



District of Columbia Community Schools Incentive Act of 2011

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This legislation was first introduced in spring 2010 by Council member Michael Brown, and reintroduced in January 2011 at the start of the new legislative season.

DC VOICE staff and supporters have been meeting with city officials and contacting council members to move this legislation forward.

The two immediate outcomes of this Act are

(1) The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”) will establish and administer a Community Schools Incentive Initiative and administer multi-year award grants that will establish no less than five new community schools (at public schools or public charter schools) within one year of the act, and

(2) the establishment of a Community Schools Fund to fund the operation of the initiative, and to ensure the District of Columbia becomes eligible to receive federal and private dollars in support of community schools.

What is a Community School and how does it work?

What:

A Community School is a school in which public and private partnership coordinate educational, developmental, family, health, and after-school care programs during non-school hours for students, families and local communities. This is done at a public school or public charter school.

Goals:

The goals are to improve academic achievement, reduce absenteeism, build stronger relationships between students, parents, and communities, and improve skills, capacity, and well-being of the surrounding community residents.

How:

This is done through an “eligible consortium” which is a partnership between a local education agency and one or more community partners, for purposes of establishing, operating and sustaining a community school. A community school could not function without community partners.

Who:

A community partner is a provider of one or more eligible services that will be available to students and/or the community, such as:

- primary medical and dental care; mental health prevention and treatment services;
- academic enrichment activities designed to promote students’ cognitive development and opportunities to practice and apply academic skills;
- programs designed to increase attendance, including reducing early chronic absenteeism rates;
- youth development programs designed to promote other aspects of young people’s development, social emotional, physical and moral development, including arts, sports, physical fitness, youth leadership, community service and service-learning opportunities;
- early childhood education, including head start and early head start programs;
- programs designed to facilitate parental involvement in, and engagement with, their children’s education, including parental activities that involve supporting, monitoring and advocating for their children’s education;
- promote parent leadership in the life of the school, and build parenting skills;
- school-age child care services including but not limited to before- and after-school services, and full day programming that operates during school holidays, summers, vacations and weekends;
- programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled and that offer multiple pathways to high school graduation or GED completion;
- youth and adult job training and career counseling services;
- nutrition education services;
- adult education, including instruction in English as a second language, adult literacy, computer literacy, financial literacy, and hard-skills training;

- or programs that provide remedial education and enrichment activities.

Why:

Children living in the District of Columbia face daily challenges such as a lack of positive adult role models, unmet health needs, unsafe neighborhoods, family financial uncertainty, and a dearth of access to positive opportunities. DC has the highest rate of children living in poverty of any state or jurisdiction in the United States, creating a number of obstacles students must combat to be successful in school.

- Thirty percent of DC children’s families have incomes below the official federal poverty level as compared to a national rate of 19%.¹
- In 2008, 57% of DC children lived in single-parent families.²
- Twenty-two percent of children live in households where the household head is a high school dropout.³
- In 2006, the DCPS graduation rate (not including charter schools) was below 50%.⁴
- The number of juvenile cases referred to DC Superior Court increased in 2007, continuing the upward trend that started in 2002. Crimes against persons and against property accounted for a majority of the juvenile cases formally petitioned.⁵
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s biennial YRBSS, in 2007, 21.3 percent of youth in DC admitted to carrying a weapon and 43 percent engaged in physical fighting.⁶
- In 2007, 14% of children in DC experienced asthma problems.⁷
- In 2006, 11.5% of the babies born had a low-birthweight. The national percentage is 8.3%.⁸

¹ National Center for Children in Poverty, 50-State Demographic Wizard, <http://www.nccp.org/tools/demographics/>, accessed on November 12, 2009.

² Annie E. Case Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, accessed on November 12, 2009.

³ Ibid

⁴ Michael Bimbaum, “D.C. Graduation Rates Down,” Washington Post, June 9, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/08/AR2009060803996.html> accessed on November 19, 2009.

⁵ “Every Kid Counts in the District of Columbia,” DC Kids Count Collaborative http://dcctf.hostcentric.com/dckidscount_files/2009%20FACT%20BOOK-FINAL%20VERSION.pdf, Washington, DC, 2008, accessed on November 14, 2009.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Annie E. Case Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, accessed on November 12, 2009.

⁸ Ibid

Research suggests that health, safety, and stability of families and communities are strongly linked to student success in school and subsequently in life.

The education system cannot be left to act alone to reduce the multitude of gaps that exist.

Requirements of the legislation and how it will be implemented

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”) will establish and administer a Community Schools Incentive Initiative and administer multi-year award grants that will establish no less than five new community schools (at public schools or public charter schools) within one year of the act.

Within 60 days of the effective date of the act, the OSSE will convene a Community Schools Advisory Committee that will:

- advise on the development of the DC Community Schools Incentive Initiative – including the development of a results-based framework and accompanying performance indicators with which to measure the success of the program;
- participate in the selection process for community school incentive grantees; develop recommendations on how all public schools in the District of Columbia can become centers of their communities by opening school facilities for non-profit and community use;
- identify potential funding sources for the provision of eligible services within new community school initiatives; and develop yearly measurable performance goals to assess (1) how to increase the percentage of families and students receiving services for each year of the program, (2) the outcomes for students and families, particularly student academic achievement, and (3) the number of public schools and charter schools that have established formal relationships with community and neighborhood groups for use of school facilities.

The Committee

The Committee shall consist of:

- the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools or their designee;
- the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation or their designee;
- the Director of the Department of Health or their designee;
- the Director of the Department of Employment Services or their designee;

- the President of the State Board of Education or their designee;
- the President of the University of the District of Columbia or their designee;
- the President of the University of the District of Columbia's Community College or their designee;
- the Deputy Mayor for Education or their designee;
- and representatives from at least 8 community based organizations.

Within 180 days of the effective date of the act, OSSE shall establish a process for awarding grants of \$200,000 a year to successful eligible consortiums and shall require that each application for a community school incentive grant include the following:

Application requirements:

- An assessment of the local school community and the neighborhood's needs and assets.
- A description of the proposed eligible consortium, including the type and number of community partners and how this consortium addresses the needs and builds upon the assets of the community that the consortium will serve.
- A proposed budget and narrative description of the proposed use of grant funds. The budget shall reflect a core concept of service coordination and integration and how the consortium shall provide at least four additional eligible services that did not exist prior to the consortium.
- Identification of operational funding for eligible services and community partners.
- A plan for the development of a community advisory board to include members of the school leadership, school faculty, parents of school students, community leaders, community-based organizations and other community members.

Post-grant requirements:

- Conduct periodic evaluations of the progress achieved with funds allocated under the grant, consistent with the purposes of this section;
- Use such evaluations to refine and improve activities conducted with the grant and the performance measures for such activities;
- Make the results of such evaluations publicly available, including providing public notice of such availability.

- Work with OSSE to identify best practices and lessons learned in order to inform city-wide community school policy.

Community Schools Fund

Another major goal of the legislation is the establishment of a **Community Schools Fund** to fund the operation of the initiative, and to ensure the District of Columbia becomes eligible to receive federal and private dollars in support of community schools. This fund will be a separate, non-lapsing Community Schools Fund. It will appear as a separate program line within the OSSE budget, and all funds deposited into the Community Schools Fund will not fall back into the unrestricted fund balance of the General Fund of the District of Columbia at the end of the fiscal year, or at any other time, but shall always be available for the uses of this Act. The Community Schools Fund shall be funded through Federal funds and grants, local funds, gifts, or subsidies from public or private sources. No more than 10% of the Community Schools Fund' shall be used to fund administrative costs associated with the operations of the OSSE. The Community Schools Fund shall be used to fund the planning and implementation of the Community Schools Incentive Grant Program.