

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 1347

Introduced by Walz, 15.

Read first time January 17, 2024

Committee:

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to schools; to adopt the Community Schools

2 Act.

3 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Sections 1 to 9 of this act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the Community Schools Act.

3 Sec. 2. The Legislature finds that:

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

8 (2) A student achieves greater educational and life outcomes when
9 such student's family can be fully engaged in the student's education.
10 Families that participate in the education of the children in such family
11 support the long-term success of such children and the community; and

12 (3) Community schools provide comprehensive programs and services
13 that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of students and
14 families, such as lack of stable housing, inadequate medical and dental
15 care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence, so students can do and
16 become their best.

17 Sec. 3. For purposes of the Community Schools Act:

18 (1) Community school means a public school that includes all of the
19 following:

20 (a) Integrated student supports that address out-of-school barriers
21 to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies
22 and providers, that are coordinated by a community school director, and
23 that may include, but are not necessarily limited to, medical, dental,
24 vision care, and mental health services or counselors to assist with
25 housing, transportation, nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice
26 issues;

27 (b) Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, including
28 before-school, after-school, weekend, and summer programs, that provide
29 additional academic instruction, individualized academic support,
30 enrichment activities, and learning opportunities emphasizing real-world
31 learning and community problem solving and that may include, but are not

1 necessarily limited to, art, music, drama, creative writing, hands-on
2 experience with engineering or science, tutoring and homework help, and
3 recreational programs that enhance and are consistent with the school
4 curriculum;

5 (c) Active family and community engagement strategies that bring a
6 student's family and the community into the school as partners in the
7 student's education and makes the school a neighborhood hub and that
8 provides adults with educational opportunities, including, but not
9 limited to, English as a second language classes, green card or
10 citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, or other programs that
11 bring community members into the building for meetings and events; and

12 (d) Collaborative leadership and practices that build a culture of
13 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using
14 strategies which shall, at a minimum, include a school-based leadership
15 team, a community school director, and a communitywide leadership team
16 and may include, but are not necessarily limited to, other leadership and
17 governance teams, teacher learning communities, and other staff to manage
18 the multiple, complex joint work of school and community organizations;

19 (2) Community school director means a person who:

20 (a) Is a full-time staff member serving one eligible school;

21 (b) Is responsible for the identification, implementation, and
22 coordination of integrated student supports, expanded and enriched
23 learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement
24 strategies, and collaborative leadership and practices;

25 (c) Serves as a member of the school-based leadership team;

26 (d) Serves as the lead for the needs and assets assessment and the
27 community school plan described in subdivisions (1)(a) and (b) of section
28 6 of this act; and

29 (e) Leads the needs and assets assessment and stakeholder-driven
30 approach to problem solving and continuous improvement;

31 (3) Community school initiative director means a person who:

1 (a) Aids implementation and coordination of integrated student
2 supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active
3 family and community engagement strategies, and collaborative leadership
4 and practices, if a local education agency has more than three eligible
5 schools operating community school programs in its jurisdiction; and

6 (b) Provides support and guidance to community school directors;

7 (4) Communitywide leadership team means a team at the local
8 education agency level that is responsible for guiding the vision,
9 policy, resource alignment, implementation, oversight, and goal-setting
10 for community school programs within a local education agency. Such team
11 shall include representatives from the local education agency, teachers,
12 school leaders, students and family members from the eligible schools,
13 community members, state-level partners that involve representatives from
14 government agencies, relevant unions, nonprofit and other community-based
15 partners, and if applicable, the community school initiative director;

16 (5) Eligible applicant means:

17 (a) A local education agency; or

18 (b) At least one nonprofit organization that partners with a local
19 education agency with approval from the governing entity responsible for
20 the local education agency;

21 (6) Eligible school means a public school that:

22 (a) Has a student body with at least forty percent of students who
23 are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch pursuant to the Richard B.
24 Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq., as such act
25 existed on January 1, 2024; or

26 (b) Has been identified for comprehensive or targeted support and
27 intervention pursuant to section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the federal Elementary
28 and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as such act existed on January 1,
29 2024, or otherwise identified by the State Department of Education as in
30 need of additional support;

31 (7) Local education agency means a school district or an educational

1 service unit;

2 (8) School-based leadership team means a school-level team that is
3 responsible for assessing a school's needs, developing its goals,
4 selecting its programming and services, and implementing programs to meet
5 the requirements of a community school. The team shall be comprised of at
6 least twelve but no more than fifteen members with at least one-third of
7 such members being parents or local residents and at least one-third of
8 such members being school staff, representatives of nonprofit
9 organizations that serve the school, and, for high schools, students at
10 the school. The members shall select a member of the team to act as the
11 chairperson; and

12 (9) Teacher learning communities means a group of primarily
13 instructional staff in an eligible school who are given common planning
14 time to participate in ongoing decision making and planning that examine
15 the teaching practice and student performance to improve school policy
16 and classroom teaching.

