

SENATE
STATE OF MINNESOTA
NINETY-FIRST SESSION

S.F. No. 4057

(SENATE AUTHORS: NELSON and Wiger)

DATE
03/05/2020

D-PG
5261

Introduction and first reading
Referred to E-12 Finance and Policy

OFFICIAL STATUS

1.1 A bill for an act
 1.2 relating to education; establishing the innovation research zone program; proposing
 1.3 coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 124D.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **[124D.901] INNOVATION RESEARCH ZONE PROGRAM.**

1.6 Subdivision 1. Establishment; requirements for participation; research zone plans. (a)

1.7 The innovation research zone program is established to improve student and school outcomes
 1.8 by creating new and different models of education. Consistent with the world's best workforce
 1.9 requirements under section 120B.11, innovation research zone partnerships encourage
 1.10 school districts and charter schools to research and implement innovative education
 1.11 programming models designed to ensure that each student is prepared for the world of the
 1.12 21st century.

1.13 (b) One or more school districts or charter schools may join together to form an innovation
 1.14 research zone partnership. The partnership may include schools, such as postsecondary
 1.15 institutions and other nonschool partners, including other units of government, nonprofit
 1.16 organizations, and for-profit organizations. An innovation research zone plan must be
 1.17 collaboratively developed in concert with the school's instructional staff.

1.18 (c) An innovation research zone partnership must research and implement innovative
 1.19 programs and models that are based on proposed hypotheses. An innovation research zone
 1.20 plan may include an emerging practice not yet supported by peer-reviewed research.
 1.21 Examples of research and innovative programs include but are not limited to:

2.1 (1) new models of curriculum, instruction, and formative assessment designed to close
2.2 the achievement gap, including new models for ages three to grade three, English as a second
2.3 language, early identification and prevention of mental health issues, and other issues;

2.4 (2) personalized learning, allowing each student to excel at the student's own pace and
2.5 according to the student's interests, aspirations, and unique needs;

2.6 (3) the use of competency outcomes, rather than seat time or course hours, and course
2.7 completion designed for each student to fulfill standards, credits, and other graduation
2.8 requirements;

2.9 (4) multidisciplinary, real-world, inquiry-based, and student-directed models designed
2.10 to make learning more engaging and relevant, including documenting and validating learning
2.11 that takes place beyond the school day and school walls and awarding credit when state
2.12 academic standards are met and validated by the school;

2.13 (5) new partnerships between Minnesota secondary schools and other partners located
2.14 anywhere in the world, including postsecondary institutions, employers, or career training
2.15 institutions enabling students to complete industry certifications, postsecondary education
2.16 credits, and other credentials;

2.17 (6) new methods of collaborative leadership models, including the expansion of schools
2.18 where teachers have larger professional roles;

2.19 (7) new methods of enhancing parental and community involvement in learning;

2.20 (8) new models of professional development for educators, including embedded
2.21 professional development;

2.22 (9) new models in other education programming such as whole child instruction,
2.23 social-emotional skill development, technology-based or blended learning, parent and
2.24 community involvement, professional development and mentoring, and models that increase
2.25 the return on investment;

2.26 (10) new models of evaluation, assessment, and accountability using multiple indicators
2.27 including models that demonstrate alternative ways to validate student's academic attainment
2.28 that have predictive validity to the state tests, but also include other variables such as
2.29 problem-solving, creativity, analytic thinking, collaboration, respecting others, global
2.30 understanding, postgraduation student performance, and other information;

2.31 (11) improving teacher and principal mentoring and evaluation;

(12) granting a high school diploma to a student who meets the graduation requirements under section 120B.02, subdivision 2, who demonstrates preparation for postsecondary education or a career consistent with the world's best workforce goals under section 120B.11, and who meets the following requirements:

(i) completes four years of high school; and

(ii) completes at least one year of postsecondary education at a two or four-year college or university through concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, or international baccalaureate courses; or

(iii) completes the requirements for a career certification up to the apprenticeship program level, if one is required for that certification;

(13) use of the provisions in section 124D.52, subdivision 9, governing standard adult high school diploma requirements; section 124D.085 governing experiential and applied learning opportunities; and section 126C.05, subdivision 15, paragraph (b), item (i), governing the use of independent study;

(14) use of the provisions of the learning year statute in section 124D.128 for a student in grade 10, 11, or 12 to participate in career and technical programs after school, on weekends, and during school breaks, including summers, and be included in the general education revenue computation. The classes must generate both high school and postsecondary credit and lead to either a career certification, technical college degree, or an apprenticeship program. A student participating in this learning year may attend school year-round, and the student's continual learning plan must provide for the student to meet the high school graduation standards no later than the end of the fall semester of grade 12;

(15) methods to initiate prevention models to reduce student needs for special education and to reduce teacher time devoted to the required special education documentation; or

(16) other innovations as determined by the local boards.

(d) An innovation research zone plan submitted to the commissioner must describe:

(1) how the plan will improve student and school outcomes consistent with the world's best workforce goals under section 120B.11;

(2) the role of each partner in the innovation research zone;

(3) the research methodologies used for each proposed action in the plan;

(4) the exemptions from statutes and rules in subdivision 2 that the innovation research zone partnership will use;

4.1 (5) a description of how teachers and other educational staff from the affected school
4.2 sites will be included in the planning and implementation process;

4.3 (6) a detailed description of expected outcomes and graduation standards;

4.4 (7) a timeline for implementing the plan and assessing the outcomes; and

4.5 (8) how results of the plan will be disseminated.

