

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
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As Engrossed: S1/29/13 S3/14/13

A Bill

SENATE BILL 66

By: Senators Elliott, J. Key, E. Cheatham, A. Clark, U. Lindsey, Bookout, K. Ingram, Maloch, D. Sanders, R. Thompson, D. Wyatt

By: Representatives Lenderman, C. Armstrong, D. Altes, Baltz, Copenhaver, H. Wilkins

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS BY CREATING
DISTRICTS OF INNOVATION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS BY
CREATING DISTRICTS OF INNOVATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 15, is amended to add an additional subchapter to read as follows:

Subchapter 28 – District of Innovation Program

6-15-2801. Definitions.

As used in this subchapter:

(1) "District of innovation" means a public school district with one or more schools of innovation that has:

(A) Developed a school of innovation plan in compliance with § 6-15-2803;

(B) Obtained necessary exceptions from laws, rules, and local policies to improve the educational performance of students from Commissioner of Education; and

(C) Been approved as a district of innovation by the commissioner;



(2) "Eligible employees" means the employees who are employed at a school that is considering being designated as a school of innovation;

(3) "Innovation" means a new or creative alternative to the existing instructional and administrative practices that is intended to improve academic performance and learning for all students;

(4)(A)(i) "School council of innovation" means a body of individuals from a current or aspiring school of innovation composed of teachers, classified employees, the building-level principal or his or her administrative designee, parents, community members, a minimum of two (2) students from the school of innovation, and other interested parties selected by the council to participate.

(ii) The teacher representatives shall be elected by a majority vote of the school's licensed eligible employees.

(iii) The classified representatives shall be elected by a majority vote of the school's classified eligible employees.

(iv)(a) The parent representatives shall be selected by a majority vote of the attendees at a meeting called for the purpose of selecting the school's parent representatives and shall have a child in the school to be eligible to serve on the council.

(b) Schools with a ten percent (10%) or greater minority student population shall have minority representation on the council.

(B) The school council of innovation shall:

(i) Generate innovative ideas and proposals of its own;

(ii) Determine a method for requesting innovative ideas and proposals from school employees, community members, and other stakeholders to be submitted to the council;

(iii) Receive innovative ideas and proposals from school employees, community members, and other stakeholders;

(iv) Consider all innovative ideas and proposals submitted by community members and other stakeholders; and

(v) Determine the content and format of the plan that will be voted on by the eligible employees.

(C) The council may create subcommittees, which may include non-council members, to work on developing portions of the plan; and

(5)(A) "School of innovation" means a school that participates in a district of innovation to transform and improve teaching and learning.

(B) A school of innovation's plan is subject to the exceptions approved by the commissioner for the school of innovation.

6-15-2802. School of innovation designation – Rules.

(a) The Commissioner of Education may approve a public school as a school of innovation for the purpose of transforming and improving the teaching and learning under § 6-15-2803.

(b)(1) A school of innovation shall be approved for a period of four (4) years and may be renewed for four-year periods thereafter.

(2) The commissioner may revoke the school of innovation designation if a school fails to substantially fulfill the school's innovation plan, meet goals and performance targets, or comply with applicable laws or rules.

(c) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to administer this subchapter, including without limitation rules that address the:

(1) Rules subject to exemption or modification for a school of innovation plan if approved by the commissioner;

(2) Application, school of innovation plan review, approval, and amendment process for a public school district to establish a school of innovation;

(3) Timeline for initial approval of a school of innovation and subsequent renewal, including any ongoing evaluations of a school of innovation;

(4) Documentation required to show meaningful parental, educator, and community engagement and capacity for the changes identified in the school of innovation plan;

(5) Approval by the eligible employees of a school of innovation;

(6) Evidence of teacher collaboration and shared leadership responsibility within each school seeking to become a school of innovation;

(7) Process for revocation of a designation as a district of innovation or school of innovation;

(8) Reporting and oversight responsibility of the school of innovation and the Department of Education;

(9) Budget and financial details of the school of innovation;
and

(10) Other information necessary as determined by the state
board.

6-15-2803. School of innovation plan.

(a) A school district shall submit its school of innovation plan,
approved by the school board of directors, to the Commissioner of Education
for approval to become a school of innovation.

(b) A school of innovation plan shall address without limitation:

(1) The goals and performance targets for the school of
innovation, which may include:

(A) Reducing the achievement gap among one (1) or more
groups of students by accelerating learning experiences for academically low-
achieving students while increasing all student learning through the
implementation of highly rigorous standards for student performance;

(B) Increasing student participation in curriculum
options;

(C) Exploring new avenues for expanding students' college
and career readiness;

(D) Motivating students by exploring innovative teaching
and learning choices; and

(E) Transforming a school's culture and climate in a
manner that will lead to transformative teaching and learning.

(2) Changes needed in the school that will lead to better
prepared students for success in life and career; and

(3) Innovative practices to be used in the school of innovation.

(c) Schools of innovation shall document the:

(1) Parental, school employee, and community engagement;

(2) Capacity for the proposed school of innovation;

(3) Rationale for law, rule, and local policy exception
requests;

(4) Progress toward goals and performance targets; and

(5) Other information requested by the commissioner.

6-15-2804. School of innovation.

(a) A school that is designated a school of innovation shall:

(1) Ensure that the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements are in place as those that apply to all other public schools;

(2) Ensure that the high school curriculum offered meets or exceeds the minimum high school graduation requirements adopted by the State Board of Education;

(3) Adhere to financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements adopted by the state board for public school districts;

(4) Require criminal background checks for school employees and volunteers as required by law for public school districts;

(5) Comply with open records and open meeting requirements;

(6) Comply with purchasing limitations and requirements;

(7)(A) Provide instructional time that meets or exceeds the instructional time requirement adopted by the state board unless granted an exception by the Commissioner of Education.

(B) Instructional time may include on-site instruction, distance or virtual learning, and work-based learning on nontraditional school days or hours;

(8) Provide data requested by the Department of Education to generate reports; and

(9) Adhere to the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act, § 6-17-1501 et seq.

(b)(1) Before a public school district submits a school of innovation plan to the commissioner, the eligible employees of each proposed school of innovation shall vote on whether the school shall be designated a school of innovation.

(2) A minimum of sixty percent (60%) of the eligible employees voting in support of the school's being designation as a school of innovation is required before the school's innovation plan may be submitted to the school board of directors for approval.

(3) The school council of innovation shall be responsible for conducting the vote required under subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

(c) A school of innovation plan may request exemptions from local policies and specific laws and rules approved for exemption or modification by the state board except the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act, § 6-17-1501 et seq.

(d) A public school district with a negotiated employment contract in place shall follow the procedure set forth within the contract that allows the implementation of a school of innovation.

SECTION 2. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that all children in our state are entitled to an equal opportunity for an adequate education; that provisions of this act will help ensure that Arkansas students receive additional opportunities for educational success through a district of innovation program; and that this act is immediately necessary to ensure that the district of innovation program is established for the 2013-2014 school year. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

(1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

(2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor, the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the bill; or

(3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.

/s/Elliott