

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 106
3 entitled “An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through
4 community schools” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

8 This act shall be called the “Community Schools Act.”

9 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

10 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

11 (1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to
12 achieve their dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every child
13 deserves a public school that fully delivers on that promise.

14 (2) According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than
15 half of the nation’s schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning
16 they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, a percentage that has risen steadily
17 in recent decades. According to the Vermont Agency of Education, an average
18 of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions during the 2019–2020
19 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, some
20 schoolchildren face more challenges than others in succeeding in school and in
21 life.

1 (3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive
2 programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of
3 students and families, such as substance misuse, lack of stable housing,
4 inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence,
5 so students can do their best.

6 (4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the
7 four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated
8 student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
9 active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and
10 practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as
11 well as address out-of-school barriers to learning.

12 (5) This research also shows that community school interventions can
13 result in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including attendance,
14 academic achievement (including reducing racial and economic achievement
15 gaps), and high school graduation rates, and can meet the Every Student
16 Succeeds Act standard of “evidence-based” approaches to support schools
17 identified for comprehensive and targeted support and intervention.

18 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on
19 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community
20 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school
21 (Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study;

1 APEX and Community School Partnership; 2019). Every dollar invested in
2 programs and support (including medical, dental, and social services;
3 afterschool and summer enrichment; parent engagement; and early childhood
4 services) can yield up to \$15.00 in return (Community Schools as an Effective
5 School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence; Anna Maier, Julia
6 Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and Livia Lam; 2017).

7 (7) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community
8 schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the
9 role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community
10 schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed,
11 well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with
12 increasingly complex needs.

13 (8) Community schools have been established in many states and
14 settings, from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. But the approach
15 has also been successful in rural communities. In McDowell County, West
16 Virginia (population 22,000), community schools are part of a public-private
17 partnership, a collaboration between state government, nonprofit agencies,
18 businesses, and philanthropic foundations, that aims to “make educational
19 improvement the route to a brighter economic future.” The national nonprofit
20 Rural School and Community Trust is an active advocate for expanding this
21 model in rural areas, calling the relationship between good schools and

1 thriving communities “crucial.” In Vermont, a growing number of schools are
2 implementing or exploring the model, from Molly Stark Elementary in
3 Bennington, which offers school-based health services, extended hours,
4 summer school, and family learning activities, to the school-based health
5 center in Winooski.

6 (b) Purpose. This law is enacted to support a demonstration grant program
7 for the implementation of community school programs that provide students
8 with equitable access to a high-quality education.

9 Sec. 3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS; DEMONSTRATION GRANT

10 PROGRAM

11 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

12 (1) “Community school coordinator” means a person who:

13 (A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible
14 school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school and
15 appointed in accordance with Vermont law; and

16 (B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and
17 coordination of a community school program, subject to the operational and
18 reporting structure of the community school coordinator’s employer.

19 (2) “Community school program” means a program offered at a public
20 elementary or secondary school that includes all four of the following:

1 (A) integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers
2 to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and
3 providers, coordinated by a community school coordinator, which may include
4 access to services such as medical, dental, vision care, and mental health
5 services, or access to counselors to assist with housing, transportation,
6 nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice issues;

7 (B) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, which
8 may include before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that
9 provide additional academic instruction, individualized academic support,
10 enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world
11 learning and community problem-solving and that may include art, music,
12 drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science,
13 tutoring and homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are
14 consistent with the school’s curriculum;

15 (C) active family and community engagement, which brings
16 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s
17 education and makes the school a community hub, providing adults with a
18 facility to access educational opportunities they want, which may include
19 coordinating services with outside providers to offer English as a second
20 language classes, green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art,
21 financial literacy, career counseling, job skills training, services for substance

1 misuse, and other programs that bring community members into the building
2 for meetings or events; and

3 (D) collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of
4 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies
5 that shall, at a minimum, leverage the multitiered system of supports and
6 include a community school coordinator and a representative of families in the
7 community, and may include school, school district, and other leadership or
8 governance teams; teacher learning communities; and other staff to manage the
9 multiple, complex, joint work of school and community organizations.

10 (3) “Demonstration grant” means a grant provided to an eligible
11 applicant under this section.

12 (4) “Eligible applicant” means either a school district with an eligible
13 school or supervisory union with an eligible school.

14 (5) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school
15 that:

16 (A) has a student body where at least 40 percent of students are
17 eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National
18 School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.; or

19 (B) has been identified for comprehensive or equity support and
20 intervention under Section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary

1 Education Act of 1965 or otherwise identified by the State as in need of
2 additional support.

3 (b) Demonstration grant authorization. The Secretary of Education is
4 authorized to provide annual demonstration grants of up to \$110,000.00 a year
5 for a period of three years for each eligible applicant to:

6 (1) hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a
7 community school program; or

8 (2) designate a community school coordinator from existing personnel
9 and augment work already being performed to develop and implement a
10 community school program.

11 (c) Grant administration.

12 (1) The Secretary of Education shall administer the demonstration grant
13 program under this section. The Secretary shall develop the demonstration
14 grant application, determine grant amounts, and provide grant funding on or
15 before September 1 of each of 2022, 2023, and 2024 to successful applicants.

16 The Secretary may deny or reduce second- and third-year grant funding if the
17 Secretary finds that the applicant has made insufficient progress towards
18 developing and implementing a community school program.

19 (2) The Agency of Education shall inform supervisory unions of the
20 availability of demonstration grants under this act and provide technical
21 assistance to eligible applicants in applying for these funds. The Agency of

1 Education shall also advise eligible applicants of other sources of funding that
2 may be available to advance the purpose of this act.

3 (d) Use of grant funding.

4 (1) An eligible applicant shall use the demonstration grant funding to
5 hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a community
6 school program or to designate a community school coordinator from existing
7 personnel and augment work already being performed to develop and
8 implement a community school program.

9 (2) If the funding is used to hire a community school coordinator, then
10 during the first year of demonstration grant funding, the community school
11 coordinator shall conduct a needs and assets assessment of the school to
12 determine what is necessary to develop a community school program and an
13 action plan to implement the community school program. During the second
14 and third years of demonstration grant funding, the community school
15 coordinator shall oversee the implementation of the community school
16 program.

17 (e) Evaluation.

18 (1) At the end of each year of grant funding, each eligible applicant that
19 received grant funding shall undergo an evaluation designed by the Agency of
20 Education.

1 (2) On or before each of December 15, 2023 and 2025, the Agency of
2 Education shall report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the
3 impact of the demonstration grant program. The report shall be made publicly
4 available on the Agency of Education’s website.

5 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

6 (a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$1,529,000.00 of the amount
7 allocated to the Agency of Education from the Elementary and Secondary
8 School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to Section 313 of the Consolidated
9 Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116–260 for the demonstration grants to
10 be funded on or before September 1 of each of 2022, 2023, and 2024 under
11 Sec. 3 of this act.

12 (b) The Agency of Education may set aside:

13 (1) not more than one percent of funds for informational assistance and
14 technical assistance, such as assistance with applying for grant funding and use
15 of grant funding, for eligible applicants under Sec. 3 of this act; and

16 (2) not more than two percent of funds for the evaluations required
17 under Sec. 3 of this act.

18 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

19 This act shall take effect on passage.

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2 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE