

2021 -- S 0825

=====
LC001989
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

—————
A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- EDUCATION EQUALITY--COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT

Introduced By: Senator Sandra Cano

Date Introduced: April 21, 2021

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-7.2-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled "The
2 Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses.**

4 In addition to the foundation education aid provided pursuant to § 16-7.2-3, the permanent
5 foundation education-aid program shall provide direct state funding for:

6 (a) Excess costs associated with special education students. Excess costs are defined when
7 an individual special education student's cost shall be deemed to be "extraordinary." Extraordinary
8 costs are those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount
9 above five times the core foundation amount (total of core-instruction amount plus student success
10 amount). The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
11 for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school
12 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding appropriated in any fiscal year;
13 and the department of elementary and secondary education shall also collect data on those
14 educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above two (2), three
15 (3), and four (4) times the core-foundation amount;

16 (b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements
17 needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education
18 programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-
19 than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies

1 necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state.
2 The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical
3 education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department
4 of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among
5 those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking
6 reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

7 (c) Programs to increase access to voluntary, free, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.
8 The department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all early childhood
9 program funds as may be determined by the general assembly;

10 (d) Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure
11 that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls
12 is needed due to concerns regarding the city's capacity to meet the local share of education costs.
13 This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs outside
14 the permanent foundation education-aid formula, including, but not limited to, transportation,
15 facility maintenance, and retiree health benefits shall be shared between the state and the city of
16 Central Falls. The fund shall be annually reviewed to determine the amount of the state and city
17 appropriation. The state's share of this fund may be supported through a reallocation of current state
18 appropriations to the Central Falls school district. At the end of the transition period defined in §
19 16-7.2-7, the municipality will continue its contribution pursuant to § 16-7-24. Additional support
20 for the Davies and the Met Center is needed due to the costs associated with running a stand-alone
21 high school offering both academic and career and technical coursework. The department shall
22 recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all stabilization funds as may be
23 determined by the general assembly;

24 (e) Excess costs associated with transporting students to out-of-district non-public schools.
25 This fund will provide state funding for the costs associated with transporting students to out-of-
26 district non-public schools, pursuant to chapter 21.1 of this title. The state will assume the costs of
27 non-public out-of-district transportation for those districts participating in the statewide system.
28 The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for
29 distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school
30 districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

31 (f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This
32 fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students
33 within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires
34 that the state and regional school district share equally the student transportation costs net any

1 federal sources of revenue for these expenditures. The department of elementary and secondary
2 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if
3 the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount
4 of funding available in any fiscal year;

5 (g) Public school districts that are regionalized shall be eligible for a regionalization bonus
6 as set forth below:

7 (1) As used herein, the term "regionalized" shall be deemed to refer to a regional school
8 district established under the provisions of chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
9 School district;

10 (2) For those districts that are regionalized as of July 1, 2010, the regionalization bonus
11 shall commence in FY 2012. For those districts that regionalize after July 1, 2010, the
12 regionalization bonus shall commence in the first fiscal year following the establishment of a
13 regionalized school district as set forth in chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
14 School District;

15 (3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the
16 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
17 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

18 (4) The regionalization bonus in the second fiscal year shall be one percent (1.0%) of the
19 state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
20 §§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

21 (5) The regionalization bonus shall cease in the third fiscal year;

22 (6) The regionalization bonus for the Chariho regional school district shall be applied to
23 the state share of the permanent foundation education aid for the member towns; and

24 (7) The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
25 for distribution among those eligible regionalized school districts if the total, approved costs for
26 which regionalized school districts are seeking a regionalization bonus exceed the amount of
27 funding appropriated in any fiscal year;

28 (h) Additional state support for English learners (EL). The amount to support EL students
29 shall be determined by multiplying an EL factor of ten percent (10%) by the core-instruction per-
30 pupil amount defined in § 16-7.2-3(a)(1) and applying that amount of additional state support to
31 EL students identified using widely adopted, independent standards and assessments identified by
32 the commissioner. All categorical funds distributed pursuant to this subsection must be used to
33 provide high-quality, research-based services to EL students and managed in accordance with
34 requirements set forth by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The

1 department of elementary and secondary education shall collect performance reports from districts
2 and approve the use of funds prior to expenditure. The department of elementary and secondary
3 education shall ensure the funds are aligned to activities that are innovative and expansive and not
4 utilized for activities the district is currently funding. The department of elementary and secondary
5 education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among eligible recipients if the total
6 calculated costs exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

7 (i) State support for school resource officers. For purposes of this subsection, a school
8 resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority
9 who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing
10 assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools. School resource officers should have
11 completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an
12 accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning in FY 2019, for a period of three (3) years,
13 school districts or municipalities that choose to employ school resource officers shall receive direct
14 state support for costs associated with employing such officers at public middle and high schools.
15 Districts or municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (1/2) of the cost of
16 salaries and benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource
17 officer positions established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

18 (1) Each school resource officer shall be assigned to one school:

