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H.106

Introduced by Representatives James of Manchester, Anthony of Barre City,
Austin of Colchester, Bongartz of Manchester, Bos-Lun of
Westminster, Brady of Williston, Brown of Richmond,
Brumsted of Shelburne, Burke of Brattleboro, Chase of
Colchester, Christie of Hartford, Coffey of Guilford, Durfee of
Shaftsbury, Elder of Starksboro, Hooper of Burlington,
Houghton of Essex, Jerome of Brandon, Kornheiser of
Brattleboro, Mrowicki of Putney, Mulvaney-Stanak of
Burlington, Pajala of Londonderry, Sims of Craftsbury,
Stebbins of Burlington, Townsend of South Burlington, Troiano
of Stannard, Vyhovsky of Essex, Webb of Shelburne, White of
Bethel, and Yantachka of Charlotte

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; equitable access to a high-quality education; community
schools

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to facilitate and
provide funding for the implementation of community schools that provide all
students with equitable access to a high-quality education.

1 An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through
2 community schools

3 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

4 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

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

6 Sec. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

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

8 (1) Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to
9 achieve his or her dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Every
10 neighborhood deserves a public school that fully delivers on that promise.

11 (2) According to the most recent data, more than half of the nation’s
12 schoolchildren live in low-income households, meaning they qualify for free or
13 reduced-price lunch, the highest proportion since this statistic began being
14 documented over 60 years ago. According to the Vermont Agency of
15 Education, an average of 38 percent of students across all supervisory unions
16 during the 2019–2020 school year qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.
17 As a result, some schoolchildren face more challenges than others in
18 succeeding in school and in life.

19 (3) Community schools facilitate the provision of comprehensive
20 programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of
21 students and families, such as substance misuse, lack of stable housing,

1 inadequate medical and dental care, hunger, trauma, and exposure to violence,
2 so students can do their best.

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

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

15 (6) Research also shows that these programs offer a strong return on
16 investment. According to impact studies, each dollar invested in a community
17 coordinator position returns approximately \$7.00 in net benefits to the school,
18 while every dollar invested in programs and support (including medical, dental
19 and social services, afterschool and summer enrichment, parent engagement
20 and early childhood services) can yield up to \$14.80 in return.

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

7 (b) Purpose. This law is enacted to support the successful implementation
8 of effective community schools that provide all students with equitable access
9 to a high-quality education.

10 Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 4032 is added to read:

11 § 4032. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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

13 (1) “Community school” means a public elementary or secondary school
14 that includes all four of the following:

15 (A) Integrated student supports, which address out-of-school barriers
16 to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and
17 providers, coordinated by a community school director, which may include
18 access to services such as medical, dental, vision care, and mental health
19 services, or access to counselors to assist with housing, transportation,
20 nutrition, immigration, or criminal justice issues.

1 (B) Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities,
2 including before-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programs, that
3 provide additional academic instruction, individualized academic support,
4 enrichment activities, and learning opportunities that emphasize real-world
5 learning and community problem-solving and that may include art, music,
6 drama, creative writing, hands-on experience with engineering or science,
7 tutoring and homework help, and recreational programs that enhance and are
8 consistent with the school’s curriculum.

9 (C) Active family and community engagement, which brings
10 students’ families and the community into the school as partners in children’s
11 education and makes the school a neighborhood hub, providing adults with a
12 facility to access educational opportunities they want, including coordinating
13 services with outside providers to offer English as a second language classes,
14 green card or citizenship preparation, computer skills, art, financial literacy,
15 career counseling, job skills training, services for substance misuse, and other
16 programs that bring community members into the building for meetings or
17 events.

18 (D) Collaborative leadership and practices, which build a culture of
19 professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies
20 that shall, at a minimum, include a school-based leadership team, a community
21 school director, and a community-wide leadership team and may include other

1 leadership or governance teams, teacher learning communities, and other staff
2 to manage the multiple, complex, joint work of school and community
3 organizations.

