

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 528

Introduced by Jacobson, 42.

Read first time January 22, 2025

Committee: Education

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to learning platforms; to amend section
2 79-1054, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to define terms; to
3 change provisions relating to grants funded from the State
4 Department of Education Improvement Grant Fund; to provide powers
5 and duties to the Department of Economic Development relating to
6 grants for learning platforms; to eliminate obsolete provisions; and
7 to repeal the original section.
8 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 **Section 1.** Section 79-1054, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
2 amended to read:

3 ~~79-1054 (1)(a) This subsection applies until July 1, 2024.~~

4 ~~(b) The State Board of Education shall establish a competitive~~
5 ~~innovation grant program with funding from the Nebraska Education~~
6 ~~Improvement Fund pursuant to section 79-3501. Grantees shall be a school~~
7 ~~district, an educational service unit, or a combination of entities that~~
8 ~~includes at least one school district or educational service unit. For~~
9 ~~grantees that consist of a combination of entities, a participating~~
10 ~~school district or educational service unit shall be designated to act as~~
11 ~~the fiscal agent and administer the program funded by the grant. The~~
12 ~~state board shall only award grants pursuant to applications that the~~
13 ~~state board deems to be sufficiently innovative and to have a high chance~~
14 ~~of success.~~

15 ~~(c) An application for a grant pursuant to this subsection shall~~
16 ~~describe:~~

17 ~~(i) Specific measurable objectives for improving education outcomes~~
18 ~~for early childhood students, elementary students, middle school~~
19 ~~students, or high school students or for improving the transitions~~
20 ~~between any successive stages of education or between education and the~~
21 ~~workforce;~~

22 ~~(ii) The method for annually evaluating progress toward a measurable~~
23 ~~objective, with a summative evaluation of progress submitted to the state~~
24 ~~board and electronically to the Education Committee of the Legislature on~~
25 ~~or before July 1, 2019;~~

26 ~~(iii) The potential for the project to be both scalable and~~
27 ~~replicable; and~~

28 ~~(iv) Any cost savings that could be achieved by reductions in other~~
29 ~~programs if the funded program is successful.~~

30 ~~(d) Based on evaluations received on or before July 1, 2019, for~~
31 ~~each grant, the State Board of Education shall recommend the grant~~

1 ~~project as:~~

2 ~~(i) Representing a best practice;~~

3 ~~(ii) A model for a state-supported program; or~~

4 ~~(iii) A local issue for further study.~~

5 ~~(e) On or before December 1, 2017, and on or before December 1 of~~
6 ~~each year thereafter, the state board shall electronically submit a~~
7 ~~report to the Clerk of the Legislature on all such grants, including, but~~
8 ~~not limited to, the results of the evaluations for each grant. The state~~
9 ~~board may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this~~
10 ~~subsection, including, but not limited to, application procedures,~~
11 ~~selection procedures, and annual evaluation reporting procedures.~~

12 ~~(1)(a) (2)(a)~~ This subsection applies beginning July 1, 2024.

13 (b) The State Board of Education shall establish an improvement
14 grant program in areas including, but not limited to, (i) teacher
15 recruitment and retention, (ii) improvement for schools and school
16 districts, (iii) improvement in student performance in the subject areas
17 of reading and mathematics, and (iv) other improvement areas identified
18 by the state board. Such grants shall be funded using lottery funds under
19 section 79-3501.

20 (c) On or before December 1 of each calendar year, the state board
21 shall electronically submit a report to the Clerk of the Legislature on
22 all such grant programs, including, but not limited to, the recipients of
23 the programs and evaluations of the effectiveness of each grant program.
24 The state board may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry
25 out this subsection.

26 ~~(2)(a) (3)(a)~~ This subsection applies beginning January 1, 2024.

27 (b) For purposes of this subsection: τ

28 (i) Department means the Department of Economic Development; and

29 (ii) Learning learning platform means a three-dimensional, game-
30 based learning platform for use by middle school and high school
31 students.

1 (c)(i) The department State Board of Education shall establish a
2 grant program to procure or purchase an annual license for a preexisting
3 learning platform platforms for use in schools to engage students in
4 coursework and careers in science, technology, and engineering ,~~and~~
5 ~~mathematics~~. Such grants shall be funded using lottery funds pursuant to
6 section 79-3501. Grant funds shall only be used to procure or purchase an
7 annual license and shall not be awarded for the purpose of research and
8 development of a learning platform.

9 (ii) ~~The State Board of Education shall establish standards that a~~
10 ~~learning platform shall meet in the subject areas of chemistry, physical~~
11 ~~science, and mathematics.~~ The department state board shall develop the
12 criteria to prioritize the grant applications.

13 (iii)(A) ~~(iii)~~ A developer may apply to the department Commissioner
14 ~~of Education~~ in a manner prescribed by the department state board for a
15 grant under this subsection for a learning platform that:

16 (I) ~~(A)~~ Is designed to teach information related to chemistry,
17 physical science, or mathematics;

18 (II) ~~(B)~~ Aligns with the academic content standards established by
19 the State Board of Education state board relating to high school
20 chemistry or , physical science and the equivalent of such standards used
21 for middle school education , or mathematics;

22 (III) ~~(C)~~ Connects such standards with real-world technologies and
23 applications;

24 (IV) ~~(D)~~ Highlights science, technology, and engineering ,~~and~~
25 ~~mathematics~~ career pathways in Nebraska; and

26 (V) Complies with the ISO 27001 data security standards; and ~~(E)~~
27 ~~Meets any additional requirements set out by the State Board of~~
28 ~~Education.~~

29 (VI) Demonstrates experience with statewide implementation of a
30 learning platform.

31 (B) A grant application approved by the Department of Economic

1 Development shall be awarded from the State Department of Education
2 Improvement Grant Fund administered by the State Department of Education.

3 (iv) Any developer that receives a grant under this subsection shall
4 provide access to and use of its learning platform to all Nebraska school
5 districts.

6 (v) Any grant awarded pursuant to this subsection shall be awarded
7 by July 1 of each year.

8 (d) On or before December 1 of each calendar year, the Department of
9 Economic Development ~~state board~~ shall electronically submit a report to
10 the Clerk of the Legislature on the grant program, including, but not
11 limited to, the recipients of the program and evaluations of the
12 effectiveness of the grant program. The department ~~State Board of~~
13 ~~Education~~ may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out
14 this subsection.

15 (3)(a) ~~(4)(a)~~ The State Department of Education Improvement Grant
16 Fund is created. The fund shall be administered by the State Department
17 of Education and shall consist of transfers pursuant to section 79-3501,
18 repayments of grant funds, and interest payments received in the course
19 of administering this section. The fund shall be used to carry out this
20 section. Transfers may be made from the fund to the Education Future Fund
21 at the direction of the Legislature. Any money in the State Department of
22 Education Improvement Grant Fund available for investment shall be
23 invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital
24 Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

25 (b) Of the ten percent of funds transferred to the fund pursuant to
26 section 79-3501, eight and three-fourths percent shall be used for
27 improvement grants pursuant to subsection (2) ~~(3)~~ of this section and the
28 remaining one and one-fourth percent shall be used for grants pursuant to
29 subsection (1) ~~(2)~~ of this section.

30 **Sec. 2.** Original section 79-1054, Reissue Revised Statutes of
31 Nebraska, is repealed.