in literacy instruction both must be aligned with the science of reading and evidence-based strategies for effective literacy instruction.

### **Student wellness and success funds**

(R.C. 3317.26)

The bill modifies requirements for the development of a school district's, community school's, or STEM school's plan to use its student wellness and success funds (SWSF). Under the bill, each district and school must *cooperate and consult*, in addition to coordinating as under continuing law with its selected community partners in developing its plan. The planning process also must include opportunities for the district's or school's selected community partners to provide meaningful input and feedback on each of the components of the plan required under the bill. The plan specifically must include:

- The type of each initiative the district or school will implement;
- The amount of funding that will be used for each initiative, including a statement verifying that at least 50% of SWSF will be spent on either physical or mental health based initiatives, or a combination of both;
- The name of the selected community partners with which the plan is being developed and implemented;
- The type of needs assessment or relevant data used to identify the need for each initiative;
- The goal of each initiative; and
- How the impact of each initiative will be measured or evaluated.

The bill requires each district and school to *annually* develop a plan and *annually*, within 30 days of creating or amending its plan (1) share the plan *for a particular school year* at a public meeting of its governing body and (2) post the plan on its *publicly accessible* website. Current law does not specify how often a school must develop and share its plan, nor that the plan must be posted on the district or school's "publicly accessible" website. The bill also requires each district and school, within the same 30-day time frame, to annually submit a link to the posted plan to the Department of Education and Workforce (the Department).

## **Other career-technical education funds**

(R.C. 3317.014)

### **Career-technical education associated services funds**

Under continuing law, school districts must use career-technical education associated services funds for purposes approved by the Department. The bill specifically identifies each of the following purposes the Department may approve for the use of those funds:

- Engaging and collaborating with education and workforce stakeholders in the service area;
- Developing and maintaining a comprehensive plan to increase career-focused education activities;
- Ensuring that plans are informed by quality data and using data to expand access to career-focused activities for all students;
- Planning and allocating resources for the growth, sustainability, and enhancement of career-focused activities in the long term;
- Establishing continuous improvement and program approval processes.

### **Career awareness and exploration funds**

The Department pays the lead district of a career-technical planning district (CTPD) career awareness and exploration funds to deliver relevant career awareness and exploration programs to all students within the CTPD. The bill adds the option for the lead district to provide mentorship opportunities through which students may learn about careers and workforce skills to the list of approved uses of career awareness and exploration funds.

The bill also requires each lead district receiving career awareness and exploration funds to report on the use of those funds to the Department.

## **Quality Community and Independent STEM School Support Programs**

(R.C. 3317.27, 3317.28, and 3317.29)

The bill codifies and revises the Quality Community School Support Program and Quality Independent STEM School Support Program. Under the programs, the Department must designate community and STEM schools as “Schools of Quality” by December 31 of each fiscal year. The Department must pay each community school and STEM school that is designated as a “School of Quality” up to \$3,000 per fiscal year for each student identified as economically disadvantaged and up to \$2,250 per fiscal year for each student who is not identified as economically disadvantaged. The Department must make periodic payments to each designated school beginning in January of that fiscal year.

### **“Community School of Quality” designation**

Under the bill, to be a “Community School of Quality,” the community school must meet at least one of the following sets of conditions:

1. The community school meets all of the following:
  - a. The school's sponsor was rated "exemplary" or "effective" on its most recent evaluation;
  - b. The school received a higher performance index score than the school district in which it is located on the two most recent report cards issued;
  - c. The school either:
    - i. Received a performance rating of four stars or higher for the value-added progress dimension on its most recent report card; or
    - ii. Is a school where a majority of its students are either enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program operated by the school or are children with disabilities receiving special education and related services, and the school did not receive a rating for the value-added progress dimension on the most recent report card; and
  - d. At least 50% of the students enrolled in the school are economically disadvantaged.
2. The community school meets all of the following:
  - a. The school's sponsor was rated "exemplary" or "effective" on its most recent evaluation;
  - b. The school is either:
    - i. In its first year of operation; or
    - ii. Opened as a kindergarten school, has added one grade per year, and has been in operation for less than four school years;
  - c. The school is replicating an operational and instructional model used by a community school that qualifies as a Community School of Quality under the first set of conditions; and
  - d. If the school has an operator, its operator received a rating of three stars or better on its most recent performance report.
3. The community school meets all of the following:
  - a. The school's sponsor was rated "exemplary" or "effective" on its most recent evaluation;
  - b. The school satisfies either of the following:
    - (i) The school contracts with an operator that operates schools in other states and meets at least one of the following:
      - (I) The operator has operated a school that received a grant funded through the federal Charter School Program within the five years prior to the date of application or receiving funding from the Charter School Growth Fund;
      - (II) The operator meets all of the following:

- One of the operator's schools in another state performed better than the school district in which the school is located;
- At least 50% of the total number of students enrolled in all of the operator's schools are economically disadvantaged;
- The operator is in good standing in all states where it operates schools; and
- The operator does not have any financial viability issues that would prevent it from effectively operating a community school in Ohio.

(ii) The school is replicating an operational and instructional model through an agreement with a college or university used by a community school or its equivalent in another state that performed better than the school district in which it is located.

c. The school is in its first year of operation.

A school that is designated as a Community School of Quality maintains that designation for the two fiscal years following the fiscal year in which it is designated. Schools that are designated as Community Schools of Quality may renew their designation each year, which extends the designation for the two fiscal years following the renewal. Furthermore, a school that was designated as a Community School of Quality for the first time for the 2022-2023 school year maintains that designation through the 2027-2028 school year and may renew its designation each year after that year.

### **Merged community schools**

The bill specifically qualifies for the program the surviving community school of a merger that takes place on or after June 30, 2022, provided it otherwise qualifies as a Community School of Quality under one of the sets of criteria described above. Payment for these schools is calculated using the adjusted full-time equivalent number of students enrolled in the school for the fiscal year as of the date the payment is made, as reported by the surviving community school, regardless of whether those students were previously enrolled in a community school that was dissolved as part of the merger.

Finally, the bill qualifies a school dissolved under the merger that otherwise qualified for the program to receive and retain funds received under the program before the bill's effective date.

### **Independent STEM schools**

A STEM school is an "Independent STEM School of Quality" if it:

1. Operates autonomously;
2. Does not have a STEM school equivalent designation;
3. Is not governed by a school district;
4. Is not a community school;

5. Cannot levy taxes or issue tax-secured bonds;
6. Satisfies continuing law requirements for STEM schools; and
7. Satisfies the requirements described in the Quality Model for STEM and STEAM Schools established by the Department.

Like community schools, a STEM school that is designated as an Independent STEM School of Quality maintains that designation for the two fiscal years following the fiscal year in which it is designated. STEM schools that were designated as Independent STEM Schools of Quality based on the report cards issued for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years may renew their designation each year, which extends the designation for the two fiscal years following the renewal.