19 (i) Schools with enrollments below one thousand twelve hundred (1,200) students shall
20 require one school resource officer;

21 (ii) Schools with enrollments of one thousand twelve hundred (1,200) or more students
22 shall require two school resource officers;

23 (2) School resource officers hired in excess of the requirement noted above shall not be
24 eligible for reimbursement; and

25 (3) Schools that eliminate existing school resource officer positions and create new
26 positions under this provision shall not be eligible for reimbursement; and

27 (j)(1) Community schools expansion. In FY 2021, the Rhode Island department of
28 education shall distribute up to four (4) grants to school districts to hire a community schools
29 coordinator. The foundation education aid shall compensate school districts up to seventy-five
30 thousand dollars (\$75,000) each fiscal year for a portion of any reasonable and necessary costs
31 associated with hiring a community schools coordinator. A community school coordinator funded
32 by this provision may be hired to provide services to the entire school district or a school or schools
33 within the public school district. These funds shall not be used to supplant funds already allocated
34 for a community schools coordinator or a child opportunity zone established pursuant to chapter

1 73 of this title that are in operation on the effective date of this section.

2 (2) The amount for FY 2022 shall be three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000). The
3 amount for FY 2023 shall be six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000). The department of education
4 shall distribute these funds for the expansion of community schools programs established pursuant
5 to chapter 110 of this title. The funds shall be contingent on a school district providing matching
6 resources through budgetary or in-kind contributions for the planning and implementation of a
7 community schools program.

8 ~~(j)~~(k) Categorical programs defined in subsections (a) through (g) shall be funded pursuant
9 to the transition plan in § 16-7.2-7.

10 SECTION 2. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
11 adding thereto the following chapter:

12 CHAPTER 110

13 COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT

14 **16-110-1. Short title.**

15 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Community Schools Act."

16 **16-110-2. Findings and purpose.**

17 The general assembly finds that:

18 (1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to achieve his or her
19 dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every neighborhood deserves a public school
20 that fully delivers on that promise.

21 (2) According to the most recent data, more than half of the nation's schoolchildren live in
22 low-income households resulting in their qualification for free or reduced-price lunch, the highest
23 proportion since this statistic began being documented over sixty (60) years ago. As a result, some
24 schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in life.

25 (3) Community schools provide comprehensive programs and services that are carefully
26 selected to meet the unique needs of students and families including, but not limited to, lack of
27 stable housing, inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence in an
28 effort to allow students to do their best.

29 (4) According to a report from the Learning Policy Institute, the four (4) key pillars of the
30 community school approach (integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and
31 opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and
32 practices) promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools, as well as address out-
33 of-school barriers to learning.

34 (5) Research shows that community school interventions can result in improvements in a

1 variety of student outcomes, including attendance, academic achievement (including reducing
2 racial and economic achievement gaps), and high school graduation rates, and meet the Every
3 Student Succeeds Act standard of "evidence-based" approaches to support schools identified for
4 comprehensive and targeted support and intervention.

5 (6) Research further shows that these programs offer a strong return on investment of up
6 to fifteen dollars (\$15.00) for every dollar invested in community schools.

7 (7) This chapter seeks to support the successful planning and implementation of effective
8 community schools that provide all students with equitable access to a high-quality education.

9 **16-110-3. Definitions.**

10 For the purposes of this chapter:

11 (1) "Community school" means a public elementary or secondary school that includes all
12 four (4) of the following:

13 (i) Integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers to learning through
14 partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers, coordinated by a community
15 school director, which may include, but are not limited to: medical, dental, vision care, and mental
16 health services, or counselors to assist with housing, transportation, nutrition, immigration, or
17 criminal justice issues;

18 (ii) Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, including before-school,
19 afterschool, weekend and summer programs, which provide additional academic instruction,
20 individualized academic support, enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize
21 real-world learning and community problem solving and which may include, but are not limited to:
22 art, music, drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science, tutoring and
23 homework help, and recreational programs that enhance, extend and are consistent with the school's
24 curriculum;

25 (iii) Active family and community engagement, which brings students' families and the
26 community into the school as partners in children's education and makes the school a neighborhood
27 hub, providing adults with educational opportunities they want, including, but not limited to,
28 English as a second language classes, computer skills, art, or other programs that bring community
29 members into the building for meetings or events; and

30 (iv) Collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of professional learning,
31 collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies which shall, at a minimum, include a
32 school-based leadership team, a community school director, and a community-wide leadership
33 team and may include, but are not limited to, other leadership/governance teams, teacher learning
34 communities, and other staff to manage the multiple, complex joint work of school and community

1 organizations.

2 (2) "Community School Coordinator" means a person who:

3 (i) Is responsible for the identification, implementation, and coordination of integrated
4 student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, family and community
5 engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices;

6 (ii) Serves as the lead for the needs and assets assessment and community school plan
7 described in § 16-110-5; and

8 (iii) Leads the needs and assessment and stakeholder-driven approach to problem-solving
9 and continuous improvement.

