

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 2820 (McCarty) – As Amended April 17, 2018

SUBJECT: School accountability: Community Engagement and School Climate for Continuous Improvement Block Grant

SUMMARY: Establishes the Community Engagement and School Climate for Continuous Improvement Block Grant to invest in the development of skills, practices, and capacity of school communities for meaningful stakeholder engagement and assessment of school climate for continuous improvement processes. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Expresses findings and declarations regarding the importance of community engagement to pupil success, school climate, and the effective implementation of the local control funding formula and the need to provide more resources to develop the skills and capacity for meaningful community engagement.
- 2) Establishes the Community Engagement and School Climate for Continuous Improvement Block Grant to invest in the development of skills, practices, and capacity of school communities for meaningful stakeholder engagement and assessment of school climate for continuous improvement processes.
- 3) Requires the block grant to consist of the following components:
 - a) Grants for school districts and charter schools to pilot new ways to improve pupil and parent engagement, including the annual assessment of school climate. This includes grants for up to 30 model school districts selected by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) based on specified criteria and up to 15 professional learning networks of school district teams to participate in cross-district and intra-district learning networks focused on improving their practices and skill sets for pupil and parent engagement.
 - b) Grants for all county offices of education (COEs) to build their knowledge and skills around community engagement and school climate so they may better support each other and school districts. Eligible expenditures include staff time to participate in activities such as, but not limited to, professional learning networks or in-depth training series for parents and community members.
 - c) Requirements on the California Department of Education (CDE) to:
 - i) Develop the criteria for the competitive grant application process;
 - ii) Develop a California Student and Family Engagement and School Climate Roadmap (Roadmap); and
 - iii) Develop toolkits and innovative practices as resources for school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education.
 - d) Requires the CDE to facilitate the engagement of the broad range of stakeholders currently involved in the development of the statewide system of support, including the

department, COEs, and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), and additional community and advocacy stakeholders statewide.

- e) Provides that the development of the Roadmap and any toolkits and innovative practices shall model the spirit and methods of engagement promoted by this bill.
 - f) A requirement on the CDE to develop criteria for climate surveys, approve survey tools for use by all school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education, and subsidize the cost of surveys used as part of this block grant.
- 4) Requires the SPI to award grants to school districts and charter schools to develop expertise in, and build capacity for, engaging parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, staff, and other community stakeholders, including for historically underrepresented and low-achieving populations, in continuous improvement processes and to annually gather data through surveys and other techniques in order to improve school conditions and climate.
 - 5) Requires the SPI to award grants of up to \$1 million to school districts to use over a three-year period to build capacity to become exemplary school districts in community engagement and school climate. The SPI shall select school districts on the basis of their applications describing their plan for the use of funds, evidence of their commitment to building their skills and capacity for meaningful stakeholder engagement, including the participating stakeholders and community organizations the school district intends to involve. Requires the SPI to select a mix of small, large, rural, and urban school districts representative of school districts statewide.
 - 6) Requires the SPI to award grants of up to \$45,000 to school districts and charter schools not receiving an initial grant for purposes of improving community engagement and school climate. Grants may be used over a three-year period. To be eligible for this grant, a school district or charter school shall commit to conducting surveys annually and to pilot new ways to improve pupil and parent engagement, including outreach methods, creating community friendly local control and accountability plan materials, or training members of a school district advisory committee on programs and services for English learners.
 - 7) Requires the SPI to award a grant of up to \$250,000 to each COE for use over a three-year period to increase its knowledge and skills in stakeholder engagement and school climate so it may better support other county offices of education and school districts in the statewide system of support. Funds may be used for staff time to participate in activities including professional learning networks or in-depth training series for parents and community members.
 - 8) Requires the SPI to facilitate the engagement of the broad range of stakeholders currently involved in the development of the statewide system of support, including the department, COEs, and the CCEE, and additional community and advocacy stakeholders, to conduct all of the following tasks:
 - a) Develop the California Student and Family Engagement and School Climate Roadmap to be shared statewide, which shall include all of the following:

