

Subject Innovation research zone program

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Overview

With some changes, codifies and makes permanent the Innovation Research Zones Pilot Program enacted in 2017 session law.

Summary

Section Description

1 Innovation zone research program [§124D.901]

Subd. 1. Establishment; requirements for participation; research zone plans. (a)
Establishes the innovation research zone program.

(b) Allows one or more school districts or charter schools to form an innovation zone partnership. Provides for participation in the partnership by nonschool partners. Requires instructional staff involvement in developing a research zone plan.

(c) Requires innovation zone research partnerships to research and implement innovative programs. Provides a non-exhaustive list of research program examples.

(d) Requires innovation research zone plans submitted to the commission of education for approval to address a number of items. Those include: how the plan will improve student outcomes; the role of each partner; research methodology to be used; exemptions to statute and rule to be used; a description of how teachers and other staff will be utilized; expected outcomes; a timeline for implementation and assessment; and how the results will be shared.

(e) Requires the approval of the initial partners and the commissioner of education to extend membership to other partners.

(f) Allows a school district or charter school participating in a partnership to continue to receive all revenue and maintain its taxation authority in the same manner as before the partnership existed. The partnership participants remain

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organized and governed by their respective boards with general powers under chapter 123B or 124E and remain subject to their employment agreements.

(g) Requires a partnership seeking approval to submit a plan to the commissioner of education in the manner prescribed. Requires the commissioner to receive recommendations from the innovation zone advisory panel, under subdivision 3, before deciding whether to accept the plan.

Subd. 2. Exemptions from law and rules. Allows an innovation zone partner to be exempt from the following education laws and rules specifically identified in their plan:

- (1) online learning program approval under section 124D.095, subdivision 7;
- (2) certain restrictions on extended time revenue;
- (3) any required hours of instructions in any class or subject areas for a student who is meeting all competencies consistent with the graduation standards described in the plan;
- (4) rigorous course of study waiver requirements under section 120B.021, subdivision 1a; and
- (5) provisions of Minnesota Rules, part 3500.1000 related to experimental and flexible school years.

Subd. 3. Innovation zone advisory panel. Requires the commissioner to establish and convene a nine-member innovation research zone advisory panel that must comprise one representative of each of the following organizations: Educators for Excellence; Education Minnesota; Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals; Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association; Minnesota Association of School Administrators; Minnesota School Boards Association; Minnesota Association of Charter Schools; and the Office of Higher Education. Requires the commissioner to appoint one member, with expertise in evaluation and research.

Subd. 4. Commissioner approval. Allows the commissioner to approve up to six plans within the seven-county metropolitan area and six plans in greater Minnesota. Requires the commissioner to publish a list of exemptions granted under approved plans.

Subd. 5. Project evaluation, dissemination, and report to legislature. Requires each partnership to submit project data to the commissioner. Requires the commissioner, once every two years, to analyze each innovation zone's progress in realizing the objectives of the partnership's plan. Requires the commissioner

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| | <p>to summarize and categorize innovation zone plans and submit a report to the legislature.</p> |
| | <p>Subd. 6. Existing innovation research zone partnership. Allows existing partnerships, under the 2017 session law, to submit amendments to their current plans and avoid the new approval process.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Appropriation. Appropriates an undefined amount to the Department of Education for the program, and requires the commissioner to provide planning and implementation grants to partnerships.</p> |



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