10 (3) "Community-wide leadership team" means a team at the local education agency (LEA)
11 level that is responsible for guiding the vision, policy, resource alignment, implementation,
12 oversight, and goal-setting for community school programs within an LEA. This team shall include
13 representatives from the LEA, teachers, school leaders, students, and family members from the
14 eligible schools, community members, system-level partners that include representatives from
15 government agencies, relevant unions, nonprofit and other community-based partners, and if
16 applicable, the community school initiative director.

17 **16-110-4. Informational and technical assistance.**

18 The department of education shall provide the following forms of technical assistance to
19 LEAs:

20 (1) Materials that describe the elements and advantages of community schools, including
21 references to governmental and nonprofit reports;

22 (2) Assistance to any school district in forming a taskforce to study the creation and
23 administration of community schools;

24 (3) Information to LEAs of the availability of grants authorized by § 16-7.2-6, and provide
25 technical assistance to eligible applicants in applying for such grants;

26 (4) Information to school districts of other sources of funding for community schools,
27 including the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and assisting school district efforts to secure
28 such funding; and

29 (5) Facilitating effective coordination among state agencies in the deployment of resources
30 and services such as health, nutrition, and other supports.

31 **16-110-5. Community school plan.**

32 School districts seeking categorical funding for community schools shall submit a plan that
33 includes:

34 (1) A needs and assets assessment that includes:

1 (i) Where available, and where applicable, student demographic, academic achievement,
2 and school climate data, disaggregated by major demographic groups, including, but not limited to,
3 race, ethnicity, English language proficiency, students with individualized education plans, and
4 students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch status;

5 (ii) Access to and need for integrated student supports;

6 (iii) Access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities;

7 (iv) Active family and community engagement information, including:

8 (A) Family and community needs based on surveys, information from public meetings, or
9 information gathered by other means;

10 (B) Measures of family and community engagement in the eligible school, including
11 volunteering in schools, attendance at back-to-school nights, and parent-teacher conferences;

12 (C) Efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant communication between
13 schools and families; and

14 (D) Access to and need for family and community engagement activities as detailed in §§
15 16-110-3(1)(iii) and (2)(i).

16 (v) Opportunities for partnerships with nonprofit organizations, faith-and-community-
17 based institutions, institutions of higher education, including teacher preparation institutions,
18 hospitals, museums, businesses, and other community entities that can partner with the eligible
19 school;

20 (vi) Community climate indicators, including housing instability, unemployment, poverty,
21 jobs that offer a living wage, health indicators, youth employment, access to parks, environmental
22 hazards, crime, and gang activity; and

23 (vii) Level of faculty, administrator and staff support.

24 (2) A community school plan that includes a description of the following:

25 (i) How the community school coordinator will be expected to fulfill their responsibilities
26 as described in § 16-110-3;

27 (ii) Collaborative leadership and practices structures and strategies;

28 (iii) Integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
29 and active family and community engagement activities that will be tailored to the needs and assets
30 assessment under subsection (1) of this section and provided in accordance with the activities
31 specified in § 16-110-3;

32 (iv) How the eligible school will provide culturally and linguistically relevant
33 communication between schools and families;

34 (v) How the eligible school will establish and maintain partnerships with nonprofit

1 organizations, faith-and-community-based institutions, institutions of higher education, including
2 teacher preparation institutions, hospitals, museums, businesses, and other community entities that
3 will help implement and sustain the community school plan;

4 (vi) How activities chosen will reinforce, and not be duplicative of, existing programs and
5 activities at the eligible school; and

6 (vii) If applicable, a description of the federal, state, local, and private funds that will be
7 accessed.

8 **16-110-6. Evaluation.**

9 (a) At the end of the initial two (2) year grant period of an implementation award and every
10 third year in which a renewal grant ends, each eligible school shall undergo an evaluation designed
11 by the department of education. The evaluation shall include, at a minimum, information in §§ 16-
12 110-3(2) and 16-110-5(1), 16-110-5(2), including the impact on academic achievement and
13 opportunities, student attendance, school climate information, integrated student supports,
14 expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement
15 strategies, the collaborative leadership and practices in place, and changes in school spending
16 information.

17 (b) By December 1, 2023, the department of education shall report to the general assembly
18 and the governor on the impact of this chapter and the grant program established in § 16-7.2-6. The
19 report shall be made publicly available via the agency's website. The department of education shall
20 provide data gathered (in the aggregate and disaggregate) pursuant to § 16-110-3 for each eligible
21 school, and present the data in such a manner that allows it to be easily searchable. The department
22 shall make recommendations to the general assembly, governor, and public concerning possible
23 revisions to the state's funding formula, particularly for the highest-poverty LEAs in the state.

24 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC001989
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- EDUCATION EQUALITY--COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT

1 This act would furnish financial support for the planning and implementation of effective
2 community schools that would provide students with equitable access to a high-quality education.

3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC001989
=====