### **Facilities funding for community and STEM schools**

(R.C. 3317.31)

The bill codifies the provision of law requiring the Department to pay an amount to each community school and STEM school for assistance with the cost associated with facilities. The bill requires the Department to pay \$25 each fiscal year for each internet- or computer-based community school (e-school) and \$1,500 each fiscal year for each student in all other community schools or STEM schools.

Traditionally, each main appropriations act has provided, in uncodified law, a per-student facilities payment to community schools and STEM schools. Generally, that payment has increased in each biennium for community schools that are not e-schools and STEM schools. Specifically, for community schools that are not e-schools and STEM schools, H.B. 110 of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, June 30, 2021, required a payment of \$500 per student in each fiscal year and H.B. 33 of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, effective July 4, 2023, required a payment of \$1,000.

### **Auxiliary services funding for mental health services**

(R.C. 3317.06)

The bill permits chartered nonpublic schools to use auxiliary services funds to provide diagnostic and therapeutic mental health services to chartered nonpublic school students.

Under continuing law, auxiliary services funds are used to purchase goods and services for students who attend chartered nonpublic schools, such as textbooks, digital texts, workbooks, instructional equipment, library materials, or tutoring and other special services. A chartered nonpublic school may elect to receive these such funds directly from the Department. Otherwise, by default, a chartered nonpublic school receives the funds through the school district in which it is located.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> R.C. 3317.024 and 3317.062, neither in the bill.



## Payment for districts with decreases in utility TPP value

(Section 265.240)

The bill requires the Department to make a payment, for FY 2026 and FY 2027, to each city, local, exempted village, or joint vocational school district that has at least one power plant within its territory and that experiences a 10% or greater decrease in the taxable value of utility tangible personal property (TPP) and an overall negative change in TPP subject to taxation. To qualify for the FY 2026 payment, a district must have experienced this decrease between tax years 2017 and 2025 or tax years 2024 and 2025. To qualify for the FY 2025 payment, a district must have experienced this decrease between tax years 2017 and 2026 or tax years 2025 and 2026.

### Eligibility determination

The Tax Commissioner must determine which districts are eligible for this payment no later than May 15, 2026 (for the FY 2026 payment) or May 15, 2027 (for the FY 2027 payment). For each eligible district, the Commissioner must certify the following information to the Department:

1. If the district is eligible for the FY 2026 payment, its total taxable value for tax year 2025 and the change in taxes charged and payable on the district's total taxable value for tax years 2017 and 2025; and
2. If the district is eligible for the FY 2027 payment, its total taxable value for tax year 2026 and the change in taxes charged and payable on the district's total taxable value for tax years 2017 and 2026; and
3. If the district is eligible for either payment, the taxable value of the utility TPP decrease and the change in taxes charged and payable on the change in taxable value.

### Payment amount

The bill requires the Department, for purposes of computing the payment, to replace the three-year average valuations used in computing a district's state education aid for FY 2019 with the district's total taxable value for tax year 2025 (for the FY 2026 payment) or tax year 2026 (for the FY 2027 payment). It then must recompute the state education aid for FY 2019 without applying any funding limitations enacted by the General Assembly.

The amount of a district's payment is the *greater* of 1 or 2 as described below:

1. The lesser of either:
  - a. The positive difference between the district's state education aid for FY 2019 prior to the recomputation and the district's recomputed state education aid for FY 2019; or
  - b. The absolute value of the change in taxes charged and payable on the district's total taxable value for tax years 2017 and 2025 (for the FY 2026 payment) or for tax years 2017 and 2026 (for the FY 2027 payment).

2. 0.50 times the absolute value of the change in taxes charged and payable on the district's total taxable value for tax years 2017 and 2023 (for the FY 2024 payment) or for tax years 2017 and 2024 (for the FY 2025 payment).

### **Payment deadline**

The Department must make FY 2026 payments between June 1 and June 30, 2026, and must make FY 2027 payments between June 1 and June 30, 2027.

### **Codified law payment**

The bill prohibits the Department from calculating or making a similar payment prescribed under codified law for FY 2026 and FY 2027.<sup>41</sup>

## **II. Career-technical education and workforce development**

### **Waivers for middle school career-technical education**

(R.C. 3313.90)

Beginning July 1, 2026, the bill eliminates waivers from a city, local, or exempted village school district's obligation to provide a career-technical education to seventh and eighth grade students.

Continuing law generally requires each district to provide career-technical education to students in grades 7 through twelve. Under current law, however a district board may receive a waiver from the requirement to provide career-technical education to seventh and eighth grade students by annually adopting a resolution announcing its intent to not offer career-technical education to those grades for that school year.

### **Approval deadlines for career-technical education programs**

(R.C. 3317.161)

The bill eliminates the application and approval deadlines for a new career-technical education program. The deadlines eliminated under the bill include:

- The March 1 deadline for the lead district of a career-technical planning district to approve or disapprove a school district's, community school's, or STEM school's career-technical education program application;
- The March 15 deadline for a district or school to appeal to the Department the lead district's decision or failure to take action on a career-technical education program application.
- The May 15 deadline for the Department to approve or disapprove a career-technical education program for the next fiscal year.

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<sup>41</sup> R.C. 3317.028, not in the bill.

Because the May 15 deadline no longer applies under the bill, the bill also eliminates the Department's authority to identify circumstances in which it may approve or disapprove a career-technical education program after that former deadline.

### **Career-Technical Assurance Guides (CTAG)**

(R.C. 3313.6013, 3313.6031, 3314.03, 3326.11, and 3328.24)

The bill adds high school courses aligned to the Chancellor of Higher Education's Career-Technical Assurance Guides (CTAG) to the list of programs that may be considered an "advanced standing program" at school districts, other public schools, and chartered nonpublic schools. Under continuing law, each district or school must provide high school students with an opportunity to participate in advanced standing programs. Other advanced standing programs are the College Credit Plus Program (CCP), Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and early college high school programs.

The bill also requires each district or school that has students enrolled in CTAG-aligned courses to implement a policy for grading and calculating class standings for those courses in a manner that is equivalent to the district's or school's policy for CCP, AP, IB, or honors courses.

### **Background**

Continuing law requires the Chancellor to establish criteria, policies, and procedures to permit a student to transfer credit for qualifying career-technical courses to a state institution of higher education from a public secondary or adult career-technical institution or another state institution "without unnecessary duplication or institutional barriers." This credit transfer initiative is known as the Career-Technical Assurance Guide or "CTAG."

Thus, students who complete CTAG-aligned career-technical courses at a public high school, and who meets certain other criteria (normally including earning a proficient score on a related WebXam), are often awarded college credit upon enrollment in a state institution. A chartered nonpublic school student may participate in career-technical programs at public high schools without any financial assessment, charge, or tuition that is not otherwise charged to resident public school students in such programs.<sup>42</sup>

### **Industry-recognized credentials**

(R.C. 3301.17, 3313.618, 3313.6113, and 3313.6114)

The bill eliminates the requirement that the Director of Education and Workforce's industry-recognized credentials and licenses committee assign a point value for each of its approved credentials and establish the total number of points that a student must earn to satisfy certain high school graduation requirements. Instead of point values, the committee must establish the criteria under which a student may use industry-recognized credentials to help qualify for a high school diploma.

