



K-12 Education

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly considered measures related to K-12 education, including teacher pay, recruitment, and retention; early childhood education; COVID-19 response and recovery; school health policies; curriculum and content standards; and administration, governance, and reporting requirements.

Teacher Pay, Recruitment and Retention

[Senate Bill 21-172](#) creates the Educator Pay Raise Fund to help school districts and charter schools increase teacher salaries and wages for other school employees. The bill also creates the Educator Pay Raise Fund Task Force to recommend a process for distributing money from the fund.

[House Bill 21-1010](#) directs the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE), in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), to convene a workgroup to investigate barriers to the preparation, recruitment, and retention of a diverse educator workforce. In addition, the bill requires DHE to disaggregate and report on data concerning educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education by gender, race, and ethnicity of program graduates.

Early Childhood Education

[House Bill 21-1304](#) creates a new Department of Early Childhood and includes a transition working group to create the transition plan and an advisory group to make recommendations for a voluntary statewide preschool program.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery

The General Assembly passed four bills to provide support to schools and students and address learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Senate Bill 21-013](#) directs CDE to create a resource bank of educational products, strategies, and services to address learning loss, including services specifically designed to address learning loss experienced by students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

[House Bill 21-1234](#) creates the Colorado High-Impact Tutoring Program in CDE to provide grants to local education providers (LEPs) for high-impact tutoring programs to address student learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If a school district, board of cooperative services, or charter school provides educational programming via online instruction to a student, [House Bill 21-1059](#) prohibits the local education provider from the following:

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- restricting the presence of a parent during online instruction, unless a parent continues to disrupt the class after being asked to stop disruptive behavior;
- requiring that a student use a camera to provide a live image during online instruction if the student's technology does not allow for use of a camera; and
- suspending or expelling an online student based on an item observed in the student's physical environment or the student's behavior while participating in online instruction, unless the behavior constitutes one of the statutory grounds for suspension or expulsion.

[*House Bill 21-1161*](#) requires CDE to suspend the administration of state assessments, contingent on receiving a waiver of federal law from the federal department of education, for the multiple instructional areas and grade levels during the 2020-21 school year. The bill also prohibits a school district from using student academic growth measures or student performance measures when evaluating licensed personnel for the 2020-21 school year.

Health Policies in Schools

Under current law, school districts must permit primary caregivers to possess and administer cannabis-based medicine on school grounds, and school principals are given the discretion to permit the storage, possession, and administration of cannabis-based medicine on school grounds by school personnel. [*Senate Bill 21-056*](#) removes the discretion from the school principals and requires school boards to implement policies allowing for the storage, possession, and administration of cannabis-based medicine by school personnel.

[*House Bill 21-1133*](#) requires kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools, and strongly encourages nonpublic schools, to

provide annual seizure-related training to school personnel who have direct contact with or supervise students who have a seizure disorder.

Curriculum and Content Standards

The General Assembly passed several bills related to curriculum and content standards. [*House Bill 21-1103*](#) requires that the State Board of Education revise the academic content standards for reading, writing, and civics to include media literacy. [*Senate Bill 21-067*](#) requires that public schools that teach civics education include instruction on specific topics, and directs the State Board of Education (SBE) to update the academic content standards for civics to comply with these requirements during the next standards review cycle. [*House Bill 21-1200*](#) directs the SBE during the next standards review cycle to ensure that the ninth through twelfth grade financial literacy standards include costs associated with obtaining a postsecondary degree or credential, common methods for saving for retirement, managing credit card debt, and homeownership. Districts and charter schools must provide information about and assistance for students and parents for state and federal financial aid applications.

Administration, Governance, and Reporting

[*Senate Bill 21-116*](#) prohibits the use of American Indian mascots by public schools, including charter and institute charter schools, and public institutions of higher education as of June 1, 2022, unless the school had an agreement with a federally recognized Indian Tribe before June 30, 2021, or the school is operated by a federally recognized Indian Tribe.

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House Bill 21-1273 requires the CDE to prepare an annual report on the number of pupils enrolled in public schools and the number of school psychologists in the state who are licensed by the department and employed by a school district, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), or a charter school.

House Bill 21-1294 requires that the Office of the State Auditor contract with a public or private entity to conduct a performance audit of the statewide implementation of K-12 standards and assessments, and the statewide accountability system. At a minimum, the independent audit must address the effectiveness of the accountability system in objectively measuring the performance of public schools and districts in delivering a system of thorough and uniform public education for all students.

Senate Bill 21-151 requires LEPs to submit certain information related to the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act to CDE.

House Bill 21-1221 updates the requirements for the CDE model bullying prevention and education policy and requires school districts to incorporate this policy in their discipline code.

Finally, under current law, if an entity does not agree with a local board's decision on denying a charter school application, or the nonrenewal or revocation of a charter, they can appeal that decision to the State Board of Education. *House Bill 21-1295* would have given local school boards a "rebuttable presumption," in which it is assumed that the board's decision was in the best interest of the students, school district, and the community. The bill was postponed indefinitely.