

SENATE BILL NO. 8

INTRODUCED BY S. O'BRIEN

BY REQUEST OF THE EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO PERSONALIZED AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING; DEFINING "PROFICIENCY-BASED LEARNING"; REVISING ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING AID PAYMENTS; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-7-1601 AND 20-7-1602, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 20-7-1601, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-7-1601. Forms of personalized learning -- legislative intent. (1) The legislature finds and declares pursuant to Article X, section 1, of the 1972 Montana constitution that forms of personalized learning authorized under Montana law, including but not limited to work-based learning pursuant to 20-7-1510, ~~proficiency under 20-9-311, proficiency-based learning as defined in subsection (2) of this section,~~ determinations of course equivalency by an elected board of trustees under 20-3-324(18), offsite instruction under 20-7-118, and transformational learning, are appropriate means of fulfilling the people's goal of developing the full educational potential of each person. The provision of and participation in forms of personalized learning under this part and in compliance with accreditation standards of the board of public education are constitutionally compliant and protected. The legislature declares that any public or private regulation that discriminates against a district or pupil participating in forms of personalized learning referenced in this section is inconsistent with constitutional goals and guarantees under Article X of the Montana constitution.

(2) "Proficiency-based learning" means an education system in which student progress is based on a student's demonstration of knowledge and skills, not seat time or the age or grade level of the student."

Section 2. Section 20-7-1602, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-7-1602. (Temporary) Incentives for creation of transformational learning programs. (1) (a) A

school district as defined in 20-6-101 that satisfies the conditions of subsection (2) and is qualified by the board of public education pursuant to subsection (4) is eligible for a 4-consecutive-year provision of the transitional funding and flexibilities in subsections (5) and (6).

(b) A school district may be qualified by the board of public education for no more than one 4-consecutive-year provision of transitional funding and flexibilities in any 8-year period.

(2) To qualify for the transitional funding and flexibilities in subsections (5) and (6), the board of trustees of a district shall submit an application that has been approved by motion of the board of trustees and signed by the presiding officer to the board of public education for approval of a transformational learning program on a form provided by the superintendent of public instruction. The school board's application must:

(a) identify the number of full-time equivalent educators meeting the criteria of 20-9-327(3) who will participate in the district's transformational learning program, with full-time equivalence calculated and reported by the district based on the planned portion of each qualifying educator's full-time equivalent assignment that is dedicated to the district's transformational learning program;

~~(b) include the district's definition of proficiency within the meaning of that term as used in 20-9-311 (4)(d). The definition must not require seat time as a condition or other element of determining proficiency. The definition must be incorporated in the district's policies and must be used for purposes of determining content and course mastery and other progress, promotion from grade to grade, grades, and graduation for pupils enrolled in the district's transformational learning program.~~
describe the district's plans for the implementation of proficiency-based learning as defined in 20-7-1601; and

(c) include a strategic plan with appropriate planning horizons for implementation, measurable objectives to ensure accountability, and planned strategies to:

(i) develop a transformational learning plan for each participating pupil that honors individual interests, passions, strengths, needs, and culture and that is rooted in relationships with teachers, family, peers, and community members;

(ii) embed community-based, experiential, online, and work-based learning opportunities and foster a learning environment that incorporates both face-to-face and virtual connections;

(iii) provide effective professional development to assist employees in transitioning to a

1 transformational learning model; and

2 (iv) ensure equality of educational opportunity to participate by all pupils of the district.

3 (3) The board of public education shall establish by rule the opening and closing dates for receipt
4 of applications and annual reports.

5 (4) The board of public education shall:

6 (a) on an annual basis, qualify districts that submit an application meeting in the determination of
7 the board or the board's designee, the requirements of subsection (2) for the funding in subsection (5) and the
8 flexibilities in subsection (6) until the annual appropriation is exhausted, after which further applications,
9 including first-time applications and annual reports requesting an expansion of a previously approved plan, are
10 to be deferred for consideration in a subsequent year, in the order of a lottery system draw, if and when
11 additional funds become available for distribution. The lottery system shall assign every first-time application or
12 request for expansion of a previously approved plan a number that will be placed into a lottery system draw that
13 will be done by a third party. The applications will be assigned a position in the order in which the numbers are
14 drawn. The drawing will continue until all districts are on the qualification list for the current year funding or
15 deferred for consideration in a subsequent year.