4 (2) “Community school director” means a person who:

5 (A) is a full-time or part-time staff member serving in an eligible
6 school or in a school district or supervisory union with an eligible school;

7 (B) is responsible for the identification, implementation, and
8 coordination of integrated student supports; expanded and enriched learning
9 time and opportunities; family and community engagement; and collaborative
10 leadership and practices;

11 (C) serves as a member of the school-based leadership team;

12 (D) serves as the lead for the needs and assets assessment and
13 community school plan described in subsection (e) of this section; and

14 (E) leads the needs and assets assessment and stakeholder-driven
15 approach to problem solving and continuous improvement.

16 (3) “Community school initiative director” means a person who:

17 (A) aids implementation and coordination of integrated student
18 supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, family and
19 community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practice where more
20 than three eligible schools operate community school programs in Vermont;
21 and

1 (B) provides support and guidance to community school directors.

2 (4) “Community-wide leadership team” means a team at a supervisory
3 union that is responsible for guiding the vision, policy, resource alignment,
4 implementation, oversight, and goal setting for community school programs
5 within the member districts of the supervisory union. This team shall include
6 representatives from the supervisory union; teachers, school leaders, students,
7 and family members from the eligible schools; community members; system-
8 level partners that include representatives from government agencies; relevant
9 unions; nonprofit and other community-based partners; and, if applicable, the
10 community school initiative director.

11 (5) “Eligible applicant” means an eligible school or a school district or
12 supervisory union with an eligible school.

13 (6) “Eligible school” means a public elementary or secondary school
14 that:

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

18 (B) has been identified for comprehensive or targeted support and
19 intervention under Section 1111(c)(4)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary
20 Education Act of 1965 or otherwise identified by the State as in need of
21 additional support.

1 (7) “School-based leadership team” means a school-level team that is
2 responsible for assessing that school’s needs, developing its goals, selecting
3 programming and services, and implementing the community school program.
4 The team shall be composed of school and community representatives with not
5 less than one-third parents or local residents and not less than one-third
6 teachers and other school staff, as well as the principal, representatives of
7 nonprofit organizations that serve the school, and, for secondary schools,
8 students at the school. The leader shall be selected by the membership of the
9 team.

10 (8) “Teacher learning communities” means a group of primarily
11 instructional staff in an eligible school who are given common planning time
12 to participate in ongoing decision making and planning that examine their
13 practice and student performance to improve school policy and classroom
14 teaching.

15 (b) Information and technical assistance. The Agency of Education shall
16 provide the following forms of technical assistance to supervisory unions:

17 (1) distribute materials that describe the elements and advantages of
18 community schools, including references to governmental and nonprofit
19 reports;

20 (2) assist any school district in forming a task force to study the creation
21 and administration of community schools;

1 (3) inform supervisory unions of the availability of grants authorized by
2 this law and provide technical assistance to eligible applicants in applying for
3 such grants;

4 (4) inform school districts of other sources of funding for community
5 schools, including the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and assist school
6 district efforts to secure such funding; and

7 (5) facilitate effective coordination among State agencies in the
8 deployment of resources and services such as health, nutrition, and other
9 supports.

10 (c) Grant authorization. The Agency of Education is authorized to provide
11 planning, implementation, and renewal grants to eligible applicants as follows:

12 (1) a one-year planning grant of up to \$20,000.00 for each eligible
13 school;

14 (2) annual implementation grants of \$110,000.00 a year for a period of
15 three years for each eligible school; and

16 (3) at the conclusion of the initial three-year grant period, applicants
17 with demonstrated success, as determined by the Agency of Education's
18 evaluation under subsection (g) of this section, may apply for a renewal grant
19 of \$110,000.00 annually for each eligible school for up to three years.

20 (d) Planning grants applications and activities.

1 (1) Eligible applicants shall submit an application to the Agency of
2 Education and shall include a description of the following:

3 (A) the initial community-wide leadership team and the school-based
4 leadership team or teams or the process that will be put in place to establish the
5 teams;

6 (B) the process and timeline for conducting a needs and assets
7 assessment and community school plan for each eligible school as required by
8 subsection (e) of this section; and

9 (C) if applicable, plans for hiring additional staff, providing
10 additional compensation to existing staff, or the contracting of a nonprofit
11 entity or entities that will help the eligible applicant apply for an
12 implementation grant or grants.

13 (2) Eligible applicants shall make an assurance that the applicant intends
14 to apply for an implementation grant within six months of receipt of a planning
15 grant.

