



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

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PRESENTS POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

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Information to Support Increasing Educator Diversity Plans
Guidance on Civil Rights Protections and Supports for Transgender or Gender-Diverse Students
Tabletop Exercises to Support Safety Plans
Policy-Related CSDE Updates

With *Increasing Educator Diversity Plans* recently due to the Connecticut State Department of Education, it's likely district leaders have been engaged in conversations directed toward strategies to address this long-standing concern.

In a recent article in Education Week, "The First Step to Hiring a Diverse School Staff: Believing It's Possible," Mark Lieberman reports on his interview with educational leaders finding success in their efforts to diversify their staff. While it is generally understood how a diverse staff favorably impacts a diverse student body, Sharif El-Mekki, founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, notes that increasing the number of educators of color in classrooms benefits not only students of color but even white teachers. "They're becoming more well-informed about their students on things that they can't just get from being in a book club," like how to communicate with families from different backgrounds. (Lieberman, March 20, 2024)

Embedded in the short article is the actual interview, where these educators provide interesting insights into their own experiences and may assist districts in their planning. Comments that caught my attention include:

- Believing it's possible and looking past the barriers.
- Nurturing a climate that welcomes and celebrates diversity
- Recognizing the importance of student/teacher relationships
- Building a professional culture where diverse staff members can help each other develop communication tools and cultural proficiency to help become more effective in working with diverse parents.
- Presenting the initiative in a way that would make staff want to participate
- Examining and working through the systemic issues that create roadblocks
- Going to the places where you know there are people you can encourage to pursue teaching

As it was expressed so well, we can't just "wait for the ball to come." Young people won't just gravitate to teaching. They need to be invited into the profession. They don't necessarily have this idea on their own.

A key point made regarding teacher retention centers on teachers needing to feel respected and professionally fulfilled. "Listening is the floor to showing respect." More information on "If You Listen, They Will Stay" can be found at <https://edtrust.org/resource/if-you-listen-we-will-stay>.

This article and the embedded interview can be found here:

https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-first-step-to-hiring-a-diverse-school-staff-believing-its-possible/2024/03?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=eml&utm_campaign=eu&M=9365222&UUID=3bc63fc4ed64805b4bcd177626d0659&T=12381383.

Perhaps one of the most challenging considerations for boards developing *Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth* policies remains how to address matters related to parent notification.

Updated January 2024, the CSDE released Guidance on Civil Protections and Supports for Transgender or Gender-Diverse Students. Specific to this topic, these “Guidelines” speak to *Parental Notice, Communication, and Objections*. It states that *except* in the context of student records, “there is currently no law that requires notice from a parent or guardian for a school to recognize the student’s gender identity or expression. In the absence of notice from a parent or guardian, however, a related question is whether a school district is obligated to inform a student’s parents or guardians of the student’s request to be referred to by name, pronouns, and gender markers that do not correspond to the sex that was assigned to the student at birth.”

It’s important to note the “Guidelines” refer to an important exception. The “exception in the context of student records” points to new guidance on procedures for altering student records: How does one initiate the process for changing a student’s permanent record? Who can initiate this process? Who determines whether or not a change is made?

The passage goes on to note, “While there is no law that specifically requires districts or schools to inform parents or guardians of a student’s gender identity or expression, the legislature has recognized the importance of fostering both ‘effective communication’ between schools and parents and parental involvement in their children’s schools.”

Whether or not to notify parents regarding a student’s gender identity or expression in school is a matter currently left up to the board through its policy or administration in the absence of policy. CAGE’s policy reflects the primary concern for protecting student privacy. (Policy on Transgender and Non-Conforming Youth, [#5145.53](#))

The Guidelines on Civil Protections and Supports for Transgender or Gender-Diverse Students can be found through this link:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Title-IX/transgender_guidance.pdf

In an informative article in Campus Safety Magazine, Executive Editor Amy Rock advocates the use of tabletop exercises to ensure district safety plans and policies remain updated and offer the most effective procedures to ensure everyone’s well-being. As she notes, “Practicing your campus’ response to various emergencies is vital to keeping constituents safe.” (March 22, 2024)

This link to the article provides a brief explanation of the tabletop exercise process and a wide array of useful topics for consideration.

https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/k-12-tabletop-exercise-6/?utm_medium=email&utm_content=Ih9YORIdfbBlsJoHUPLv2eE0vkfnTW3IKPU2v9EplVH_nEDxtUmLsffFgrGV0tm

Finally, the CSDE provided superintendents with the following policy-related updates:

The CSDE is releasing a new **Attendance Dashboard on EdSight**. Districts are being provided with advance notification before this dashboard is formally linked on EdSight. This new Attendance Dashboard provides

counts and rates for chronic absence, average daily attendance, and truancy. It includes new visualizations and summary charts. Both yearly and monthly attendance data are available within this report. Data are available at the state, district, and school levels and can be disaggregated by various student groups. On Monday, this dashboard will be accessible to districts under Students > Attendance from the EdSight menu. The data for this report were submitted by districts through the Public School Information System (PSIS) June Collection and the Monthly Attendance Data Collection. For questions about the report, please contact the EdSight helpdesk at edsight.sde@ct.gov.

During the 2021-22 year, the CSDE began collecting student-level results for the students who took assessments in Grades 10, 11, or 12 in a language other than English to demonstrate their proficiency in those languages. The data for 2022-23 have been processed and are now visible in the **Seal of Biliteracy secure report on Edsight secure**.

Authorized users in Edsight Secure can view test results for students who attempted to become eligible for the Seal of Biliteracy upon high school graduation. The report disaggregates test results by student characteristics such as race, gender, English learner/multilingual learner, students with disabilities, and high needs status. As with other assessment data in EdSight Secure, the test results will transfer if the student enrolls in a new district/school; the results will be viewable both by the district that administered the test (i.e., tested district) and the district where the student is currently enrolled (i.e., current district). For questions about the report, please contact the EdSight helpdesk at edsight.sde@ct.gov.