

REFERENCE TITLE: project rocket pilot program; appropriations

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-fifth Legislature
First Regular Session
2021

HB 2174

Introduced by
Representative Udall

AN ACT

ESTABLISHING THE PROJECT ROCKET PILOT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATING MONIES.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Project rocket pilot program; fund; distributions;
3 improvement plans; request for proposals;
4 independent school improvement experts;
5 reporting requirements; delayed repeal

6 A. The project rocket pilot program is established to improve
7 academic outcomes for all students in schools that meet the eligibility
8 requirements prescribed in subsection C of this section. Schools that
9 receive funding pursuant to this section shall prioritize these resources
10 to implement evidence-based, proven strategies to increase academic gain
11 and graduation rates for students who are struggling academically due to
12 socioeconomic factors such as poverty, adverse childhood experiences and
13 English language acquisition.

14 B. The project rocket fund is established for the purposes of this
15 section. The fund consists of legislative appropriations, gifts, grants,
16 donations and any other monies transferred to the fund. The department of
17 education shall administer the fund at the direction of the state board of
18 education. Monies in the fund are continuously appropriated and are
19 exempt from the provisions of section 35-190, Arizona Revised Statutes,
20 relating to lapsing of appropriations. The department of education may
21 accept and spend federal monies and private grants, gifts, contributions
22 and devises to assist in carrying out the purposes of this section. These
23 monies do not revert to the state general fund at the end of a fiscal
24 year.

25 C. For fiscal years 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, at the
26 direction of the state board of education, the department of education
27 shall distribute monies from the project rocket fund to school districts
28 and charter schools as follows:

29 1. Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that
30 received a letter grade of C during the prior fiscal year pursuant to
31 section 15-241, Arizona Revised Statutes, shall receive \$150 per student
32 from the fund if at least sixty percent of the pupils enrolled in the
33 school meet the eligibility requirements established under the national
34 school lunch and child nutrition acts (42 United States Code sections 1751
35 through 1793) for free or reduced-price lunches, or an equivalent measure
36 recognized for participating in the federal free and reduced-price lunch
37 program and other school programs dependent on a poverty measure,
38 including the community eligibility provision for which free and
39 reduced-price lunch data is not available.

40 2. Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that
41 received a letter grade of D during the prior fiscal year pursuant to
42 section 15-241, Arizona Revised Statutes, shall receive \$150 per student
43 from the fund.

44 3. Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that
45 received a letter grade of F during the prior fiscal year pursuant to

1 section 15-241, Arizona Revised Statutes, shall receive \$150 per student
2 from the fund.

3 4. Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that
4 does not receive a letter grade during the prior fiscal year pursuant to
5 section 15-241, Arizona Revised Statutes, shall receive \$150 per student
6 from the fund if the school it feeds into receives monies pursuant to this
7 section. For the purposes of this section only, a school operated by a
8 school district or charter holder that does not receive a letter grade
9 during the prior fiscal year pursuant to section 15-241, Arizona Revised
10 Statutes, shall operate under the assumption that it received the same
11 letter grade during the prior fiscal year pursuant to section 15-241,
12 Arizona Revised Statutes, as the school into which it feeds.

13 D. Any monies a school district or charter holder receives from the
14 project rocket fund shall be separately accounted for in the school
15 district's or charter holder's annual financial report.

16 E. All monies received pursuant to this section shall be spent at a
17 qualifying school site.

18 F. To participate in the project rocket pilot program, an eligible
19 school shall file a notice of intent to participate with the state board
20 of education not later than July 1, 2021. The department of education
21 shall disburse a payment equal to one-fourth of the annual funding amount
22 under this section to the school district or charter school on the state
23 board of education's receipt of the notice. The department shall disburse
24 the remainder of the funding for that fiscal year on the state board of
25 education's approval of the school's improvement plan submitted pursuant
26 to subsection G, H or I of this section.