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<sup>42</sup> See R.C. 3313.90 and 3333.162, not in the bill.

Continuing law permits a student to fulfil certain graduation requirements by (1) earning an industry-recognized credential diploma seal or (2) earning industry-recognized credentials as a “foundational” option when using alternative demonstrations of competency. Under the bill, qualifying industry-recognized credentials for either option must be based on the criteria established by the committee rather than point values established under current law.

### **Graduation and career plans**

(R.C. 3313.617)

School districts and other public and chartered nonpublic schools are required to adopt a policy regarding students who are at risk of not qualifying for a high school diploma. As part of that policy, districts and schools must develop a graduation plan for each student enrolled in grades 9 through 12. Along with continuing law that requires graduation plans to address a student’s pathway to meeting curriculum and graduation requirements, the bill requires graduation plans to identify post-graduation career goals for the student and to align the student’s high school experience with these goals. The bill also requires the Department to adopt rules regarding the content of the graduation and career plans.

The bill requires that a district or school ensures that a student and a representative of the district or school or a representative of an organization with which the district or school partners for career planning and advising supports jointly develop the plan with the student. Current law requires just a representative of a district or school to jointly develop the plan.

The bill requires a district to ensure that a graduation and career plan conforms to, rather than supplements, its policy on career advising, and aligns to any student success plan developed for the student.

### **Career pathways resource**

(R.C. 3313.6020)

The bill requires the Department, in consultation with the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, to develop a career pathways resource for students. Each public school must distribute the resource to all students in grades 6-12 at least annually in the manner prescribed by the Department.

### **Work-based learning hours**

(R.C. 3313.618)

For the purposes of qualifying for a high school diploma, the bill allows a student to use completion of 250 hours of work-based learning experience as a “foundational” option as part of an alternative demonstration of competency. Under current law, the completion of 250 hours of work-based learning experience is considered a “supporting” option.

Continuing law generally requires a high school student to earn a “competency score” established by the Department on both the Algebra I and English Language Arts II end-of-course exams to qualify for a high school diploma. If a student fails to obtain that score on one or both of those exams and then fails do so again on a retake of them, the student may use an alternative demonstration of competency.

One alternative demonstration of competency is to complete a “foundational” option and either another “foundational” option or a “supporting” option. Both “foundational” and “supporting” options generally align with student outcomes in career-technical education programs.

### **III. Assessments, instruction, and tutoring**

#### **Diagnostic assessment**

(R.C. 3301.079, 3301.0715, and 3313.608; Section 733.30)

As under current law, the bill requires the Department to adopt a diagnostic assessment by June 30, 2026. Under the bill, all public schools must use the assessments developed by the Department. The bill eliminates the option for high-performing districts and schools administer alternative diagnostic assessments and the authority to use an alternative assessment to measure reading skills under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Current law permits a district or school to use alternative diagnostic assessments if the district or school received a performance rating of four stars or higher on the state report card for the preceding school year.

The Department is already required under current law to adopt diagnostic assessments designed to measure student comprehension of academic content and mastery of related skills for relevant subject areas and grade levels. However, the bill changes and adds requirements. Current law requires the Department to adopt a diagnostic assessment aligned with the academic standards and model curriculum for first and second grade in reading, writing, and mathematics, and for third grade in reading and writing, but the bill requires the Department to adopt diagnostic assessments for each of grades kindergarten through three that are aligned with standards in reading and math. Further, the bill requires the diagnostic assessment for reading to be designed to measure student comprehension of foundational reading skills aligned to the science of reading. The bill also removes the requirement that blank copies of diagnostic assessments be public records and that upon completion of each assessment, the Department must inform each district or school of its completion and make the assessment available to that district or school.

Under the bill, districts and schools must administer the diagnostic assessments by September 30 of each year, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. It also requires districts and schools to administer diagnostic assessments to a student with significant cognitive disability in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Department.

Finally, under the bill, each district and school must utilize and score each diagnostic assessment in accordance with rules established by the Department.

#### **Kindergarten readiness assessment**

(R.C. 3301.0714, 3301.0715, and 3302.03)

The bill requires districts and schools to administer the kindergarten readiness assessment to each kindergarten student between the first day of July of the school year in which the student enrolls in kindergarten and the 20<sup>th</sup> day of instruction of that school year. Each district or school must utilize and score the kindergarten readiness assessment in accordance with rules established by the Department of Children and Youth.

Continuing law requires each district or school to report the results of diagnostics assessments administered to each student enrolled in grades kindergarten through 3. The bill eliminates an exemption from reporting the results of kindergarten students if the parent of that student requests the district or school not to report the results.

The bill eliminates the requirement that the Department include data from the kindergarten readiness assessment on the district or school's state report card.

### **State assessments as public records**

(R.C. 3301.0711)

Beginning with state assessments administered in the spring of the 2025-2026 school year, the bill reduces from 40% to 20% the percentage of questions on the assessment used to compute a student's score that must be made a public record. It also eliminates related out-of-date provisions that make questions on state assessments public records.

### **Core curriculum and evidence-based reading programs**

(R.C. 3313.6028)

Current law requires each school district, community school, and STEM school to only use core curriculum and instructional materials in English language arts and evidence-based reading intervention programs from a list of high-quality curricula, materials, and programs aligned to the Science of Reading and developed by the Department.

The bill limits that requirement by only requiring the use of a core curriculum and instructional materials from the list for students in grades pre-K-5. However, it expressly requires each district or school to use evidence-based reading intervention programs from that list for students in grades pre-K-12

### **Wellness instruction**

(R.C. 3313.60, 3314.0311, 3314.0312, 3326.092, and 3326.093)

The bill requires each school district and other public school annually to provide developmentally appropriate, evidence-based instruction in mental health promotion and suicide prevention, instead of instruction in evidence-based suicide prevention and safety training and violence prevention as required under current law. The instruction must include information on the development and maintenance of positive mental health, stigma reduction, and the signs and symptoms of depression, suicide, and self-harm, and seeking help for self and peers.

The bill eliminates the requirement that students in grades six through 12 receive evidence-based social inclusion instruction and instead requires students in grades kindergarten through 12 to receive annual evidence-based instruction in universal prevention practices or programs that teach students the necessary knowledge and skills to improve health and wellness outcomes. The instruction must focus on enhancing interpersonal skills, encouraging health decision making, and increasing resiliency.

Continuing law requires each district or school to use a training program or practice that is approved by the Department for that instruction.

Prior to providing the instruction, the bill requires each district or school to notify each student's parent or guardian of the instruction that will be provided. The notification must indicate that the parent or guardian can review any related instructional materials and that, upon written request of the parent or guardian, the student must be excused from receiving the instruction.

These provisions take effect July 1, 2026.

### **Approved evidence-based training programs**

(R.C. 3301.221)

The bill requires the Department to maintain a list of approved evidence-based training programs that districts and schools must use when providing instruction on mental health promotion, suicide prevention, and health and wellness outcomes. Continuing law requires the Department to maintain the list in consultation with DBH, but the bill removes the requirement to consult with the Department of Public Safety as well.