16 (3) Planning grant funds shall be used for the following activities:

17 (A) the establishment of, or continued support of, a community-wide
18 leadership team and school-based leadership team or teams; and

19 (B) conducting a needs and assets assessment and crafting a
20 community school plan for each eligible school as required under subsection
21 (e) of this section.

1 (4) Planning grant funds may be used for hiring additional staff,
2 providing additional compensation to existing staff, or contracting with a
3 nonprofit entity or entities to aid in the activities necessary to apply for an
4 implementation grant.

5 (e) Application for implementation and renewal grants and community
6 school plan. Eligible applicants shall submit an application for an
7 implementation or renewal grant to the Agency of Education and for each
8 eligible school shall include:

9 (1) A needs and assets assessment that includes:

10 (A) where available, and where applicable, student demographic,
11 academic achievement, and school climate data, disaggregated by major
12 demographic groups, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, English
13 language proficiency, students with individualized education plans, and
14 students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch status;

15 (B) access to and need for integrated student supports under
16 subdivisions (a)(1)(A) and (f)(1)(C) of this section;

17 (C) access to and need for expanded and enriched learning time and
18 opportunities under subdivisions (a)(1)(B) and (f)(1)(D) of this section;

19 (D) school funding information, including federal, State, local, and
20 private education funding and per-pupil spending, based on actual salaries of
21 personnel assigned to the eligible school;

1 (E) information on the number, qualifications, and stability of school
2 staff, including the number and percentage of fully certified teachers and rates
3 of teacher turnover; and

4 (F) active family and community engagement information, including:

5 (i) family and community needs based on surveys, information
6 from public meetings, or information gathered by other means;

7 (ii) measures of family and community engagement in the eligible
8 schools, including volunteering in schools, attendance at back-to-school nights,
9 and parent-teacher conferences;

10 (iii) efforts to provide culturally and linguistically relevant
11 communication between schools and families; and

12 (iv) access to and need for family and community engagement
13 activities under subdivisions (a)(1)(C) and (f)(1)(E) of this section.

14 (2) Collaborative leadership and practices, including a description of the
15 community-wide leadership team, school-based leadership teams, teacher
16 learning communities, and common planning time for educators.

17 (3) Opportunities for partnerships with nonprofit organizations; faith-
18 and community-based institutions; institutions of higher education, including
19 teacher preparation institutions; hospitals; museums; businesses; and other
20 community entities that can partner with the eligible school.

1 (4) Community climate indicators, including housing instability,
2 unemployment, poverty, jobs that offer a living wage, health indicators, youth
3 employment, access to parks, environmental hazards, crime, and gang activity.

4 (5) A community school plan, which shall include a description of the
5 following:

6 (A) how the community school director and, as applicable,
7 community school initiative director will be expected to fulfill their
8 responsibilities under subdivisions (a)(2) and (a)(3) of this section;

9 (B) the collaborative leadership and practices structures and
10 strategies;

11 (C) the integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning
12 time and opportunities, and active family and community engagement
13 activities that will be tailored to the needs and assets assessment under
14 subdivision (1) of this subsection (e) and provided in accordance with the
15 activities under subdivision (f)(1) of this section;

16 (D) how the eligible school will provide culturally and linguistically
17 relevant communication between schools and families;

18 (E) how the eligible school will establish and maintain partnerships
19 with nonprofit organizations, faith- and community-based institutions,
20 institutions of higher education, including teacher preparation institutions.

1 hospitals, museums, businesses, and other community entities that will help
2 implement and sustain the community school plan;

3 (F) how activities chosen will reinforce, and not be duplicative of,
4 existing programs and activities at the eligible school; and

5 (G) if applicable, a description of the federal, State, local, and private
6 funds that will be accessed.

7 (f) Activities for implementation and renewal grants.

8 (1) Programming, services, and activities in this subsection shall be
9 tailored to school and community needs as identified in the needs and assets
10 assessment and community school plan under subsection (e) of this section.