27 G. Not later than October 1, 2021, a school district or charter
28 holder of a school that meets the requirements prescribed in subsection C,
29 paragraph 1 or 2 of this section shall submit to the state board of
30 education an improvement plan to improve student outcomes, which may
31 include targeted academic interventions, adjustments of teacher and
32 principal salaries, class size reduction as defined in section 15-977,
33 Arizona Revised Statutes, professional development, adaptive technology or
34 other evidence-based, proven strategies to close the achievement gap. The
35 plan must also identify a mentor who can assist with academic achievement.
36 The mentor must be a current or former school leader with a demonstrable
37 record of leading a successful school improvement effort and must commit
38 to providing regular check-ins and advice to the project rocket school
39 leader whom the person is mentoring. Instead of identifying a mentor as
40 described in this subsection, the school district or charter holder may
41 elect to partner with an approved independent school improvement expert
42 from the partner network list identified by the state board of education
43 pursuant to subsection J of this section to implement the improvement plan
44 developed under this subsection.

1 H. The school district governing board of a school that meets the
2 requirements prescribed in subsection C, paragraph 3 of this section is
3 subject to both of the following:

4 1. The school district governing board shall establish a project
5 rocket committee composed of all of the following:

- 6 (a) A school district governing board member.
- 7 (b) The superintendent of the school district.
- 8 (c) The school principal from the identified school.
- 9 (d) A teacher from the identified school.
- 10 (e) The parent of a child who attends the identified school.

11 2. Not later than October 1, 2021, the project rocket committee
12 shall submit an improvement plan to the state board of education to
13 improve student outcomes, which may include targeted academic
14 interventions, adjustments of teacher and principal salaries, class size
15 reduction as defined in section 15-977, Arizona Revised Statutes,
16 professional development, adaptive technology or other evidence-based,
17 proven strategies to close the achievement gap. The project rocket
18 committee shall partner with an approved independent school improvement
19 expert from the partner network list identified by the state board of
20 education pursuant to subsection J of this section to implement the
21 improvement plan developed under this subsection.

22 I. The charter holder of a charter school that meets the
23 requirements prescribed in subsection C, paragraph 3 of this section is
24 subject to both of the following:

25 1. The charter holder shall establish a project rocket committee
26 composed of all of the following:

- 27 (a) A member of the governing body of the identified charter
28 school.
- 29 (b) The chief administrative officer of the identified charter
30 school.
- 31 (c) The school principal from the identified charter school.
- 32 (d) A teacher from the identified charter school.
- 33 (e) The parent of a child who attends the identified charter
34 school.

35 2. Not later than October 1, 2021, the project rocket committee
36 shall submit an improvement plan to the state board of education to
37 improve student outcomes, which may include targeted academic
38 interventions, adjustment of teacher and principal salaries, class size
39 reduction as defined in section 15-977, Arizona Revised Statutes,
40 professional development, adaptive technology or other evidence-based,
41 proven strategies to close the achievement gap. The project rocket
42 committee shall partner with an approved independent school improvement
43 expert from the partner network list identified by the state board of
44 education pursuant to subsection J of this section to implement the
45 improvement plan developed under this subsection.

1 J. On or before August 30, 2021, the state board of education shall
2 identify two or more approved independent school improvement experts to be
3 included on a partner network list through a request for proposals
4 process. A school district or the charter holder of a school that meets
5 the requirements prescribed in subsection C, paragraph 3 of this section
6 shall select an approved independent school improvement expert from the
7 partner network list to implement, in partnership with the school's
8 project rocket committee, the improvement plan submitted under subsection
9 H or I of this section. A state agency, or any subsidiary of the state
10 agency, that meets the criteria prescribed in subsections K and L of this
11 section is eligible for inclusion on the partner network list.

12 K. For the purposes of subsection J of this section, the state
13 board of education shall award contracts to independent school improvement
14 experts who meet all of the following requirements:

15 1. Have a credible track record of improving student academic
16 achievement in public schools with various demographic characteristics, as
17 measured by statewide assessments.

18 2. Have experience designing, implementing and evaluating
19 data-driven instructional systems in public schools.

