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AB-1923 Partnership academies: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). (2021-2022)

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Assembly Bill No. 1923

CHAPTER 114

An act to amend Sections 54690, 54692, and 54693 of the Education Code, relating to partnership academies.

[Approved by Governor July 19, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State July 19, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1923, Mathis. Partnership academies: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Existing law establishes the California Partnership Academies to promote state-school-private sector partnerships combining academic and vocational training to high school pupils who present a high risk of dropping out of school, and motivating them to stay in school and graduate. Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue grants to school districts, as specified, to plan, establish, and maintain these academies. Existing law requires the Superintendent to establish eligibility criteria for school districts that apply for these grants.

This bill would require the Superintendent to prioritize proposals for new partnership academies based upon a school district's enrollment of unduplicated pupils, pupils from groups historically underrepresented in career technical education or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs or professions, and at-risk pupils. The bill would authorize the Superintendent to also prioritize school districts located in a rural or economically disadvantaged area. The bill would, for purposes of the partnership academy requirements, expressly include STEM courses anytime career technical education courses are referenced.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 54690 of the Education Code is amended to read:

54690. (a) The Legislature hereby finds and declares that the partnership academies program has proven to be a highly effective state-school-private sector partnership, providing combined academic and occupational training to high school pupils who present a high risk of dropping out of school, and motivating those pupils to stay in school and graduate. Partnership academies are functioning in high schools across the state, with occupational education and skills development successfully offered in California's 15 different industry sectors, including electronics, computer technology, finance, agribusiness, alternative energy, environmental design and construction, graphic arts and printing, international business, and space. Partnership academies have been honored with national awards for excellence, and the California partnership academies have been given high accolades in various textbooks and studies addressing career technical education or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs.

(b) The Legislature finds the partnership academies are in the forefront of school efforts to integrate academic and career technical education or STEM, and that they can be effective in providing an integrated learning program and high motivation toward pursuing skilled occupational fields to pupils at risk of dropping out of school and to pupils not motivated by the regular educational curriculum. Further, the Legislature finds the partnership academies can make a very positive contribution towards meeting the needs of the state for a highly skilled and educated workforce in the 21st century.

(c) Therefore, the Legislature hereby states its intent to expand the number of partnership academies in this state's high schools, hereafter to be known as California Partnership Academies; to broaden the availability of these learning experiences to interested pupils who do not meet the criteria of at-promise pupils; and to encourage the establishment of academies whose occupational fields address the needs of developing technologies.

(d) For purposes of this article, "at-promise pupil" means a pupil enrolled in high school who is at risk of dropping out of school, as indicated by at least three of the following criteria:

(1) Past record of irregular attendance. For purposes of this section, "irregular attendance" means absence from school 20 percent or more of the school year.

(2) Past record of underachievement in which the pupil is at least one-third of a year behind the coursework for the respective grade level, or as demonstrated by credits achieved.

(3) Past record of low motivation or a disinterest in the regular school program.

(4) Disadvantaged economically.

(5) Scoring below basic or far below basic in mathematics or English language arts on the standardized test administered pursuant to Article 4 (commencing with Section 60640) of Chapter 5 of Part 33.

(6) Maintaining a grade point average of 2.2 or below, or the equivalent of a C minus.

(e) Up to one-half of the pupils enrolled at a partnership academy may be pupils who do not meet the criteria of at-promise pupils.

(f) The department may expend no more than 5 percent of the funds received to carry out this article on administrative expenses.

SEC. 2. Section 54692 of the Education Code is amended to read:

54692. In order to be eligible to receive funding pursuant to this article, a school district shall provide all of the following:

(a) An amount equal to a 100 percent match of all funds received pursuant to this article in the form of direct and in-kind support provided by the district.

(b) An amount equal to a 100 percent match of all funds received pursuant to this article in the form of direct and in-kind support provided by participating companies or other private sector organizations.

(c) An assurance that state funds provided by the partnership academies program shall be used only for the development, operation, and support of partnership academies.

(d) An assurance that each academy will be established as a "school within a school." Academy teachers shall work as a team in planning, teaching, and troubleshooting program activities. Classes in the academy program shall be limited to academy pupils as specified in subdivision (e). Each participating school district shall establish an advisory committee consisting of individuals involved in academy operations, including school district and school administrators, lead teachers, and representatives of the private sector.

(e) Assurance that each academy pupil will be provided with the following:

(1) Instruction in at least three academic subjects each regular school term that prepares the pupil for a regular high school diploma, and, where possible and appropriate, to meet the subject requirements for admission to the California State University and the University of California. These subjects should contribute to an understanding of the occupational field of the academy.

(2) Career technical education or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses offered at each grade level at the academy that are part of an occupational course sequence that targets comprehensive skills and that does the following:

(A) Provides career technical education or STEM courses in high skill occupations of regional and local economic need.

(B) Focuses on occupations requiring comprehensive skills leading to higher than entry-level wages, or the possibility of significant wage increases after a few years on the job, or both.

(C) Provides a sequence of courses that build upon each other in knowledge, skill development, and experience, and ends in a capstone course that includes an internship component.

(D) Prepares pupils for employment and postsecondary education. Sequenced courses shall be linked to certificate and degree programs in the region, where possible.

(E) Whenever possible, prepares pupils for industry-recognized certifications.

(F) Whenever possible and appropriate, offers career technical education or STEM courses that also meet the subject requirements for admission to the California State University and the University of California.

(3) A class schedule that limits the attendance to the classes required in paragraphs (1) and (2) to pupils of the academy. Whenever possible, these classes should be block scheduled in a cluster to provide flexibility to academy teachers. During the 12th grade the number of academic classes may vary.

(4) A mentor from the business community during the pupil's 11th grade year.

(5) An employer-based internship or work experience that occurs in the summer following the 11th grade or during 12th grade year.

(6) Additional motivational activities with private sector involvement to encourage academic and occupational preparation.

(f) Assurance that academy teachers have a common planning period to interchange pupil and educational information. A second planning period should be provided for the lead teacher in addition to the normal planning period for full-time teachers and be supported as a part of the school district's matching funds, whenever practical.

SEC. 3. Section 54693 of the Education Code is amended to read:

54693. (a) The Superintendent shall establish eligibility criteria for school districts that apply for grants pursuant to this article. When establishing criteria, the Superintendent shall consider the commitment and need of the applicant school district. The Superintendent may consider school district indicators of need, including, but not limited to, the number or percent of pupils in poverty or with limited English proficiency, and the dropout rate.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), the Superintendent shall prioritize proposals for new partnership academies based upon a school district's enrollment of the following pupil groups:

(1) Unduplicated pupils, as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 42238.02.

(2) Pupils from groups historically underrepresented in career technical education or STEM programs or professions.

(3) At-promise pupils, as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 54690.

(c) The Superintendent may also prioritize new partnership academies for school districts located in a rural area or an economically disadvantaged area.