The bill also eliminates the specific criteria that the approved training programs must meet and the requirement that the Department maintain a list of approved training programs for instruction in social inclusion, as well as the criteria for those approved programs.

### **Youth peer-led programming**

(R.C. 3313.6611)

The bill permits each district and school to provide youth peer-led programming based on relational connections and youth empowerment models for each school building serving grades six through 12, instead of designating a student-lead violence prevention club as permitted under current law. Under continuing law, the youth peer-led programming must do the following:

1. Be open to all members of the student body;
2. Have at least one identified adult advisor; and
3. Foster opportunities for student leadership development.

The bill requires the youth peer-led programming to also do the following:

1. Promote help-seeking behaviors; and
2. Encourage students to individually assess and develop strengths in their lives.

The bill eliminates the requirement to implement and sustain suicide and violence prevention and social inclusion training and awareness activities.

### **Advanced math learning opportunities**

(R.C. 3313.6032)

The bill requires each school district to provide advanced math learning opportunities to each student who achieves an advanced level of skill on either a math achievement assessment



or an end-of-course exam in the following school year. An “advanced level of skill” is the highest level on the range of scores a student may receive on those assessments or exams. If a student takes an advanced math course, the student must take any corresponding required achievement assessment or end-of-course exam for that course.

Under the bill, “advanced learning opportunities in math” or “advanced math course” refers to learning opportunities or a course that provides academic content or rigor that exceeds the standard math curriculum for the student’s grade level, as determined by the district.

If a district does not offer any advanced learning opportunities in math for the grade level in which the student is enrolled for the next school year, the bill exempts that district from the requirement to provide advanced learning opportunities.

The bill requires each district to notify the parent or guardian of a student who qualifies for advanced math learning opportunities. The parent or guardian may then submit a written request to opt out their student from the advanced math learning opportunities. If a parent or guardian submits an opt out request, the district is not required to provide that student with advanced math instruction.

### **Reporting of math curriculum and materials**

(R.C. 3301.0714)

The bill requires each public school to report the core curriculum and instruction materials it is using for math for grades pre-K through 12 through the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Continuing law already requires each public school to also report what core curriculum instructional materials it is using for English language arts for grades pre-K through five and the reading intervention programs for grades pre-K through 12 through EMIS.

### **Provision of high-dosage tutoring**

(R.C. 3313.608)

The bill eliminates the requirement that high-dosage tutoring provided to students on reading improvement and monitoring plans by school districts and other public schools be provided outside of the student’s regular instruction time. As a result, the bill expressly permits a district or school to incorporate high-dosage tutoring into a student’s regular instruction time.

The bill also requires a locally approved high-dosage tutoring program to align with best practices identified by the Department.

### **Background**

Under the Third-Grade Reading Guarantee, districts and schools must annually assess the reading skills of each student in grades K-3 and identify students who are reading below their grade level. Each district or school must provide intervention services for each student identified as reading below grade level, including developing a reading improvement and monitoring plan (RIMP) for each student. Each RIMP must include instruction time outside of a student’s regular instruction time of at least three days a week, or at least 50 hours over 36 weeks, of high-dosage



tutoring provided by a state-approved vendor on the list of high-quality tutoring vendors compiled by the Department or through a locally approved program that aligns with high-dosage tutoring best practices.

### **High-quality tutoring program list**

(R.C. 3301.136)

When compiling the list of high-quality tutoring vendors, continuing law requires the Department to request the qualifications of public and private entities that provide tutoring programs for students. The bill requires those qualifications to include program efficacy data or other evidence of program effectiveness for students who participate in the tutoring programs.

The bill requires the Department to remove immediately from the list any English language arts tutoring program that the Department determines is not aligned to the science of reading or that uses a three-cueing approach.

Every three years after it the initial list is posted, the Department must provide an opportunity for entities to submit their qualifications for consideration to be included in the list and post an updated list of tutoring programs on the Department's website.

## **IV. Educators**

### **Use of seniority in teacher assignments**

(R.C. 3319.173)

The bill requires each school district superintendent to assign teachers to positions based on the best interests of the district's students. The bill also prohibits the superintendent from using seniority or continuing contract status as the primary factor in assigning, reassigning, or transferring teachers, regardless of whether the assignment, reassignment, or transfer is voluntary on the part of the teacher.

The bill also provides that these new provisions prevail over conflicting provisions of collective bargaining agreements entered into after the bill's effective date. As such, any current collective bargaining agreements that assign teachers based on other factors, including seniority or continuing contract status as a primary factor, are unaffected for the remainder of the agreement's duration.

Under continuing law, except when deciding between teachers who have comparable evaluations, school districts are already prohibited from (1) giving seniority preference to teachers when making reductions in force or (2) rehiring teachers based on seniority.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> R.C. 3319.17(C), not in the bill.

## **School district employment data**

(R.C. 3301.82)

### **Collection of data**

The bill requires the Department to annually collect school district employment and vacancy data for all of the following:

1. Teachers;
2. Related services providers and other providers of specialized services;
3. Principals and assistant principals;
4. Paraprofessionals;
5. Bus drivers; and
6. Any other positions as determined by the Department.

### **Report aggregate data**

The bill requires the Department to report the number of vacant positions aggregated by the following:

1. Type of position;
2. Subject area;
3. Geographic area, including rural and urban areas;
4. Methods used to fill vacant positions, which must include the following:
  - a. Hiring of substitutes, retirees, or alternative licensure program candidates;
  - b. Contracting with an educational service center or other entity; and
  - c. Other methods determined by the Department; and
5. Positions that remain unfilled.

### **Publish collected data**

The Department annually must publish and summarize the collected data on its public website.

## **Principal Apprenticeship Program**

(R.C. 3319.271)

The bill requires the Department to establish a Principal Apprenticeship Program, which must provide pathways for individuals to receive training and development in school leadership and primary and secondary school administration. The program must also provide the option for participants to obtain a master's degree.

The bill requires that the program be open to licensed educators who are employed as a teacher in an Ohio public or chartered nonpublic school, as well as to professionals working in fields other than education. The Department may give preference to applicants who have

multiple years of classroom teaching experience or multiple years of experience in the same professional career field and experience in teaching, training, or supervising others.

The bill requires participants of the program to be mentored by a school principal and complete on-site job training. Upon certification from the Department that the individual has completed the program, the bill requires the State Board of Education to issue the individual a professional administrator license for grades pre-K-12.

## **Science of Reading professional development**

(R.C. 3301.0714 and 3319.2310)

### **Development of training course**

The bill requires the Department to maintain an introductory Science of Reading training course for licensed educators and to develop a competency-based training course that updates and reinforces educators' knowledge in the Science of Reading.

