

**SENATE  
STATE OF MINNESOTA  
NINETIETH SESSION**

**S.F. No. 3268**

(SENATE AUTHORS: EICHORN)

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D-PG

Introduction and first reading  
Referred to E-12 Policy

OFFICIAL STATUS

1.1 A bill for an act  
1.2 relating to education; modifying the innovation research zone pilot program;  
1.3 amending Laws 2017, First Special Session chapter 5, article 2, section 52.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. Laws 2017, First Special Session chapter 5, article 2, section 52, is amended  
1.6 to read:

1.7 **Sec. 52. INNOVATION ~~RESEARCH~~ ZONES PILOT PROGRAM.**

1.8 Subdivision 1. **Establishment; requirements for participation; ~~research zone plans.~~**

1.9 (a) The innovation ~~research~~ zone pilot program is established to improve student and school  
1.10 outcomes consistent with the world's best workforce requirements under Minnesota Statutes,  
1.11 section 120B.11. Innovation zone partnerships allow school districts and charter schools to  
1.12 research and implement innovative education programming models designed to better  
1.13 prepare students for the world of the 21st century.

1.14 (b) One or more school districts or charter schools may join together to form an innovation  
1.15 zone partnership. The partnership may include other nonschool partners, including  
1.16 postsecondary institutions, other units of local government, nonprofit organizations, and  
1.17 for-profit organizations. An innovation zone plan must be collaboratively developed in  
1.18 concert with the school's instructional staff.

1.19 (c) An innovation ~~research~~ zone partnership must research and implement innovative  
1.20 education programs and models that are based on proposed hypotheses. An innovation zone  
1.21 plan may include an emerging practice not yet supported by peer-reviewed research.  
1.22 Examples of innovation zone research may include, but are not limited to:

- 2.1 (1) personalized learning, allowing students to excel at their own pace and according to  
2.2 their interests, aspirations, and unique needs;
- 2.3 (2) the use of competency outcomes rather than seat time and course completion to fulfill  
2.4 standards, credits, and other graduation requirements;
- 2.5 (3) multidisciplinary, real-world, inquiry-based, and student-directed models designed  
2.6 to make learning more engaging and relevant, including documenting and validating learning  
2.7 that takes place beyond the school day and school walls;
- 2.8 (4) models of instruction designed to close the achievement gap, including new models  
2.9 for age three to grade 3 models, English as a second language models, early identification  
2.10 and prevention of mental health issues, and others;
- 2.11 (5) new partnerships between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions,  
2.12 employers, or career training institutions enabling students to complete industry certifications,  
2.13 postsecondary education credits, and other credentials;
- 2.14 (6) new methods of collaborative leadership including the expansion of schools where  
2.15 teachers have larger professional roles;
- 2.16 (7) new ways to enhance parental and community involvement in learning;
- 2.17 (8) new models of professional development for educators, including embedded  
2.18 professional development; or
- 2.19 (9) new models in other areas such as whole child instruction, social-emotional skill  
2.20 development, technology-based or blended learning, parent and community involvement,  
2.21 professional development and mentoring, and models that increase the return on investment.
- 2.22 (d) An innovation zone plan submitted to the commissioner must describe:
- 2.23 (1) how the plan will improve student and school outcomes consistent with the world's  
2.24 best workforce requirements under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11;
- 2.25 (2) the role of each partner in the zone;
- 2.26 (3) the research methodology used for each proposed action in the plan;
- 2.27 (4) the exemptions from statutes and rules in subdivision 2 that the research zone  
2.28 partnership will use;
- 2.29 (5) a description of how teachers and other educational staff from the affected school  
2.30 sites will be included in the planning and implementation process;
- 2.31 (6) a detailed description of expected outcomes and graduation standards;

3.1 (7) a timeline for implementing the plan and assessing the outcomes; and

3.2 (8) how results of the plan will be disseminated.

3.3 The governing board for each partner must approve the innovation zone plan.

3.4 (e) Upon unanimous approval of the initial innovation zone partners and approval of the  
3.5 commissioner of education, the innovation zone partnership may extend membership to  
3.6 other partners. A new partner's membership is effective 30 days after the innovation zone  
3.7 partnership notifies the commissioner of the proposed change in membership unless the  
3.8 commissioner disapproves the new partner's membership.