- i) A common definition and standards framework for supporting quality community engagement that addresses the following four cornerstones of community engagement:
 - (1) Equitable stakeholder engagement;
 - (2) Leadership development;
 - (3) Shared decision making; and
 - (4) Accountability and transparency.
 - ii) Best practices for community engagement;
 - iii) Community-friendly engagement tools. Of the funds appropriated for purposes of this article, in addition to any other uses to support the development of community-friendly tools for engagement, a portion shall be allocated to the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence as one-time funds to use over a two-year period to develop innovative toolkits and communication processes that are designed to enhance community engagement in the continuous improvement process statewide. The funds allocated to the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence shall, in part, be used to ensure the active participation of pupil and parent representatives on the design team and in the development process.
- b) Provide recommended criteria to the SPI for the grants provided to school districts and charter schools. The criteria shall reference the California Student and Family Engagement and School Climate Roadmap and include a requirement to survey parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, and staff annually to gather useful data for utilization in school conditions and climate planning and action.
 - c) Develop share, and implement an in-depth training series to build the knowledge, skill sets, and commitment of school system leaders to improve pupil, parent, community, and educator engagement, including disseminating the progress, best practices, and lessons learned from the exemplary school districts awarded the.
- 9) Requires the SPI, consultation with the stakeholder group, to award grants of up to \$200,000 to up to 15 professional learning networks of stakeholders to participate in cross-district and intra-district learning focused on improving their practices and skills and on building school system leaders' capacity for meaningful engagement that adheres to the common definition and standards framework.
 - 10) Requires the SPI to review and approve survey tools based on recommendations of the School Conditions and Climate Work Group convened by the CDE.
 - 11) Requires the SPI to compile and publish on the CDE's website, before the 2019-20 school year, a selection of state-vetted and approved school conditions and climate survey tools.
 - 12) Requires the CDE to provide approved survey tools, and basic analysis of survey results, to school districts, charter schools, and COEs participating in the grant program.

- 13) Requires the survey tools to include tools for surveying parents, pupils, teachers, staff, and administrators, and for measuring the following four domains of school conditions and climate:
 - a) Safety;
 - b) Relationships among all stakeholders;
 - c) Conditions for teaching and learning; and
 - d) Empowerment and engagement.
- 14) Requires the CDE to provide the survey tools, and basic analysis of survey results, at no additional cost to school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education, contingent upon a specific appropriation for this purpose.
- 15) Clarifies that a school district, charter school, or COE may, at its discretion, use other survey tools.
- 16) Provides that the implementation of this bill is contingent on an appropriation made in the annual Budget Act for these purposes.

EXISTING LAW: Requires school districts, charter schools, and COEs to adopt Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) each year, and requires the LCAPs to address eight state priorities, two of which are:

- 1) Parental involvement, including efforts the school district makes to seek parent input in making decisions for the school district and each individual schoolsite, and including how the school district will promote parental participation in programs for unduplicated pupils and individuals with exceptional needs; and
- 2) School climate, as measured by all of the following:
 - a) Pupil suspension rates;
 - b) Pupil expulsion rates; and
 - c) Other local measures, including surveys of pupils, parents, and teacher on the sense of safety and school connectedness.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: In October 2017, the CDE's School Conditions and Climate Work Group (CCWG) issued recommendations regarding the further development of the school conditions and climate measures used for LCAPs. The recommendations stem from a common definition, which states in part:

"School Conditions and Climate" refers to the character and quality of school life. This includes the values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, materials and resources, supports, physical environment, and practices that foster a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment. Positive school conditions

and climate ensure people in the school community (students, staff, family, and community feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe, supported, connected to the school, and engaged in learning and teaching."

