



12 POLICY CHANGES ENACTED IN THE 2021 OMNIBUS EDUCATION BILL

The 2021 Omnibus Education Bill focused primarily on funding issues, but there are a dozen policy changes that school administrators, charter school boards and staff should take note. The following changes, except for those noted, go into effect this summer:

1] ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

- A School board must provide annual notice to parents of the school district's policy relating to a pupil's absence from school for religious observance.

2] ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION SUSPENSION

- Any implementation of revised academic standards not already implemented as of January 1, 2021 are suspended. The suspension does not prevent the Commissioner from continuing with current rulemaking activities of developing future statewide assessments.

3] TEACHER MENTORSHIP & RETENTION

- A school district **must** develop teacher mentoring programs for teachers new to the profession or district, including teaching residents, teachers of color, teachers who are American Indian, teachers in license shortage areas, teachers with special needs, or experienced teachers in need of peer counseling. *NOTE: The law until now encouraged but did not require teacher mentor programs.*

4] CORPORAL PUNISHMENT & CHARTER SCHOOLS

- A charter school is subject to and must comply with 121A.58 as though it were a district.

5] AUTHORIZERS IN CORRECTIVE ACTION

- Establishes a timeline for authorizers to make required changes when the authorizer is in corrective action, allows a charter school to transfer authorizers if the authorizer is still in corrective action after 130 business days, and clarifies the actions the commissioner may take against an authorizer. *NOTE: Effective July 1, 2022*

6] SPECIAL EDUCATION RECOVERY SERVICES & SUPPORTS

- A school district or charter school that serves students with disabilities must invite the parents of the student with a disability to a meeting of each individualized education program (IEP) team as soon as practicable, but no later than December 1, 2021 to determine whether special education

services and supports are necessary to address lack of progress on IEP goals or in the general education curriculum or loss of learning or skills due to disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7] MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

- A district or charter school providing instruction or presentations on preventing suicide or self-harm must use either the resources provided by the commissioner or other evidence-based instruction.

8] SEIZURE TRAINING & ACTION PLAN

- A school district or charter school where an enrolled student's parent or guardian has notified the school district or charter school that the student has a diagnosed seizure disorder and has seizure rescue medication or medication prescribed by the student's licensed health care provider to treat seizure disorder symptoms, **must have a seizure action plan for that student.**

9] NOTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

- Upon notification by the Department of Health or Pollution Control Agency to a school district, charter school, or nonpublic school of environmental hazards that may affect the health of students or school staff, the school must notify all staff, students, and parents of the hazards as soon as possible. The notice must contain information how to obtain more information, and any actions that may reduce the hazard.

10] SCHOOL MEAL POLICIES

- Each school participating in the national school lunch program must adopt and post on its website, or website of the organization where the meal is served, a school meal policy. The school must not deny a school lunch regardless of an outstanding balance in the student's meal account, and schools must provide meals to students in a respectful manner.

11] LIMIT ON SCREENTIME FOR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

- A child in a publicly funded preschool or kindergarten program may not use an individual-use screen, such as a tablet, smartphone, or other digital media, without engagement from a teacher or other students. This does not apply to a child who has an individualized family service plan, an individualized education plan, or a 504 plan in effect. **NOTE:** *Effective July 1, 2022*

12] EVIDENCE-BASED EDUCATION GRANTS

- An evidence-based evaluation process must be established to describe, measure, and report on the effectiveness of any prekindergarten through grade 12 education funded program that is funded by appropriations by the legislature to the commissioner of education for grants to organizations. **NOTE:** *Effective July 1, 2022*