### **Training requirement**

The bill requires each teacher, administrator, or speech-language pathologist employed by a school district, community school, STEM school, or college-preparatory boarding school to complete the Department's Science of Reading training as follows:

1. An individual hired as a teacher or administrator prior to July 1, 2025, must complete the training by June 30, 2030, and every five years thereafter;
2. An individual hired as a teacher or administrator on or after July 1, 2025, must complete the training within one year after the date of hire, and every five years thereafter. However, the bill provides an exemption for individuals who either already completed that training or a similar training, as determined by the Department, or completed appropriate coursework in the Science of Reading as part of the individual's educator or licensure preparation program, as verified by the district or school;
3. An individual employed as a school psychologist or speech-language pathologist must complete the training by June 30, 2027, and every five years thereafter.

### **Professional development**

Under continuing law, a district or school must establish a local professional development committee for the purpose of determining if coursework that a teacher proposes to complete meets the requirements set by the State Board of Education rules for licensure renewal.<sup>44</sup> The bill requires those committees to count Science of Reading training towards professional development requirements for educator licensure renewal. Additionally, a committee must permit an individual to apply any hours earned over the minimum required hours of professional development coursework for licensure renewal to the next renewal period for that license.

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<sup>44</sup> R.C. 3319.22, not in the bill.

## **Reporting**

The bill requires districts and schools to report to the Department through the Education Management Information System (EMIS) the number of teachers, administrators, school psychologists, and speech-language pathologists employed by the district or school that have completed the Science of Reading training.

### **Educator in-service training**

(R.C. 3319.073)

### **Youth suicide awareness and prevention training**

The bill requires each school district or other public school to develop its own youth suicide awareness and prevention in-service educator training curriculum instead of adopting or adapting curriculum developed by the Department. Continuing law requires each district or school to develop its curriculum in consultation with public or private agencies or persons involved in youth suicide awareness and prevention programs. Additionally, the bill eliminates the option for an educator to accomplish the training through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials approved by the district or school.

### **Child sexual abuse training**

The bill eliminates the requirement that child sexual abuse in-service training for educators be provided by law enforcement officers or prosecutors that have experience in handling cases involving child sexual abuse or child sexual violence. Instead, the bill requires each district or school to develop its own curriculum in consultation with public or private agencies or persons involved in child sexual abuse prevention or child sexual violence prevention.

## **V. Community schools**

### **High-performing community school definition**

(R.C. 3313.413)

The bill revises the definition of “high-performing community school” for the purposes of the law regarding the right of first refusal to purchase school district property and the involuntary disposition of school district property. Under the bill, a community school is high performing if it meets at least one of the following sets of conditions:

1. The community school:
  - a. Received a higher performance index score than the school district in which it is located on the two most recently issued state report cards; and
  - b. Either:
    - i. Received a performance rating of four stars or higher for the Progress component on its most recent report card; or
    - ii Is a dropout prevention and recovery community school and did not receive a rating for the Progress component on the most recent report card.

2. The community school serves only grades kindergarten through three and received a performance rating of four stars or higher for the Early Literacy component on the most recent state report card;

3. The community school has not commenced operations or has been in operation for less than one school year and:

a. The school is replicating an operational and instructional model used by another high-performing community school; and

b. The school either:

i. Has an operator that received an overall rating of three stars or higher, or a “C” or higher, on its most recent performance report; or

ii. Does not have an operator and is sponsored by a sponsor that was rated “exemplary” or “effective” on its most recent evaluation.

Under current law, a “high-performing community school” is a community school that meets one of the following:

1. The school has received:

a. A performance rating of three stars or higher for the Achievement component on the state report card or has increased its performance index score in each of the three previous years of operation; and

b. A performance rating of four stars or higher for progress on its most recent state report card.

2. Serves only grades K-three and has received either a performance rating of four stars or higher for the Early Literacy component on its most recent state report card; or

3. Primarily serves students enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program and has received a rating of “exceeds standards” on its most recent state report card.

### **Dropout prevention and recovery community schools**

(R.C. 3314.02, 3314.362, and 3314.383; conforming changes in R.C. 3301.0712, 3301.0727, 3302.03, 3302.034, 3302.20, 3314.013, 3314.016, 3314.017, 3314.034, 3314.05, 3314.261, 3314.29, 3314.35, 3314.351, 3314.46, 3314.361, 3314.38, 3314.381, 3314.382, 3317.163, 3317.22, and 3319.301)

The bill defines a “dropout prevention and recovery community school” as a community school that enrolls only students who are between the ages of 14 and 21, and who, at the time of their initial enrollment, are at least one grade level behind their cohort age groups or experience crises that significantly interfere with their academic progress such that they are prevented from continuing their traditional educational programs.

Prior to July 1, 2027, each school to which the bill’s provisions apply, upon approval of the school’s sponsor, must (1) transfer those grades that do not comply to a separate community school or (2) cease offering those grades. The bill requires schools to assist students who are not

eligible to attend a “dropout prevention and recovery community school” to transfer to the separate community school or enroll in a different school.

### **Transition period**

Currently, a “dropout recovery community school” is a community school in which a majority of the students are enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program that is operated by the school. The bill permits schools that meet the current definition but do not satisfy the new definitional requirements to continue to operate for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years.

On and after July 1, 2027, all community schools that primarily serve students enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program must comply with the new definition.

### **Separate IRN**

The bill requires the Department to assign any separate community school created to attain compliance with the new definition its own internal retrieval number.

## **Involuntary sale of unused school facilities**

(R.C. 3313.411)

### **Definition of unused school facility**

Continuing law requires school districts to offer to sell or lease any of its real property that meet the statutory definition of being an “unused school facility” to other public schools. The bill clarifies a building is an “unused school facility” if it has been used for direct academic instruction but student enrollment is less than 60% of either:

1. The maximum student enrollment established in the building’s architectural specifications or master design plan; or
2. The building’s greatest student enrollment in the ten most recent school years including the current school year.

Under law not changed by the bill, an “unused school facility” also means real property that has been used by a school district for school operations, including academic instruction or administration, since July 1, 1998, but has not been used in that capacity for one year.

### **Department list of unused school facilities**

Beginning November 30, 2025, and annually thereafter, the bill requires each school district to annually report to the Department the enrollment data necessary to determine whether a school building meets the 60% student enrollment threshold and any real property that meets the other set of criteria to be considered an unused school facility. By December 31, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Department must publish a list of unused school facilities on its website.

### **Value**

The bill also changes the value for which a school district must sell an unused school facility from the property’s appraised fair market value to the property’s appraised value as an

educational facility. The district is not required to accept any payment that is lower than this value, as determined in an appraisal that is not more than one year old.

### **Method of sale**

The bill also changes from an auction to a lottery the method by which a district must sell its property if more than one high-performing community school notifies the district of its intention to purchase property. Specifically, the district must conduct a lottery to select the school to which the district must sell the property.

### **Priority**

If no high-performing community school within the district offers to purchase or lease a property, the bill requires the district to offer it to high-performing community schools located outside of the district prior to offering it to other start-up community schools, college-preparatory boarding schools, and STEM schools.

Continuing law requires a school district to offer to lease or sell “unused” real property to other public schools within the district, including community schools, college-preparatory boarding schools, and STEM schools. Community schools that meet the statutory definition of “high-performing” must be given priority in such transactions. Districts also may offer the property to existing community schools located outside the district, if those schools have plans, stipulated in their contracts with their sponsors, to relocate to the district.