11 As a condition of receipt of funds, eligible applicants shall, for each eligible
12 school:

13 (A) provide a community school director and, as applicable, a
14 district-level community school initiative director to coordinate services across
15 eligible schools;

16 (B) establish or maintain a school-based leadership team and teacher
17 learning communities and, for the supervisory union, a community-wide
18 leadership team;

19 (C) implement at least two of the following integrated student
20 supports:

- 1 (i) access to health services that may be based in the eligible
2 school or provided in the community, including primary health; dental care;
3 and mental health, including trauma-informed care;
- 4 (ii) access to nutrition services, including access to additional
5 meals or assistance in accessing food assistance programs;
- 6 (iii) access to programs that provide assistance to students who
7 have been chronically absent, suspended, or expelled:
- 8 (I) mentoring and other youth development programs;
9 (II) programs that support positive school climates;
10 (III) juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation programs;
11 (IV) specialized instructional support services;
12 (V) homeless prevention services;
13 (VI) developmentally appropriate physical education;
14 (VII) legal services, including immigration-related legal
15 services;
- 16 (VIII) dropout prevention programs; and
17 (IX) transportation services necessary for students to access
18 integrated student support services, expanded and enriched learning time and
19 opportunities, family and community engagement activities, or other services
20 and activities identified to support the development of students;

1 (D) implement expanded and enriched learning time and
2 opportunities, which may include additional academic instruction; before-
3 school, afterschool, and summer learning programs; mentorship programs; job
4 training; internships; apprenticeships; and service-learning opportunities, and
5 provide time for the community school director, school staff, the school-based
6 leadership team, and others to plan, coordinate, and integrate these
7 opportunities; and

8 (E) implement at least two active family and community engagement
9 strategies, which may include:

- 10 (i) on-site early childhood care and education programs;
11 (ii) home visitation services by teachers and other professionals;
12 (iii) access to adult education, including instruction in English as a
13 second language, GED, financial literacy, or credit recovery programs;
14 (iv) access to job search and preparation services and career
15 advancement activities;
16 (v) access to legal services, such as help with green card or
17 citizenship preparation;
18 (vi) access to programs that aid family and community well-being,
19 including accessing homeless prevention services;

1 (vii) programs that promote parental involvement and family
2 literacy, provide volunteer opportunities, promote inclusion in school-based
3 leadership teams, and empower and strengthen families and communities;

4 (viii) provide other programming or services designed to meet
5 school and community needs identified in the needs and assets assessment,
6 which may also satisfy requirements under subdivisions (1)(C), (1)(D), and
7 (1)(E) of this subsection (f); and

8 (ix) publicly disclose the results of an annual self-assessment
9 based on information under subsection (e) of this section.

10 (2) Required activities shall not be duplicative of existing programs and
11 activities.

12 (g) Evaluation.

13 (1) At the end of the initial three-year grant period of an implementation
14 award and every third year in which a renewal grant ends, each eligible school
15 shall undergo an evaluation designed by the Agency of Education. The
16 evaluation shall include, at a minimum, information under subdivisions (e)(1)
17 and (e)(2) and subdivision (f)(1) of this section, including the impact on
18 academic achievement and opportunities, school climate, integrated student
19 supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family
20 and community engagement strategies, the collaborative leadership and
21 practices in place, and changes in school spending.

1 (2) On or before December 15, 2023, the Agency of Education shall
2 report to the General Assembly and the Governor on the impact of the
3 Community Schools Act and its grant program. The report shall be made
4 publicly available on the Agency of Education’s website. The Agency of
5 Education shall provide data gathered, in the aggregate and disaggregate, under
6 subdivision (e)(1) of this section for each eligible school and present the data
7 in such a manner that allows it to be easily searchable. As applicable, the
8 Agency of Education shall make recommendations to the General Assembly,
9 the Governor, and the public concerning possible revisions to the State’s
10 funding formula, particularly for the highest-poverty supervisory unions in the
11 State.

12 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

13 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, \$1,529,000.00 is
14 appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education for fiscal
15 year 2022 designated for community schools under 16 V.S.A. § 4032.

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

17 (1) not more than 10 percent of funds for informational and technical
18 assistance for eligible applicants and eligible schools under 16 V.S.A.
19 § 4032(b); and

20 (2) not more than five percent of funds for the evaluations required
21 under 16 V.S.A. § 4032(g).

- 1 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE
- 2 This act shall take effect on passage.