4.6 (e) Upon unanimous approval of the initial innovation research zone partners and approval
4.7 by the commissioner, the innovation research zone partnership may extend membership to
4.8 other partners. A new partner's membership is effective 30 days after the innovation research
4.9 zone partnership notifies the commissioner of the proposed change in membership, unless
4.10 the commissioner disapproves the new partner's membership.

4.11 (f) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, a school district or charter school
4.12 participating in an innovation research zone partnership under this section continues to
4.13 receive all revenue and maintains its taxation authority in the same manner as it would
4.14 without participation in the partnership. The innovation research zone school district and
4.15 charter school partners remain organized and governed by their respective school boards
4.16 with general powers under chapter 123B or 124E and remain subject to any employee
4.17 agreements under chapters 122A and 179A. Public district and charter school employees
4.18 participating in an innovation research zone partnership remain employees of their respective
4.19 school district or charter school.

4.20 (g) An innovation research zone partnership may submit its plan at any time to the
4.21 commissioner in the form and manner specified by the commissioner. The commissioner
4.22 must approve or reject the plan after receiving the recommendation of the innovation research
4.23 zone advisory panel under subdivision 3. An initial innovation research zone plan that has
4.24 been rejected by the commissioner may be resubmitted after the innovation research zone
4.25 partnership has modified the plan to meet the recommendations of the commissioner.

4.26 Subd. 2. **Exemptions from law and rules.** (a) Notwithstanding any other law to the
4.27 contrary, an innovation research zone partner with an approved plan is exempt from any
4.28 law or rule from which a district-created, site-governed school under section 123B.045 is
4.29 exempt and any other statute or rule from which the commissioner has exempted another
4.30 district or charter school, as identified in the list published on the Department of Education's
4.31 website under subdivision 4, paragraph (b). A district or charter school with an innovation
4.32 research zone plan is exempt from the following:

(1) online learning program approval under section 124D.095, subdivision 7, if the school district or charter school offers a course or program online combined with direct access to a teacher for a portion of that course or program;

(2) restriction on when extended learning time revenue under section 126C.10, subdivision 2a, may be used for a student who meets the criteria of section 124D.68, subdivision 2;

(3) any required hours of instruction in any class or subject area for a student who is meeting all competencies consistent with the graduation standards described in the innovation research zone plan;

(4) the provisions of section 120B.021, subdivision 1a, relating to rigorous course of study waiver, for which the board of the district or charter school may delegate the responsibility to the principal or site leadership team; and

(5) the provisions of Minnesota Rules, part 3500.1000, relating to experimental and flexible school year programs.

(b) Notwithstanding any law or rule to the contrary, a school district or charter school may use general fund money to accomplish the provisions of its innovation research zone plan consistent with this section as approved by the commissioner.

(c) The exemptions under this subdivision must not be construed as exempting an innovation research zone partner from the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, the required academic standards under section 120B.021, and the graduation requirements under sections 120B.02 and 120B.024.

Subd. 3. Innovation research zone advisory panel. (a) The commissioner must establish and convene an innovation research zone advisory panel to review all innovation research zone plans submitted for approval.

(b) The panel must be composed of nine members. One member must be appointed by each of the following organizations: Educators for Excellence, Education Minnesota, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Elementary Principals Association, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota School Boards Association, Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, and the Office of Higher Education. In addition, the commissioner must appoint one member with expertise in evaluation and research.

Subd. 4. Commissioner approval. (a) Based on the recommendations of the innovation research zone advisory panel, the commissioner must approve, not approve, or request added information from the applicant. If an applicant includes an exemption in the applicant's plan

under subdivision 2, the commissioner must grant that exemption if the plan is approved.
The commissioner may approve up to six innovation research zone plans in the seven-county metropolitan area and up to six plans in greater Minnesota. If an innovation research zone partnership fails to implement its innovation research zone plan as described in its application and according to the stated timeline, upon recommendation of the innovation research zone advisory panel, the commissioner must alert the partnership members and provide them the opportunity to remediate. If implementation continues to fail, the commissioner must suspend or terminate the innovation research zone partnership.

(b) The commissioner must annually publish a list of the exemptions the commissioner has granted to a school district or charter school on the department's website. The first list must be published by July 1, 2020.

Subd. 5. **Project evaluation, dissemination, and report to legislature.** Each innovation research zone partnership must submit project data to the commissioner in the form and manner provided for in the approved application. At least once every two years, the commissioner must analyze each innovation research zone's progress in meeting the objectives of the innovation research zone partnership's plan. The commissioner must summarize and categorize innovation research zone plans and submit a report to the legislative committees having jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education by February 1 of each odd-numbered year in accordance with section 3.195.

Subd. 6. **Existing innovation research zone partnerships.** An innovation research zone partnership with an approved plan under Laws 2017, First Special Session chapter 5, article 2, section 52, may submit an amendment to their plan, consistent with the provisions of this section and is not required to go through the approval process in subdivision 3.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 2. **APPROPRIATION.**

Subdivision 1. **Department of Education.** The sum indicated in this section is appropriated from the general fund to the Department of Education in the fiscal year designated.

Subd. 2. **Innovation research zone program.** For innovation research zone partnerships:

§ 2021

The commissioner must provide planning and implementation grants to innovation research zone partnerships.