17 Sec. 4. (1) The Commissioner of Education shall employ up to three
18 full-service community school coordinators in separate geographical
19 regions across the state. Such coordinators shall provide technical
20 assistance, ensure the evaluation and effectiveness of programming, and
21 coordinate local and community services in such coordinator's region
22 relating to the implementation of the Community Schools Act.

23 (2) The State Department of Education shall provide technical
24 assistance to local education agencies which shall include:

25 (a) Distributing materials that describe the elements and advantages
26 of community schools, including references to governmental and nonprofit
27 reports if applicable;

28 (b) Assisting any local education agency in forming a taskforce to
29 study the creation and administration of a community school;

30 (c) Informing local education agencies of the availability of grants
31 under the Community Schools Act and answering any technical questions

1 about the application process;

2 (d) Informing local education agencies of other sources of funding
3 for community schools and assisting efforts to secure such funding; and

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

7 (3) The State Department of Education shall provide planning,
8 implementation, and renewal grants to eligible applicants who meet the
9 requirement for such grants. An eligible applicant may apply for and
10 receive each type of grant. Such grants shall include:

11 (a) A one-time, one-year planning grant of up to fifty thousand
12 dollars;

13 (b) A one-time implementation grant of up to one hundred twenty-five
14 thousand dollars per year for a period of three years; and

15 (c) A renewal grant of up to seventy-five dollars per year for a
16 period of three years for an applicant that demonstrated success at the
17 conclusion of the implementation or previous renewal grant as determined
18 by the evaluation pursuant to section 6 of this act.

19 Sec. 5. (1) An eligible applicant may submit an application for a
20 planning grant to the State Department of Education. The application
21 shall include:

22 (a) A description of the following:

23 (i) The initial communitywide leadership team and the school-based
24 leadership team or the process that will be put in place to establish
25 such teams;

26 (ii) The process and timelines for conducting a needs and assets
27 assessment and community school plan for each eligible school as required
28 by subdivisions (1)(a) and (b) of section 6 of this act; and

29 (iii) If applicable, plans for hiring additional staff, plans for
30 providing additional compensation to existing staff, or plans for
31 contracting with a nonprofit entity or entities to help the eligible

1 applicant apply for an implementation grant; and

2 (b) An assurance that the eligible applicant intends to apply for an
3 implementation grant within six months after receipt of a planning grant.

4 (2)(a) A planning grant shall be used to:

5 (i) Establish or provide additional support to a communitywide
6 leadership team and school-based leadership team; and

7 (ii) Conduct a needs and assets assessment and develop a community
8 school plan for each eligible school as required pursuant to subdivisions
9 (1)(a) and (b) of section 6 of this act.

10 (b) A planning grant may also be used for hiring additional staff,
11 providing additional compensation to existing staff, or contracting with
12 a nonprofit entity or entities to aid in the activities necessary to
13 apply for an implementation grant.

14 Sec. 6. (1) An eligible applicant may submit an application for an
15 implementation or renewal grant to the State Department of Education. The
16 application shall include for each eligible school:

17 (a) A needs and assets assessment that includes:

18 (i) If available and applicable, student demographic, academic
19 achievement, and school climate data, disaggregated by major demographic
20 groups, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, English language
21 proficiency, students with an individualized education program, and
22 students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch;

23 (ii) Access to and need for integrated student supports as described
24 in subdivision (1)(a) of section 3 of this act;

25 (iii) Access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time and
26 opportunities as described in subdivision (1)(b) of section 3 of this
27 act;

28 (iv) School funding information, including federal, state, local,
29 and private education funding and per-pupil spending, based on actual
30 salaries of personnel assigned to the eligible school;

31 (v) Information on the number, qualifications, and stability of

1 school staff, including the number and percentage of certified teachers
2 and rates of teacher turnover;

3 (vi) Active family and community engagement strategies information,
4 including:

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

7 (B) Measurers of family and community engagement in the eligible
8 school, including volunteering in school activities, attendance at back-
9 to-school nights, and parent-teacher conferences;

10 (C) Efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant
11 communication between the eligible school and families of students in
12 such school; and

13 (D) Access to and need for family and community engagement
14 activities as described in subdivision (1)(c) of section 3 of this act;

15 (vii) Collaborative leadership and practices, including a
16 description of the communitywide leadership team, school-based leadership
17 team, teacher learning communities, and common planning time for
18 educators;

19 (viii) Opportunities for partnerships with nonprofit organizations,
20 community-based institutions, postsecondary institutions, hospitals,
21 museums, businesses, and other community entities that can partner with
22 the eligible school; and

23 (ix) Community climate indicator data, including housing
24 instability, unemployment, poverty, jobs that offer a living wage, health
25 indicators, youth employment, access to parks, environmental hazards,
26 crime, and gang activity; and