The CCWG makes the following recommendations for state implementation:

- Utilize the definition and features created by the CCWG as the CDE's official definition of school conditions and climate;
- Establish a School Conditions and Climate Validity and Reliability Technical Design Group responsible for developing the criteria to vet school conditions and climate surveys, and vetting the surveys that would appear on the CDE menu of state-vetted and state-supported survey tools.
- Provide a menu of state-vetted and state-supported survey tools and instruments to LEAs.
- Require the survey tools to cover four research based school conditions and climate domains and related constructs: safety, relationships, conditions for teaching and learning, and empowerment.
- Include useful tools, resources, and supports about school conditions and climate within the developing statewide system of support to build the capacity of system actors as they endeavor to improve school conditions and climate.

This bill is intended to implement these recommendations. The bill also creates a grant program to support a variety of LEA activities related to improving stakeholder engagement and school climate, including:

- Piloting new ways to improve pupil and parent engagement;
- Supporting professional learning networks;
- Building knowledge and skills around community engagement and school climate; and
- Conducting school climate surveys.

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, this bill is needed, because the requirement to address parental involvement and school climate in LCAPs is a significant shift for LEAs, most of which were not prepared with the skill sets and practices necessary for stakeholder engagement and school climate assessment and improvement. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that the development of the LCAP includes practices, resources, and expertise in meaningful community engagement and to encourage and support LEAs in measuring and analyzing school conditions and climate data.

Numerous drafting errors and other concerns. This bill contains many errors and omissions that would complicate its implementation, including:

- It combines funding for LEAs and the CDE into a single "block grant." This comingles Proposition 98 (local assistance) and non-Proposition 98 (state operations) funds.

- One section of the bill requires the grants to go to school districts and charter schools, but another section specifies only school districts.
- The number (or maximum number) of LEAs to receive a grant is not specified.
- There is no requirement for a local match, which is typical of grant programs.
- The bill provides for smaller grants to be awarded to LEAs that did not get a primary grant. It is not specified whether this means the secondary grants would go to an LEA that applied for and did not receive a primary grant, or if any LEA could apply for one. It is not specified whether this is a competitive grant or, if so, what criteria would be used to determine which LEA should receive it or how much each would receive. If it is not a competitive grant, there is no description of the basis on which grants would be awarded.
- The bill does not provide criteria or guidance to the SPI to determine the amount of COE grants.
- The bill does not provide a date by which the California Student and Family Engagement and School Climate Roadmap must be completed. This is critical, because the Roadmap is required to inform the criteria that will be used to award grants, but the construction of the bill suggests that it will not be completed until after the grants are awarded.
- The bill appropriates money to "professional learning networks" without statutorily defining who they are. Although it is the author's intent to use Proposition 98 funds for this purpose, professional learning network are not local education agencies within the meaning of Proposition 98 and so could not receive Proposition 98 funding.
- The bill provides that grant recipients can access school climate surveys through the CDE and that other LEAs can access the survey only if there is an appropriation specifically for that purpose. This is more restrictive than existing law, under which all LEAs have access to the surveys.
- The bill lacks an evaluation requirement. Grant program and pilot projects typically require an evaluation of the program, with reports to the Legislature, in order to determine if the program has met its objectives and whether it should be continued, discontinued, expanded, or modified. Generally, grant recipients, as a condition of receiving the grant, are required to provide the data necessary to conduct the evaluation.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

ACLU of California
Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
Bay Area Plan
Black Parallel School Board
California Federation of Teachers
California School-Based Health Alliance
California State PTA
California Teachers Association

Californians for Justice
Children Now
Chinese Progressive Association
Faith in Merced
Families in Schools
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
Inland Congregations United for Change
Innecity Struggle
Khmer Girls in Action
LA Voice
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Oakland Community Organizations
Orange County Congregation Community Organization
Partnership for Children & Youth
Public Advocates
RYSE Center
Sacramento ACT
SOMOS Mayfair
Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson
Validity Partners, LLC
One individual

Opposition

None received

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