



HB2762 project rocket pilot program; appropriations (Udall)

This bill establishes the Project Rocket Pilot Program (Program) and Project Rocket Fund (Fund) to improve academic outcomes for all students in eligible schools.

Program and Fund

- Directs schools that receive funding to prioritize resources to implement evidence-based, proven strategies to increase academic gain and graduation rates for students who are struggling academically due to socioeconomic factors
- Establishes the Fund from continuous legislative appropriations, gifts, grants, donations, and any other money transferred to the Fund
- Directs the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to administer the Fund at the direction of the State Board of Education (SBE)
- Specifies that unused money in the Fund at the end of each fiscal year will not revert to the state's general fund.
- Allows ADE to accept and spend federal monies, private grants, gifts, and contributions to the Fund

Appropriations and Distribution of Funds

- Appropriates \$44.6M from the general fund in FY21, FY22, and FY23 to the Project Rocket Fund
- Appropriates \$1M and 7 full time employees from the general fund in FY21, FY22, and FY23 to SBE to administer the Project Rocket Pilot Program
- Requires ADE to distribute money from the Fund in FY21, FY22, and FY23 as follows:
 - Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that received a C letter grade the previous year and has at least 60% of its students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches (or an equivalent measure) shall receive \$150 per student
 - Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that received a D letter grade the previous year shall receive \$150 per student
 - Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that received a F letter grade the previous year shall receive \$150 per student
 - Each school operated by a school district or charter holder that did not receive a letter grade during the prior year shall receive \$150 per student if it feeds into a school that qualifies for the Program
 - For the purposes of this Program only, a school that did not receive a letter grade during the prior year shall assume it receives the same letter grade as the school it feeds into



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- Clarifies that only students who are eligible to be included in a school's student count shall be considered in determining the school's percentage of free or reduced-price lunch students.
- Requires school districts or charter holders receiving money from the Fund to separately account for it in their annual financial report
- Requires all money received from the Fund to be spent at a qualifying school site
- Requires eligible schools to file a notice of intent to participate with SBE by July 1, 2020
- Instructs ADE to disburse funds to eligible schools in FY21 as follows:
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ of the annual funding when SBE receives the notice of intent to participate
 - The remainder of the funding upon SBE's approval of the school's improvement plan
- Specifies that if the appropriated amount isn't sufficient to fully pay each school, ADE shall proportionally distribute the funding per student

Improvement Plans

- Requires a school district or charter holder of a school that received a C or D letter grade and is participating in the Program to submit an improvement plan to SBE with information on their plan to improve student outcomes, which may include targeted academic interventions, class size reduction, adjustment of teacher and principal salaries, professional development, adaptive technologies, or other evidence-based, proven strategies to close the achievement gap
 - Requires the plan to identify a mentor to assist with academic achievement who is a current or former school leader with a record of leading a successful school improvement effort and able to provide regular check-ins and advice to the school leader
 - Allows school districts or charter schools to partner with an approved independent school improvement expert from the list identified by SBE
- Requires a school district or charter holder of a school that received a F letter grade and is participating in the Program to establish a Project Rocket Committee composed of the following:
 - A school district governing board member or member of the charter school governing body
 - The superintendent of the school district or the chief administrative officer of the participating charter school
 - The school principal from the participating school
 - A teacher from the participating school
 - The parent of a child who attends the participating school
- Requires a school district or charter holder that received a F letter grade to use their Project Rocket Committee to submit an improvement plan to SBE with the same information as outlined above for districts with C or D letter grades.



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- School districts and charter holders that received F letter grades are required to have their Project Rocket Committee select from the partner network list provided by SBE to help implement the improvement plan
- Directs SBE to identify two or more approved independent school improvement experts to be included on a partner network list through a RFP process by August 30, 2020
 - Directs SBE to award contracts to independent school improvement experts who meet the following requirements:
 - Have a credible track record of improving student academic achievement in public schools with various demographic characteristics, as measured by statewide assessments
 - Have experience designing, implementing, and evaluating data-driven instructional systems in public schools
 - Have experience coaching public school administrators and teachers on designing and implementing data-driven school improvement plans
 - Have experience delivering high-quality professional development and coaching in instructional effectiveness to public school administrators and teachers
- Directs the school improvement expert to also provide ongoing support to the school in the areas of:
 - Collecting and analyzing data on student achievement
 - Recommending changes to the school to improve student achievement
 - Monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan
 - Providing implementation support for the plan
 - Any other services required by SBE
- Allows a school not demonstrating academic growth or otherwise dissatisfied with the services provided by the school improvement expert to submit a request to SBE to cancel the contract and select a different school improvement expert
- Requires SBE to review all improvement plans within 90 days of submission and approve all plans that meet the criteria outlined
- Specifies that if a school district has an existing improvement plan on file with ADE, the plan submitted for this Program must attempt to align with or expand on the existing improvement plan.
- Allows SBE to adopt rules, policies, and procedures to accomplish these goals including rules to establish an appeals process for a school that doesn't receive approval of its plan

Reporting

- Requires each school that received money from the Fund in the prior fiscal year to annually submit a report to SBE on how the improvement plan has improved academic development.
- Allows SBE to request additional reports as needed throughout the year to assess a school's progress



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- Requires SBE to review each improvement plan annually
- Allows SBE to withhold money from the Fund if an improvement plan or report is not submitted by June 1
- Requires SBE to compile each report submitted by participating schools and provide that information in 20201 and 2022 to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, the Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting, and the chairpersons of the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate
- Requires SBE to submit a final report on the Program in December 2023 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, and the Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting
 - Specifies that the report must include the following:
 - The schools and independent school improvement experts that participated in the Program
 - The academic progress of schools participating in the Program
 - Any other information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the Program
- Ends the Program on December 31, 2023