

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 his or her dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every  
13 child 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 provision 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, including  
8           before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that provide  
9           additional academic instruction, individualized academic support, enrichment  
10           activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world learning and  
11           community problem-solving and that may include art, music, drama, creative  
12           writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science, tutoring and  
13           homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are consistent  
14           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 neighborhood hub, providing adults with a  
18           facility to access educational opportunities they want, including coordinating  
19           services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes,  
20           green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy,  
21           career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other

1 programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or  
2 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 multi-tiered 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 If the amount appropriated for this purpose is insufficient to fully fund the  
17 demonstration grants under this section, then the demonstration grant amounts  
18 that are awarded shall be prorated. [If proration is not used, then the Secretary  
19 should award grants based on relative need, in which case criteria may need to  
20 be established to guide the Secretary] The Secretary may deny or reduce  
21 second- and third-year grant funding if the Secretary finds that the applicant

1 has made insufficient progress towards developing and implementing a  
2 community school program.

3 (2) The Agency of Education shall inform supervisory unions of the  
4 availability of demonstration grants under this act and provide technical  
5 assistance to eligible applicants in applying for these funds. The Agency of  
6 Education shall also advise eligible applicants of other sources of funding that  
7 may be available to advance the purpose of this act.

8 (d) Use of grant funding.

9 (1) An eligible applicant shall use the demonstration grant funding to  
10 hire a community school coordinator to develop and implement a community  
11 school program or to designate a community school coordinator from existing  
12 personnel and augment work already being performed to develop and  
13 implement a community school program.

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

1        (e) Evaluation.

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

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

9        Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

10        (a) The Secretary of Education shall use \$1,529,000.00 of the amount  
11        allocated to the Agency of Education from the Elementary and Secondary  
12        School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to Sec. 313 of the Consolidated  
13        Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, for the demonstration grant  
14        program under Sec. 3 of this act.

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

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

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

21        Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

1        This act shall take effect on passage.

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3        (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE