

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

The legislature enacted a five-year “Innovation Zone” pilot project in the 2012 session laws, which it amended in 2014, to improve student and school outcomes by allowing groups of school districts to work together to provide innovative education programs and activities and share district resources. Interested school districts were required to form partnerships and create a plan, consistent with project goals, to provide students challenging programs, offer teachers professional development opportunities, increase student engagement and connection, or deliver financial or other services more efficiently.

This bill proposes to expand project goals to include improving students’ career and college readiness, expand the entities eligible to join with school districts or charter schools in a pilot project partnership, expand the number of pilot project participants, expand the innovative programs and activities a partnership may undertake and the interim assessments a partnership may administer, expand the measures a partnership may use to demonstrate its project success to the education commissioner and the legislature, and extend the pilot project expiration date.

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1 Innovative delivery of education services and sharing of school or district resources; pilot project.

Subd. 1. Establishment; requirements for participation. (a) Expands the purpose of the pilot project to include career and college readiness and expands the eligible participants to include charter schools, postsecondary institutions, and

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employers. Allows project participants to: (1) provide innovative programs and activities that are consistent with the statutes governing the adult high school diploma or experiential and applied learning opportunities; (2) conduct rigorous research on innovative education programs and activities that may include career and college readiness assessments and interim assessments that comply with the federal ESSA; and (3) share resources in order to improve students' career and college readiness, defined in statute to mean students able to complete credit-bearing coursework at a two- or four-year college or university or other credit-bearing postsecondary program without need for remediation, and consistent with the career and college readiness requirements of the World's Best Work Force. Allows the pilot project to continue until June 30, 2021, or up to five years, whichever is earlier, except project participants may agree to continue their project beyond June 30, 2021.

(b) Requires eligible participants to form a partnership, prepare a plan, and complete an application to participate in the pilot project. Requires participating school districts and charter schools to receive formal approval to participate from their governing boards. Requires the plans to evaluate partnership outcomes using measures such as a return on investment, program effectiveness, or beat-the-odds analysis, and career and college readiness assessments or other interim assessments.

(c) Allows partnerships to structure their application and plan to: (1) reduce duplicative assessments less useful for informing instruction or identifying and diagnosing students' needs for targeted interventions; (2) establish expectations for career and college readiness; (3) use fully adaptive, on and off-grade assessments; (4) provide students with the information they need to develop and realize their individualized plan for postsecondary education and employment; use career and college readiness assessments or other interim assessments highly correlated with the reading and math MCAs; allow students to use an applied math or STEM course to satisfy the state's algebra II requirement; or include student assessment data under this section in the World's Best Work Force report of participating districts.

Allows participating districts and charter schools to use alternative assessments in place of MCAs and to take attendance only once per school day as long as students are not identified as truant. Allows a partnership to invite additional eligible partners to join the partnership and requires the partnership to notify the commissioner when such partners are added.

(d) Allows a district or charter school member of a partnership to submit an application to the education commissioner to participate in a pilot project.

(f) Requires participating districts and charter schools to submit biennial evaluations to the commissioner and the legislature by February 1 in each odd-numbered year that include longitudinal data consistent with the statewide education data collection system (SLEDS) and the evaluation measures contained in the partnership's plan.

Subd. 2. Commissioner's role. For 2016 only, requires interested partnerships to submit an application by July 1. Adds researchers from the Office of Higher Education and the University of Minnesota to the panel advising the commissioner on

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applicants' qualifications under this section. Directs the commissioner to authorize up to eight qualified applicants during the 2016-2017 to 2020-2021 school years.

Subd. 3. Pilot project evaluation. Directs districts and charter schools to submit pilot project data to the commissioner and the legislature, consistent with this section. Directs the commissioner to analyze data showing the progress of participating districts and charter schools in providing innovative education programs and activities and sharing resources to improve career and college readiness, consistent with state data practices requirements governing state agencies' use and dissemination of data on individuals. Directs the commissioner to submit an interim legislative report by March 30, 2019, and a final legislative report by February 1, 2022.

Makes this section immediately effective and applicable to those applications submitted to the education commissioner after that date. Allows districts already participating in a pilot project under this section to continue to operate under the existing 2014 law.