

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website (www.nmlegis.gov). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2020

Bill Number	<u>HB236</u>	Sponsor	<u>Thomson/Trujillo, C./Sariñana/Garratt/ Trujillo, L.</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.216300:1SA</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HAFC;SEC</u>
Short Title	<u>No Community School Grant Funding Limits</u>		
Analyst	<u>Alexander</u>	Original Date	<u>1/28/2020</u>
		Last Updated	<u>2/19/2020</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 236 (HB236) would amend the Community Schools Act to remove limitations on grant funding amounts for community schools.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB236 does not contain an appropriation.

HB236 would give the Public Education Department (PED) significant flexibility to make planning and implementation grants to public schools eligible for community schools funding. Under current law, community schools working to scale their programs to full implementation are eligible for a one-time planning grant of up to \$50 thousand to conduct a needs assessment and establish a site-based team. Schools currently implementing a school-wide community school criteria are eligible for an annual implementation grant of \$150 thousand each year for three years. HB236 would remove these minimum and maximum amounts and allow PED to make flexible awards based on any criteria the department deems prudent. For example, HB236 would allow the department to make awards based on a community school's enrollment or the number and types of services the school offers.

However, HB236 does not define any specific criteria by which community schools should be evaluated to receive implementation awards, which may lead to inconsistent award methodologies year-over-year. For example, PED's now defunct "Reads To Lead" program experienced several different award methodologies during its lifespan, which resulted in school districts sporadically earning and losing awards. Notably, Albuquerque Public Schools, the largest school district in the state, lost a sizable Reads To Lead award when PED changed the award methodology in FY17. Providing some guidelines for PED implementation allows the Legislature to hold the department and community schools accountable for prioritizing evidence-based programs that have an impact on the achievement gap.

Under HB236, funding for community schools would rely heavily on the Legislature to provide what it deems to be sufficient funding for community schools. If community schools received a lower legislative appropriation in a future fiscal year, the PED would be required to reduce grant funding accordingly.

In FY20, for the first time since the Community Schools Act was enacted, the Legislature appropriated \$2 million to PED to support the development of community schools. PED received 111 applications and used the funds to make planning awards to 26 schools and implementation awards to six schools.

The Senate Finance Committee Amendment to the House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS/aSFC) contains a \$4 million related recurring appropriation to PED for community school support, doubling FY20 funding. If HB236 does not pass, the appropriation in HB2/HAFCS/aSFC will fund a maximum of 26 implementation awards. LESC staff estimate \$4.8 million is needed under current law to fund 32 implementation awards of \$150 thousand each. LESC’s FY21 recommendation for public school support also included additional nonrecurring funds to provide planning awards to a number of the state’s remaining community school applicants. However, this recommendation was not adopted in HB2/HAFCS/aSFC. If HB236 is enacted, PED could make a greater number of awards with smaller award amounts to each school.

**FY20 Actual and FY21 Estimated
Community School Awards under Current Law**
(dollars in thousands)

	FY20 Actual Awards		FY21 Estimated Demand (LESC)		HB2/HAFCS/aSFC	
	N. Schools	Funding	N. Schools	Funding	N. Schools	Funding
Planning Awards (up to \$50 thousand each)	26	\$1,100.0	22	\$1,100.0	2	\$100.0
Implementation Awards (\$150 thousand each)	6	\$900.0	32	\$4,800.0	26	\$3,900.0
Total Community School Awards	32	\$2,000.0	52	\$5,900.0	28	\$4,000.0

Source: LESC Files

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Community schools are a place-based strategy in which schools partner with local public and private agencies to provide services that reflect students’ needs and priorities. The Coalition for Community Schools defines a community school as a place and a set of partnerships between the school and community resources with an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.

Research by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) found the community school model meets the evidence-based standard for interventions under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) if the schools completely implement the following four key pillars with fidelity:

- Integrated student supports;
- Expanded learning time and opportunities;
- Family and community engagement; and
- Collaborative leadership and practice.

LPI also found effective community schools successfully meet the needs of low-achieving students in high-poverty schools, and help close opportunity gaps for students from low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

New Mexico Community Schools. The New Mexico Community Schools Act was passed in 2013, although funding was not appropriated until FY20, at which point 32 community school awards were distributed. A 2019 LESC report on community schools found students in schools operating as community schools for five or more years gained 6 percentage points in reading proficiency and 3 percentage points in math proficiency, but did not close the achievement gap over that time period. New Mexico community schools have also increased their graduation rates, but have not kept pace with the statewide growth in graduation.

New Mexico community schools do not appear to be implementing all four key pillars with fidelity, which the research shows to have the largest positive impact on student outcomes. Community school experts emphasize schools should not focus solely on out-of-school barriers to learning; supports and services must be integrated with a strategy to address in-school barriers and must include rigorous, high-quality instruction.

Eligibility Requirements. Grants for community schools initiatives are available to a school district, a group of eligible public schools, or a single eligible public school that has a demonstrated partnership with the local community. An eligible public school means any of the following:

- A public elementary or secondary school that has a student body where at least 40 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch pursuant to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act; or
- A public elementary or secondary school that has been identified as a school for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) or targeted support and improvement (TSI) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; or
- A public elementary or secondary school that has otherwise been identified by the state as in need of additional support. Schools in need of additional support are struggling in the areas of academic proficiency in English Language Arts, math and/or science, attendance, graduation rates, drop-out rates and/or family engagement.

Depending on demand for funding, schools identified as needing CSI or TSI will be prioritized.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider how it can give PED flexibility to make community school awards while still building guidelines that allow community schools to budget for anticipated awards in coming years. Examples of such guidelines may include requiring PED to make awards per student or requiring PED to scale awards based on schools' fidelity to the four key community school pillars.

RELATED BILLS

Relates to HB53, Health Services as Part of Sufficient Education, which would include nursing, school counseling, and behavioral health services in the definition of a basic sufficient education.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files