27 (b) A community school plan that includes:

28 (i) How the community school director and, as applicable, the
29 community school initiative director are expected to fulfill their
30 responsibilities as described in subdivisions (2) and (3) of section 3 of
31 this act;

1 (ii) The collaborative leadership and practices structures and
2 strategies;

3 (iii) The integrated student supports, expanded and enriched
4 learning time and opportunities, and active family and community
5 engagement strategies that will be tailored to the needs and assets
6 assessment;

7 (iv) How the eligible school will provide culturally and
8 linguistically relevant communication between the eligible school and
9 families with students attending such school;

10 (v) How the eligible school will establish and maintain partnerships
11 with nonprofit organizations, community-based institutions, postsecondary
12 institutions, hospitals, museums, businesses, and other community
13 entities that will help to implement and sustain the community school
14 plan;

15 (vi) How activities chosen will reinforce existing programs and
16 activities at the eligible school; and

17 (vii) If applicable, a description of the federal, state, local, and
18 private funds that will be available to implement the community school
19 plan.

20 (2) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (3) of this section,
21 an implementation or renewal grant shall be used to:

22 (a) Provide a community school director and, as applicable, a
23 community school initiative director to coordinate services across the
24 eligible school or schools;

25 (b) Establish or maintain a school-based leadership team and teacher
26 learning communities, and, for the local education agency, a
27 communitywide leadership team;

28 (c) Implement at least two of the following integrated student
29 supports:

30 (i) Health services that may be based in the eligible school or
31 provided in the community, including primary health, dental, and mental

1 health care, including trauma-informed care;

2 (ii) Nutrition services, including providing additional meals or
3 assistance in accessing food assistance programs; or

4 (iii) Programs that provide assistance to students who have been
5 chronically absent, suspended, or expelled such as:

6 (A) Mentoring and other youth development programs;

7 (B) Programs that support a positive school atmosphere;

8 (C) Juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation programs;

9 (D) Specialized instruction supports services;

10 (E) Homelessness prevention services;

11 (F) Developmentally appropriate physical education programs;

12 (G) Legal services, including immigration related legal services;

13 (H) Dropout prevention programs; or

14 (I) Transportation services necessary for students to access
15 integrated student support services, expanded and enriched learning time
16 and opportunities, active family and community engagement strategies, or
17 other services and activities identified to support the development of
18 students;

19 (d) Implement expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
20 which may include additional academic instruction, before-school, after-
21 school, and summer school programs, mentorship programs, job training,
22 internships, apprenticeships, and service-learning opportunities, and
23 time for the community school director and school staff to have school-
24 based learning time and to plan, coordinate, and integrate such
25 opportunities; and

26 (e) Implement at least two active family and community engagement
27 strategies, which may include:

28 (i) Onsite early childhood education programs and child care;

29 (ii) Home visitation services by teachers and other professionals;

30 (iii) Adult education, including instruction in English as a second
31 language or a diploma of high school equivalency program;

1 (iv) Job search and preparation services and career advancement
2 activities;

3 (v) Legal services, such as help with citizenship preparation;

4 (vi) Programs that aid family and community well-being, including
5 accessing homelessness prevention services;

6 (vii) Programs that promote parental involvement and family
7 literacy, provide volunteer opportunities, promote inclusion in school-
8 based leadership teams, and empower and strengthen families and
9 communities; or

10 (viii) Other programming or services designed to meet school and
11 community needs identified in the needs and assets assessment.

12 (3) Required activities under subsection (2) of this section shall
13 not be duplicative of existing programs and activities at the eligible
14 school.

15 (4) The State Department of Education shall develop an evaluation
16 for each implementation grant or renewal grant to evaluate each community
17 school. The evaluation shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (a) Information obtained in the needs and assets assessment and
19 community school plan and the activities and programs that were
20 implemented as a result of such information pursuant to subsection (2) of
21 this section; and

22 (b) The impact on academic achievement and opportunities, school
23 atmosphere, integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning
24 time and opportunities, active family and community engagement
25 strategies, the collaborative leadership and processes in place, and
26 changes in school spending information.

27 (5) The department shall evaluate each eligible applicant that
28 received an implementation or renewal grant for each eligible school at
29 the end of the third year of an implementation grant or at the end of
30 every third year of a renewal grant.

31 Sec. 7. By July 1, 2025, and each July 1 thereafter, the State

1 Department of Education shall electronically submit a report to the
2 Legislature on the impact of the Community Schools Act and any
3 recommended revisions. The report shall be made available to the public
4 on the department's website.

5 Sec. 8. It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate one
6 million dollars from the General Fund to the State Department of
7 Education to carry out the Community Schools Act.

8 Sec. 9. The State Board of Education may adopt and promulgate rules
9 and regulations to carry out the Community Schools Act.