## **VI. School policies**

### **Absence intervention, truancy, and chronic absenteeism**

The bill substantially modifies the process school districts, brick-and-mortar community schools, and STEM schools must follow when addressing student absences by replacing several more structured statutory requirements and timelines related to the absence intervention process with a similar set of district-led requirements. It also makes other changes.

#### **District and school responsibilities for student absences**

(R.C. 3321.191, repealed and reenacted, 3321.19 and conforming changes in 2151.27, 3320.04 and 3321.16)

The bill generally retains the (1) requirement to adopt a policy to address student absences and (2) definition of “habitual truant.” However, it repeals the following process districts and schools must follow prescribed in current law:



Instead, the bill replaces this process with a requirement to adopt a policy in consultation with the juvenile court that does all of the following:

1. Acknowledges that student absences from school for any reason, whether excused or unexcused, take away from instructional time and have an adverse effect on student learning;
2. Identifies strategies to prevent students from becoming chronically absent;
3. Includes procedures for notifying a student's parent, guardian, or custodian, when the student has been absent from school for a number of hours determined by the board, which cannot exceed 5% of the minimum number of hours required in the school year;
4. Establishes a tiered system that provides more intensive interventions and supports for students with greater numbers of absences and includes resources to help students and their families address the root causes of the absences;



5. Provides for one or more absence intervention teams to work with students at risk of becoming chronically absent and their families to improve the students' attendance at school;
6. Prohibits suspending, expelling, or otherwise preventing a student from attending school based on the student's absences; and
7. Permits consultation or partnering with public and nonprofit agencies to provide assistance to students and families in reducing absences.

### **Chronic absenteeism percentage**

(R.C. 3321.191(A))

The bill officially defines "chronically absent" as missing at least 10% of the minimum number of hours required in the school year, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. This aligns with federal law.

Federal law requires schools to collect data on "chronic absenteeism" and track and monitor absences.<sup>45</sup> Generally, a student is "chronically absent" when the student, with or without excuse, misses 10% or more of the school year, or about 18 days.<sup>46</sup> Schools and districts must provide supports to these students and their families to prevent further absences.

### **Grade level promotion**

(R.C. 3313.609)

The bill eliminates the requirement that a school district or community school prohibit the grade level promotion of a student who has been absent without excuse for more than 10% of the required attendance days of the school year.

### **Filing of truancy complaint in juvenile court**

(R.C. 3321.16; conforming changes in R.C. 3321.22)

As mentioned above, the bill eliminates the requirement that if the student's absences persist after the school has made meaningful attempts to reengage the student, the school must file a complaint in juvenile court not later than 61 days after the absence intervention team's plan was implemented. Instead, the bill requires a complaint only if the school district determines that the student is not making satisfactory progress in improving the student's attendance at school. When a complaint is filed, it must allege that the child is an unruly child for being a habitual truant and that the parent or guardian has violated the duty to cause the child to attend school.

### **Background**

Under continuing law, an "habitual truant" is a student of compulsory school age who is absent *without legitimate excuse* for 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one

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<sup>45</sup> 20 U.S.C. 6311(c) and 6613(b).

<sup>46</sup> See, [Letter from Secretary Cardona Regarding Student Attendance and Engagement](#), March 22, 2024, which is available on the U.S. Department of Education's website: [ed.gov](https://www.ed.gov).

school month, or 72 or more hours in a school year.<sup>47</sup> For any student whose absences meet that threshold, a school district or school must currently engage an absence intervention plan process. That process requires the student and the student's parent to participate in activities to get the student to attend school and, if the student's unexcused absences persist, it can eventually lead to the filing of a complaint in juvenile court.

### **Notice to parents regarding truancy and consequences**

(R.C. 3321.21)

The bill clarifies that certain required notices to parents regarding truancy and consequences that include proof of receipt and are sent by email or text message, in addition to registered mail, regular mail with certificate of mailing, or other form of delivery, are legal notices.

### **Student cellphone use**

(R.C. 3313.753)

The bill requires each public school's (any school district, community school, STEM school, or college-preparatory boarding school) policy governing the use of cellphones by students during school hours to outright prohibit student cellphone use during the instructional day. Though, the bill maintains an exception to that prohibition that permits cellphone use for student learning or to monitor or address a health concern if determined appropriate by the school's governing body or if that use is included in a student's individualized education program (IEP) or section 504 plan.

Each school must adopt the updated policy by the first day of January after the bill's effective date if it does not have a policy that meets the bill's requirement. Within 60 days of that date, the Department must develop a model policy that meets the bill's requirements for use by schools.

### **Background**

H.B. 250 of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, effective August 14, 2024, requires public schools to adopt a policy governing the use of cellphones by students during school hours that (1) emphasizes that student use be as limited as possible during school hours and (2) reduces use-related distractions in classroom settings. That law also requires the Department to adopt a model cellphone policy, taking into account available research concerning the effect of cellphone use by students in school settings.

### **Artificial intelligence policies**

(R.C. 3301.24; conforming changes in R.C. 3314.03, and 3326.11)

The bill requires the Department to develop a model policy on the use of artificial intelligence in schools no later than December 31, 2025. The policy must include the appropriate use of artificial intelligence by students and staff for educational purposes.

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<sup>47</sup> R.C. 2151.011(B)(18), not in the bill.

Not later than July 1, 2026, each school district and public school must adopt a policy on the use of artificial intelligence in schools. Districts and schools may choose to adopt the model policy created by the Department.

The bill permits the Department to collect data from districts and schools on their use of artificial intelligence in the manner prescribed by the Department.

## **State report card**

(R.C. 3302.03; Section 265.550)

### **Early Literacy component**

The bill eliminates the use of the percentage of students promoted to the fourth grade under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee as a performance measure for the Early Literacy component on the state report card for public schools. For the two remaining performance measures used to calculate the component, (1) the proficiency rate on the reading segment of the third grade English language arts assessment and (2) the progress in improving literacy in grades kindergarten through three, the bill assigns a weight of 50% for each. If either of those performance measures is not included on a district's or school building's report card, the bill requires performance ratings for the Early Literacy component to be prescribed by rule of the Department.

### **College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness component**

The bill eliminates the requirement that the Department analyze data from the post-secondary readiness performance measure in the 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 school years and develop rules for a method to assign a performance rating to the College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness (CCWMR) component based on that measure. The bill also eliminates a related requirement that the method not include a tiered structure or per student bonuses. The bill eliminates requirements for the Department to propose rules for a method to assign a performance rating on the CCWMR component, submit the rules to the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) for approval, and begin assigning performance ratings for the CCWMR component and factoring it into a district's or building's overall performance rating for the 2024-2025 school year only if JCARR approves the rules.

Instead, the bill requires the Department to include the CCWMR component as report-only data on school district and school building report cards for the 2024-2025 school year. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, the bill requires the Department to assign a performance rating to the CCWMR component and factor it into the calculation for a school district's or building's report card.