16 (b) require each participating school district to submit an annual report demonstrating in the
17 determination of the board or the board's designee, continued qualification for funding under this section and
18 including a report of progress toward measurable objectives under the school district's transformational learning
19 plan. The school district shall include any decrease or requested increase in the number of participating full-
20 time equivalent educators under subsection (2)(a) for adjustments to its funding. Any increase in funding based
21 on requested increased levels of participation under subsection (2)(a) must be determined in the year in which
22 the request for a funding increase is received and augmented with a lottery system among all first-time
23 applications and annual reports requesting an expansion of a previously approved plan and must be contingent
24 on the availability of funds within any appropriation of the legislature. An application deferred for consideration
25 in a subsequent year due to lack of funding must be annually updated each year after more than 1 full fiscal
26 year has passed from the date of original submission of the application in order for the application to retain its
27 priority by original date received.

28 (c) report in accordance with 5-11-210 to the education interim committee on the progress made

1 by districts as submitted in the annual report and strategic plan operating under approved and funded
2 transformational learning plans.

3 (5) (a) For a period of 4 consecutive fiscal years following the fiscal year in which a district is
4 qualified by the board of public education and contingent on ~~continued compliance with~~ satisfying the annual
5 reporting requirements under subsection (4), the superintendent of public instruction shall provide a
6 transformational learning aid payment to the district equivalent to 50% of the quality educator payment defined
7 in 20-9-306 from the immediate prior fiscal year multiplied by the number of the district's full-time equivalent
8 educators reported under subsection (2)(a) of this section.

9 (b) The payment under this subsection (5) must be distributed directly to the school district's
10 flexibility fund established under 20-9-543 by October 1 of each year of funding by the superintendent of public
11 instruction. The money must be expended by the district only for the purposes set forth in the district's approved
12 transformational learning program.

13 (c) A school district may not receive more than 25% of the total amount of payments made under
14 this subsection (5).

15 (6) During each year that a school district remains qualified for funding under subsection (5), the
16 district's trustees may:

17 (a) if the obligations of transparency set forth in 20-9-116 are met, levy an annual permissive
18 property tax not to exceed 100% of any funds distributed to the district under subsection (5). Proceeds of the
19 levy must be deposited in the district's flexibility fund established under 20-9-543 and must be expended by the
20 district only for the purposes of the district's approved transformational learning plan.

21 (b) transfer state or local revenue from any budgeted or nonbudgeted fund, other than the debt
22 service fund or retirement fund, to the district's flexibility fund.

23 (7) (a) Any funds transferred pursuant to subsection (6)(b) may be expended by the district solely
24 for the purposes of implementing the district's approved transformational learning plan. Any transfers of funds
25 are not considered expenditures to be applied against budget authority.

26 (b) Any transfers that are not expended for the purposes of implementing the district's approved
27 transformational learning plan within 2 full school fiscal years after the funds are transferred must be transferred
28 back to the originating fund from which the revenue was transferred.

(c) The intent of subsection (6)(b) and this subsection (7) is to increase the flexibility and efficiency of school districts without an increase in local taxes. In furtherance of this intent, if transfers of funds are made from any school district fund supported by a nonvoted levy, the district may not increase its nonvoted levy for the purpose of restoring the amount of funds transferred.

(8) The present law base calculated for K-12 local assistance under Title 17, chapter 7, part 1, must include transformational learning aid as defined in subsection (9).

(9) For the purposes of this title, the following definitions apply:

(a) "Transformational learning" means a flexible system of pupil-centered and proficiency-based learning that is designed to develop the full educational potential of each pupil that:

(i) is customized to address each pupil's strengths, needs, and interests;

~~(ii) includes continued focus on each pupil's proficiency over content; and~~

~~(iii)~~ (ii) actively engages each pupil in determining what, how, when, and where each pupil learns.

(b) "Transformational learning aid" means 50% of the quality educator payment defined in 20-9-306 multiplied by 10% of the statewide number of full-time equivalent educators from the fiscal year immediately preceding the year to which distribution of transformational aid applies calculated as provided in 20-9-327. (Terminates June 30, 2027--sec. 7, Ch. 402, L. 2019.)"

NEW SECTION. Section 3. Transition. The board of public education or the board's designee shall review the applications of school districts with first-time applications that are unfunded and on the waiting list on [the effective date of this act] to determine whether the district's application meets the requirements under 20-7-1602(2) as amended by [this act]. If a district's application does not meet the requirements, the board shall remove the district from the waiting list. A district removed from the waiting list may reapply.

NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2023.

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