20 3. Have experience coaching public school administrators and
21 teachers on designing and implementing data-driven school improvement
22 plans.

23 4. Have experience delivering high-quality professional development
24 and coaching in instructional effectiveness to public school
25 administrators and teachers.

26 L. In addition to assisting in implementing the improvement plan
27 prescribed in subsection H or I of this section, the independent school
28 improvement expert shall provide ongoing support to the school, including
29 the following:

30 1. Collecting and analyzing data on student achievement.

31 2. Recommending changes to the school to improve student
32 achievement.

33 3. Monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan.

34 4. Providing implementation support for the improvement plan.

35 5. Providing any other services required by the state board of
36 education.

37 M. If a participating school is not demonstrating academic growth
38 or is otherwise dissatisfied with the services provided by the contracted
39 independent school improvement expert, the school may submit a request to
40 the state board of education to cancel that contract and select a
41 different independent school improvement expert.

42 N. The state board of education shall review all plans submitted
43 under this section within ninety days after submission. The state board
44 of education shall approve all plans submitted that meet the criteria
45 prescribed in subsection G of this section.

1 O. If a school district has an existing improvement plan under any
2 provision of title 15, Arizona Revised Statutes, on file with the
3 department of education, the plan submitted under subsection H of this
4 section must attempt to align with or expand on the existing improvement
5 plan.

6 P. The state board of education may adopt rules, policies and
7 procedures to carry out this section, including rules to establish an
8 appeals process for a school that does not receive approval of its plan.

9 Q. The state board of education shall direct the department of
10 education to provide payments to schools for the project rocket pilot
11 program on July 1 of each year, except in fiscal year 2021-2022 pursuant
12 to subsection F of this section. If the appropriated amount is not
13 sufficient to fully pay each school, the department of education shall
14 proportionately allocate the funding per student.

15 R. On or before June 1 of each year, each school that received
16 monies pursuant to this section in the prior fiscal year shall submit a
17 report to the state board of education that briefly describes how the
18 improvement plan developed under subsection G, H or I of this section has
19 improved academic improvement. The state board of education may request
20 additional reports as needed throughout the year to assess a school's
21 progress. The state board of education shall review each improvement plan
22 annually. If any improvement plan or report is not submitted, the state
23 board of education may withhold monies under this section until the plan
24 or report is submitted according to this section.

25 S. On or before October 1, 2022 and October 1, 2023, the state
26 board of education shall compile each report submitted pursuant to
27 subsection R of this section and provide that information to the joint
28 legislative budget committee, the governor's office of strategic planning
29 and budgeting and the chairpersons of the education committees of the
30 house of representatives and the senate, or their successor committees.

31 T. For the purposes of this section, only students who are eligible
32 to be included in a school's student count shall be considered in
33 determining that school's percentage of free or reduced-price lunch
34 students or other poverty indicators.

35 U. On or before December 1, 2024, the state board of education
36 shall submit a final report on the project rocket pilot program to the
37 governor, the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of
38 representatives, the joint legislative budget committee and the governor's
39 office of strategic planning and budgeting and shall provide a copy of the
40 report to the secretary of state. The report shall include information on
41 all of the following:

42 1. The schools and independent school improvement experts that
43 participated in the project rocket pilot program.

44 2. The academic progress of schools participating in the project
45 rocket pilot program.

1 3. Any other information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of
2 the project rocket pilot program.

3 V. This section is repealed from and after December 31, 2024.

4 Sec. 2. Appropriations; project rocket fund; state board of
5 education

6 A. The sum of \$44,567,968 is appropriated from the state general
7 fund in each of fiscal years 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 to the
8 project rocket fund established by section 1 of this act.

9 B. The sum of \$1,000,000 and seven FTE positions are appropriated
10 from the state general fund in each of fiscal years 2021-2022, 2022-2023
11 and 2023-2024 to the state board of education to administer the project
12 rocket pilot program established by section 1 of this act.

13 Sec. 3. Retroactivity

14 This act applies retroactively to from and after June 30, 2021.