The bill retains a requirement for the method used to assign performance ratings on the CCWMR component that a district or building may not receive less than three stars for the component if the district's or building's performance on the component meets or exceeds a level of improvement set by the Department. To account for this requirement, continuing law permits more than half of the total districts and buildings may receive a performance rating of three stars on the component.

## **Educational Regional Service System**

(R.C. 3312.01, 3312.07, 3312.08, 3312.09, 3312.10, and 3312.13; R.C. 3312.02, 3312.03, 3312.04, 3312.05, and 3312.06 (repealed); R.C. 3312.02, repealed and reenacted)

The Educational Regional Service System (ERSS) was established by H.B. 115 of the 126<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and became operational on July 1, 2007. H.B. 115 created the 16-region system to provide support services to school districts, community schools, and chartered nonpublic schools and to generally support state and regional education initiatives and efforts to improve school effectiveness and student achievement. The bill modifies the purpose, makeup, regions, and procedures for ERSS.

### **Initiatives**

(R.C. 3312.01)

In addition to supporting state and regional “education initiatives,” to improve school effectiveness and student achievement, as required under continuing law, the bill also requires ERSS to support workforce development initiatives. The bill also requires ERSS to provide support and technical assistance to improve school effectiveness and student achievement.

The bill eliminates law establishing the intent for ERSS to reduce the unnecessary duplication of programs and provide for a more streamlined and efficient delivery of educational services without reducing the availability of the services districts and schools need.

### **Service Providers**

(R.C. 3312.01)

The bill expressly includes as service providers under ERSS career-technical planning districts, county boards of developmental disabilities, Ohio college tech prep regional centers, and community colleges. Continuing law already includes educational service centers (ESCs), information technology centers, and “other regional education service providers.” The bill clarifies that “other regional education service providers” are determined by the Department.

### **Services for STEM schools**

(R.C. 3312.01 and 3312.10)

The bill requires ERSS services, including special education and related services, to be provided to STEM schools. Under continuing law, ERSS services must be provided to school districts, community schools, and chartered nonpublic schools.

The bill also permits STEM schools to enter into an agreement with the governing authority of an information technology center, which school districts and community schools may do under continuing law.

### **Regions**

(Repealed and reenacted R.C. 3312.02; conforming changes in R.C. 3312.01)

The bill eliminates the 16 statutorily established ERSS regions and instead requires the Department to establish and designate the boundaries of up to 16 new regions within 180 days

of the bill's effective date. The Department must notify affected regions of subsequent changes at least 90 days before the fiscal year in which those changes will take effect.

### **Regional advisory councils**

(R.C. 3312.01, 3312.08, 3312.09, 3312.13; repealed R.C. 3312.03, 3312.04, 3312.05, and 3312.06)

The bill eliminates ERSS regional advisory councils and subcommittees.

Under current law, each ERSS region is required to have an advisory council composed of representatives from regional ESCs, school districts, institutions of higher education, and the treasurer of the fiscal agent for the region. Current law requires each advisory council to:

- Identify regional needs and priorities for educational services that the Department may use to develop performance contracts entered into by the fiscal agent of the region;
- Develop policies to coordinate the delivery of services in a manner that responds to regional needs and priorities;
- Make recommendations to the fiscal agent regarding the expenditure of funds for implementation of state and regional education initiatives and school improvement efforts;
- Monitor implementation of state and regional education initiatives and school improvement efforts by ESCs, information technology centers, and other regional service providers to ensure that the terms of the performance contracts entered into by the fiscal agent are met;
- Establish an accountability system to evaluate the council on its performance of the duties described above; and
- Establish specialized subcommittees of the council.

### **Fiscal agents and performance contracts**

(R.C. 3312.01, 3312.07, 3312.08, 3312.09, and 3312.13)

The bill permits career-technical planning districts, county boards of developmental disabilities, Ohio college tech prep regional centers, and community colleges to be the fiscal agent for an ERSS region. It also permits the Department to select an entity located in another ERSS region to be a fiscal agent for a region where no entity responded to or met the requirements in the Department's request for proposals. Under continuing law, a school district or educational service center may serve as a region's fiscal agent.

Under continuing law, the Department must select entities to serve as a region's fiscal agent based on certain criteria. The bill modifies one of these criteria by requiring an entity to provide an assurance it will limit aggregate fees for administering a performance contract to 5% of the contract's value, rather than a demonstrated intent to limit those fees to 7% as under current law.

## **Performance contracts**

(R.C. 3312.07 and 3312.09)

Under continuing law, each ERSS fiscal agent must enter performance contracts with the Department to implement the state and regional education initiatives and school improvement efforts and to disburse ERSS funding. Each performance contract must include the aggregate fees to be charged by the fiscal agent and its subcontractors to cover personnel and program costs associated with administering the contract. The bill decreases the threshold to require Controlling Board approval of those such costs from 4% to 3% of the value of the performance contract.

State law also prescribes certain factors the Department must consider when entering performance contracts with a fiscal agent. The bill eliminates the requirement that the Department consider the services that will be provided in an ERSS region from the Department's system of intensive, ongoing support for the improvement of school districts and school buildings before entering a performance contract.<sup>48</sup>

## **Competency-based adult education programs**

(R.C. 3313.902, 3314.38, and 3345.86, all repealed and reenacted; R.C. 3317.036, 3317.23, 3317.231, and 3317.24, all repealed; conforming changes in R.C. 3317.01; Section 733.20)

### **Eliminate existing programs**

The bill eliminates the Adult Diploma Program and 22+ Adult High School Diploma Program. The bill allows individuals enrolled in those programs to complete their program in accordance with its requirements prior to its repeal, so long as they complete it by June 30, 2027. Alternatively, it allows an individual to instead complete a competency-based program as established in this bill. The Department is required to pay an eligible institution or eligible provider as required by the program an individual completes.

### **Competency-based educational programs**

#### ***Definition***

Under the bill, a “competency-based educational program” is any system of academic instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting in which individuals receive credit based on demonstrations and assessments of their learning rather than the amount of time they spend studying a subject. A competency-based educational program must encourage accelerated learning among individuals who master academic materials quickly while providing additional instructional support time for individuals who need it.

#### ***Providers***

The bill permits a city, local, or exempted village school district or community school that operates a dropout prevention and recovery program, a joint vocational school district that operates an adult education program, a community college, a state community college, a

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<sup>48</sup> R.C. 3302.04, not in the bill.

technical college, a university branch campus, or an Ohio technical center (“provider”) to establish a competency-based educational program for eligible individuals to earn a high school diploma.

An individual is eligible to enroll in a competency-based education program if they are at least 18 years old, have officially withdrawn from school, and have not been awarded a high school diploma or certificate of high school equivalence. Eligible individuals are prohibited from being assigned to classes or setting with individuals who are under 18 years old.

A provider may enroll an individual for up to three consecutive school years. In the event of a hardship experienced by the individual, a provider may request that the Department allow additional time to meet the diploma requirements.

A provider must comply with standards adopted by the Department and establish a career plan for each individual enrolled in the program that specifies their career goals and describes how the individual will demonstrate competency or earn course credits to earn a diploma and attain career goals.