3.9 (f) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, a school district or charter school  
3.10 participating in an innovation zone partnership under this section continues to receive all  
3.11 revenue and maintains its taxation authority in the same manner as before its participation  
3.12 in the innovation zone partnership. The innovation zone school district and charter school  
3.13 partners remain organized and governed by their respective school boards with general  
3.14 powers under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 123B or 124E, and remain subject to any  
3.15 employment agreements under Minnesota Statutes, chapters 122A and 179A. School district  
3.16 and charter school employees participating in an innovation zone partnership remain  
3.17 employees of their respective school district or charter school.

3.18 (g) An innovation zone partnership may submit its plan at any time to the commissioner  
3.19 in the form and manner specified by the commissioner. The commissioner must approve  
3.20 or reject the plan after reviewing the recommendation of the Innovation ~~Research~~ Zone  
3.21 Advisory Panel. An initial innovation zone plan that has been rejected by the commissioner  
3.22 may be resubmitted to the commissioner after the innovation zone partnership has modified  
3.23 the plan to meet each individually identified objection.

3.24 Subd. 2. **Exemptions from laws and rules.** (a) Notwithstanding any other law to the  
3.25 contrary, an innovation zone partner with an approved plan is exempt from each of the  
3.26 following state education laws and rules specifically identified in its plan:

3.27 (1) any law or rule from which a district-created, site-governed school under Minnesota  
3.28 Statutes, section 123B.045, is exempt;

3.29 (2) any statute or rule from which the commissioner has exempted another district or  
3.30 charter school, as identified in the list published on the Department of Education's Web site  
3.31 under subdivision 4, paragraph (b);

4.1 (3) online learning program approval under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.095,  
4.2 subdivision 7, if the school district or charter school offers a course or program online  
4.3 combined with direct access to a teacher for a portion of that course or program;

4.4 (4) restrictions on extended time revenue under Minnesota Statutes, section 126C.10,  
4.5 subdivision 2a, for a student who meets the criteria of Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.68,  
4.6 subdivision 2; and

4.7 (5) any required hours of instruction in any class or subject area for a student who is  
4.8 meeting all competencies consistent with the graduation standards described in the innovation  
4.9 zone plan.

4.10 (b) The exemptions under this subdivision must not be construed as exempting an  
4.11 innovation zone partner from the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

4.12 **Subd. 3. Innovation Research Zone Advisory Panel.** (a) The commissioner must  
4.13 establish and convene an Innovation ~~Research~~ Zone Advisory Panel to review all innovation  
4.14 zone plans submitted for approval. The advisory panel must meet at least once a year to  
4.15 review the submitted plans. The advisory panel must provide written notice to a partnership  
4.16 not recommended by the panel for the commissioner's approval. The notice must identify  
4.17 the reasons for the panel's refusal to recommend the plan for the commissioner's approval.  
4.18 The partnership may resubmit the plan according subdivision 1, paragraph (g).

4.19 (b) The panel must be composed of nine members. One member must be appointed by  
4.20 each of the following organizations: Educators for Excellence, Education Minnesota,  
4.21 Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Elementary School  
4.22 Principals' Association, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota School  
4.23 Boards Association, Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, and the Office of Higher  
4.24 Education. The commissioner must appoint one member with expertise in evaluation and  
4.25 research.

4.26 **Subd. 4. Commissioner approval.** (a) Upon recommendation of the Innovation ~~Research~~  
4.27 Zone Advisory Panel, the commissioner may approve ~~up to three~~ innovation zone plans ~~in~~  
4.28 ~~the seven-county metropolitan area and up to three in greater Minnesota~~ partnerships. If an  
4.29 innovation zone partnership fails to implement its innovation zone plan as described in its  
4.30 application and according to the stated timeline, upon recommendation of the Innovation  
4.31 ~~Research~~ Zone Advisory Panel, the commissioner must alert the partnership members and  
4.32 provide the opportunity to remediate. If implementation continues to fail, the commissioner  
4.33 must suspend or terminate the innovation zone plan.

5.1 (b) The commissioner must publish a list of the exemptions the commissioner has granted  
5.2 to a district or charter school on the Department of Education's Web site by July 1, 2017.  
5.3 The list must be updated annually.

5.4 Subd. 5. **Project evaluation, dissemination, and report to legislature.** Each ~~research~~  
5.5 innovation zone partnership must submit project data to the commissioner in the form and  
5.6 manner provided for in the approved application. At least once every two years, the  
5.7 commissioner must analyze each innovation zone's progress in realizing the objectives of  
5.8 the innovation zone partnership's plan. The commissioner must summarize and categorize  
5.9 innovation zone plans and submit a report to the legislative committees having jurisdiction  
5.10 over education by February 1 of each odd-numbered year in accordance with Minnesota  
5.11 Statutes, section 3.195.