

Learning Community Basic Concepts

Combination of LB's 1024 (2006), 641 (2007), and 1154 (2008)

- Political subdivision comprised of member school districts
 - Mandatory for school districts with headquarters in a county containing a city of the metropolitan class or in a county contiguous to such city
 - Optional for districts making a request by May 1 of each odd-numbered year if:
 - At least 3 districts will be participating and either:
 - The districts have a combined total of at least 10,000 students; or
 - All districts headquartered in at least 1 county will participate and either:
 - All participating districts are sparse or very sparse; or
 - The districts have a combined total of at least 2,000 students
 - Commissioner certifies new learning communities on or before August 1 of odd-numbered years with an effective date in January of the next odd-numbered year
 - Secretary of State facilitates the initial meetings of the coordinating council

- Governance
 - Learning Community Coordinating Council membership:
 - 12 members elected from 6 election districts
 - Each voter is allowed to vote for one member (limited voting)
 - 6 members are school board members appointed from the 6 election districts by the school board members residing in the election district
 - Additional non-voting members are appointed by the school boards of any districts that do not otherwise have a council member residing in the district
 - Achievement Subcouncils comprised of voting members from the election district
 - Develop diversity plan recommendations
 - Administer elementary learning centers
 - Approve or disapprove the poverty and LEP plans
 - Receive community input
 - Advisory Committee comprised of the superintendents of the member districts
 - Review issues related to open enrollment
 - Review focus programs, focus schools, magnet schools, and pathways
 - Provide recommendations for improving academic achievement
 - Provide input on other issues as requested

- Learning Community Coordinating Council duties:
 - Levy and distribute common levies to member districts pursuant to a formula
 - Levy and distribute levies for elementary learning center facilities and approved focus school or focus program facilities
 - Collect, analyze, and report data
 - Approve focus schools and programs
 - Adopt, approve, and implement a diversity plan
 - Administer open enrollment
 - Conduct school fairs to provide information about schools in the LC
 - Develop reorganization plans
 - Establish and administer elementary learning centers
 - Approve or disapprove poverty and LEP plans
 - Assist parents, citizens, and member districts in using mediation
 - Receive community input

- Diversity Plan
 - Provide educational opportunities in each election district to attract students from diverse backgrounds
 - Open enrollment, subject to limitations established by the learning community coordinating council to encourage diversity
 - Focus programs, focus schools, magnet schools, and pathways
 - Focus program – designed to promote socioeconomic diversity with a unique curriculum which may be in building with other programs, but which does not have an attendance area
 - Focus school – like a focus program, except housed in its own building
 - Magnet school – like a focus program or school, except it has a home attendance area and reserves some capacity for outside students who will contribute to socioeconomic diversity
 - Pathway – elementary, middle, and high school focus programs, focus schools, and magnet schools with a coordinated curricula

- Elementary Learning Centers
 - Learning Community Coordinating Council hires an executive director
 - At least one center for each 25 buildings with at least 35% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches
 - Subcouncils submit plan for elementary learning centers in their election district
 - Open to all elementary-age children in the learning community and their families
 - Programs designed to enhance the academic success of elementary students
 - Examples: Intensive assistance with reading skills outside the school day, assistance with parental reading skills, computer labs, mentors, English classes for families, health services

- Funding
 - Common levy for member districts up to \$0.95 for general fund and up to \$0.02 for special building funds
 - Minimum general fund common levy in the state aid formula of \$0.90
 - Levy proceeds distributed based on formula needs, with a 3-year hold harmless
 - Discretionary levy for member districts up to remainder of \$1.05 levy and any overrides or exceptions available to individual districts
 - Levy up to \$0.05 for up to 50% of the cost of a focus school or program facility and for up to 100% of the cost of an elementary learning center facility
 - The remainder of the cost of a focus school or program facility would be paid by the school district that will own the facility
 - State appropriation of \$500,000 for the first year and \$1 million thereafter for learning community functions
 - ESU core services and technology infrastructure funds
 - 50% of the membership of member districts attributed to learning community
 - 50% of the membership of member districts attributed to ESU

- Boundaries
 - The boundaries of member school districts may only be altered with the approval of the affected school districts, the learning community coordinating council, and the State Committee for the Reorganization of School Districts
 - Prior to establishment of the learning community, school districts that will become members may alter boundaries with the approval of the affected districts