The provider must report each individual enrolled in this program to the Department. Further, the provider must contact each diploma recipient to collect data on the individual’s career outcomes at 6, 12, and 18 months after the diploma is awarded. This must include whether the individual is gainfully employed, participating in an apprenticeship, enrolled in postsecondary education, or servicing in the military, and the data collected must be reported to the Department.

### ***High school diploma requirements***

An individual enrolled in a program may earn a diploma by either completing three demonstrations of competency or completing two demonstrations of competency and completing course credits in specified subject areas.

Demonstrations of competency include:

1. Attaining a competency score, as determined by the Department, on the Algebra I or English language arts II end-of-course exams;
2. Attaining a workforce readiness score, as determined by the Department, on the nationally recognized job skills assessment (WorkKeys);
3. Obtaining an industry-recognized credential, or group of credentials, that qualify the student for a high school diploma or an industry-recognized credential that is aligned to a technical education program provided by Ohio technical center;
4. Earning a cumulative score of proficient or higher on three or more state technical assessments (WebXams);
5. Completing a pre-apprenticeship program aligned with the student’s career field and then providing evidence of acceptance into a registered apprenticeship in that field, or completing an apprenticeship registered with the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council;

6. Completing 250 hours of work-based learning experience with evidence of positive evaluations; or

7. Obtaining an OhioMeansJobs-readiness seal.

The course credits include:

1. Four credits in English language arts;
2. Four credits of math, one credit of which may be a career-based math course aligned to the individual's career plan;
3. Three credits in science;
4. Three credits in social studies; and
5. One-half credit in financial literacy, which may be applied to the number of math or social studies credits.

An individual who qualifies for a diploma using three demonstrations of competency must either attain a competency score on Algebra I and English language arts II end-of course exams or attain a workforce readiness score on the WorkKeys. A student who qualifies for a diploma using two demonstrations of competency and course credits may use any two demonstrations of competency.

### ***Department responsibilities***

The bill requires the Department to adopt rules as necessary to administer the program, such as program standards, requirements for determining amounts paid to providers, and guidelines for approving hardship requests for program participants. Annually, the Department must certify the enrollment and attendance of each individual and pay the provider up to \$7,500 per school year based on the extent of the individual's completion of diploma requirements. The Department must award a high school diploma to enrolled individuals who successfully qualifies for one under the program.

### **Free school breakfast and lunch**

(R.C. 3313.8110, 3314.03, and 3326.11)

The bill requires each school district, community school, and STEM school that participates in the federal school breakfast or lunch program and has an identified student percentage of 25% or more to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and provide a free breakfast or lunch, respectively, to each enrolled student. If a school or district determines it cannot, for financial reasons, comply with the requirement, it may choose not to do so. If it chooses not to provide breakfast or lunch under the bill, it must publicly communicate that fact in the manner it chooses to its residents.

Consistent with federal law, "identified student percentage" is the percentage of enrolled students who automatically qualify for free school lunch based on their household's participation in specific means-tested benefits programs, such as SNAP, or the student's status as a foster, homeless, migrant, or runaway child or Head Start enrollee. Districts and schools that adopt CEP



provide free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students without collecting household applications and are reimbursed using a formula based on the identified student percentage.<sup>49</sup>

### **Payment of tuition for students in residential treatment facilities**

(R.C. 3313.64)

The bill addresses payment of tuition for educational services when a child is placed in a home located in a district different from the district in which the child's parent resides (or a similarly licensed facility in another state). For purposes of determining district residency, a "home" is a foster home, a group home, or a residential facility. In this case, the school district in which a child's parent resides must pay tuition to the home or facility if (1) the child was parentally placed in the home or facility in consultation with, and upon the recommendation of, the Ohio Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence Program (OhioRISE) and (2) the home or facility provides education services that meet the minimum standards established by the Director of the Department (or substantially similar requirements of the jurisdiction in which an out-of-state facility is located), except that reduction in the minimum number of instructional hours is permitted only as necessary to accommodate the child's treatment program.

### **Notice of admission and collaborative reentry plan**

When a child is admitted to a home or out-of-state facility, the home or out-of-state facility must notify the district where the child's parent resides and the district where the home is located that the home or facility will be provided educational services to the child until the child is discharged. When the child is discharged, the home or facility must notify the district where the child's parent resides and collaborate on a supportive reentry plan.

### **Payment structure**

The bill requires the district where the parent resides to continue to enroll the student and excuse the child from attendance until the child is discharged. The total educational cost the district must pay will be determined by a formula approved by the Department. The Department must design the formula to calculate a per diem cost for the educational services provided each day. The formula also must reflect the total actual cost incurred in providing those services. The Department must certify that cost to both the home or facility and the district responsible for tuition. The bill requires the Department to deduct the certified amount from the state basic aid funds payable to the responsible district and pay that amount to the home or facility. The district must continue to report the child in its enrollment for funding purposes.

### **Change in parent's residence**

The bill provides that if the parent's residence changes during the child's stay the Department may re-determine the responsible school district based on evidence provided by the district currently responsible for tuition.

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<sup>49</sup> 42 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F) and 7 C.F.R. 245.6.

## **Discharge procedures**

When a child is discharged, the home or facility must immediately notify the responsible district and the Department and provide both parties with a certified transcript of all coursework completed during the child's admission. The responsible district must accept all completed coursework and award credit in accordance with the district's

## **Diploma requirements**

When a high school student is discharged and returns to the parent's residence, the child must meet requirements for receiving a high school diploma that are no more stringent than those that apply to students who enroll in a public or chartered nonpublic high school after receiving a home education.<sup>50</sup>

## **State scholarship recipients**

Finally, the bill exempts a school district from the responsibility to pay tuition for a child admitted to a home or facility who has been awarded a state scholarship.

## **Background**

OhioRISE (Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence) is a specialized Medicaid managed care program for youth with complex behavioral health and multisystem needs. While some mental health and substance use services are covered under Medicaid, others are not, nor are they generally covered by private insurance. The resulting financial burden forced some families to surrender custody of their child to a public children services agency to enable the child to access care. One of the goals of OhioRISE is to prevent custody relinquishment.

## **School bus driver training**

(R.C. 3327.101)

The bill requires, by July 1, 2026, employed school bus and motor van drivers to complete six hours of in-service training annually, rather than the four hours required under current law. The Department must develop the curriculum for the in-service training and approve training providers for that curriculum. Under the Department's current rules, the in-service training is based on a needs assessment and may include topics like school bus and commercial driver's license requirements, equipment and care, pupil management (including bullying behaviors), safety and emergency procedures, motor vehicle laws, radio and cellphone usage, and detailed route sheets, among other topics.<sup>51</sup>

The bill also authorizes the classroom portion of school bus driver recertification training to be conducted online. Under current law, online courses are authorized for pre-service training and the annual in-service training. The on-the-bus portion of training for all drivers must still be conducted in person.

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<sup>50</sup> See R.C. 3313.618; R.C. 3321.042, not in the bill.

<sup>51</sup> O.A.C. 3301-83-10(B).