

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 13-64—sSB 1002

Education Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

SUMMARY: This act allows a local or regional board of education to establish a community school or schools to participate with community partners to provide various educational and social services to students, families, and community members. The act spells out the steps a board must complete in order to establish a community school, which include (1) conducting a school operations and instructional audit and a community needs audit, (2) conducting a community resource assessment, and (3) developing a community school plan.

The act requires boards that establish these schools to report to the state Department of Education (SDE) on the school's progress. In turn, SDE must report to the Education Committee on community schools.

The act also adds community schools to the list of school turnaround options that can be used under the commissioner's network of schools.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

PROCESS TO ESTABLISH COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

On and after July 1, 2013, a local or regional board can establish a community school at a new or existing school.

Under the act a "community school" is a public school that participates in a coordinated, community-based effort with community partners to provide comprehensive educational, developmental, family, health, and wrap-around services to students, families, and community members.

Under the act, a "community partner" is a provider of at least one of the following services:

1. primary medical or dental care,
2. mental health treatment and services,
3. academic enrichment activities,
4. programs designed to improve student attendance,
5. youth development programs,
6. early childhood education,
7. parental involvement programs,
8. child care services,
9. programs that assist students who are truant or have been suspended or expelled,
10. youth and adult job training and career counseling services,
11. nutrition education,
12. adult education,
13. remedial education and enrichment activities,

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14. legal services, or
15. any other appropriate services or programs.

Required Steps

Before opening a community school, a board of education must complete several steps. For an existing school, it must conduct a school operations and instructional audit pursuant to the audit required under the law creating the commissioner's network of schools program (see BACKGROUND). For both new and existing schools the board must conduct a community needs audit to identify the academic, physical, social, emotional, health, mental health, and civic needs of students and their families that could impact student learning and academic achievement.

The board must also conduct a community resource assessment of potential resources, services, and opportunities available within or near the community that students, families, and community members may access and integrate into the community school.

The board must also develop, based on the community resource assessment results, a community school plan that addresses the specific needs identified in the school operations and instructional audit and community needs audit. The plan must coordinate, integrate, and enhance services for students, families, and community members to improve the academic achievement of students and increase family and community involvement in education.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reports to SDE

At the conclusion of each school year, any board that has established a community school must submit a report on each school to SDE, in a form and manner SDE determines.

The report must:

1. evaluate the community school's effectiveness in providing services to students, families, and community members, including whether the implementation of the plan has improved student achievement and increased family and community involvement in education;
2. measure the development and implementation of partnerships with community partners;
3. provide information on the degree of communication between schools and families, neighborhood safety, school climate, the degree of parental participation in school activities, student health, and student civic participation;
4. analyze, as appropriate, how student learning and academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance rates, school readiness, the number of suspensions and expulsions, and graduate enrollment in higher education institutions have been affected by the community school; and
5. provide any other information relevant to evaluating the community school.

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Reports to the General Assembly

By January 1, 2015, the act requires the education commissioner to begin submitting annual reports on community schools to the Education Committee. The reports must evaluate the community schools operating during the prior school year and provide information on:

1. state and federal barriers to implementation and effective coordination of services at the community schools,
2. the extent of coordination between state agencies providing services at the schools, and
3. the efficiency and adequacy of local and state programs and policies with respect to student and family services provided at the schools.

COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK SCHOOL TURNAROUND MODELS

The act adds community schools to the list of school turnaround models that can be used under the commissioner's network of schools.

Under the commissioner's network, certain low-performing schools are selected to craft turnaround plans aimed at improving student performance. The state supplies additional funds to help implement a school's turnaround plan, once the commissioner approves it.

The existing commissioner's network law provides a menu of turnaround school models for a school turnaround committee to choose from, including (1) CommPACT schools; (2) a social development model; (3) institution of higher education- or regional education service center-administered schools; and (4) a school reorganization model that includes such mandatory items as block scheduling for math and reading.

BACKGROUND

Operations and Instructional Audit

By law, the operations and instructional audit required under the commissioner's network of schools must be conducted pursuant to SDE guidelines and determine the extent to which the school:

1. has established a strong family and community connection;
2. has a positive environment;
3. has effective leadership, teachers, and support staff;
4. uses time effectively;
5. has a curriculum and instructional program that is rigorous and based on student needs and research; and
6. uses evidence for continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

The audit must be informed by an inventory of before- and after- school programs, school-based health centers, or family resource centers, the number of teachers employed and the number who have left in each of the previous three school years, the school's curricula, the number of school psychologists and social workers, and a number of other items.

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