

1 State of Arkansas  
2 93rd General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2021  
4

# A Bill

SENATE BILL 291

5 By: Senator Irvin  
6 By: Representative L. Johnson  
7

## For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO SUPPORT ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC  
10 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMMUNITY  
11 SCHOOL APPROACH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.  
12  
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## Subtitle

15 TO SUPPORT ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND  
16 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE  
17 IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
18 APPROACH.  
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21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
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23 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 15, is amended to add an  
24 additional subchapter to read as follows:

### Subchapter 30 – Community Schools Act

#### 6-15-3001. Title.

28 This subchapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Community  
29 Schools Act".  
30

#### 6-15-3002. Legislative findings.

32 The General Assembly finds that:

33 (1) According to 2020 data, sixty-six percent (66%) of Arkansas  
34 students, and as much as one hundred percent (100%) of students in some  
35 schools, qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, meaning that these students  
36 live in lower-income households;



1           (2) As a result of so many students qualifying for free or  
2 reduced-price lunch, some students may face more challenges than others in  
3 succeeding in school and in life and can benefit from additional support;

4           (3) Community schools provide comprehensive programs and  
5 services to meet the needs of the whole child, which include without  
6 limitation adequate health care, mental health care, dental care, nutrition,  
7 and trauma support services, so that students can reach their full potential;

8           (4) Not all families are able to provide academic support and  
9 enrichment opportunities outside of school that help children and youth  
10 develop educational, social, emotional, and physical skills throughout and  
11 during out-of-school time;

12           (5) Community schools play a vital role in ensuring that all  
13 students have access to opportunities that support success;

14           (6) Community schools support working families by ensuring all  
15 children and youth are safe and productive, even during out-of-school time;

16           (7) Community schools help build strong communities by involving  
17 students, parents, business leaders, and adult volunteers in the lives of  
18 young people in positive and productive activities;

19           (8) Research shows that community school strategies can result  
20 in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including higher attendance  
21 rates, higher aspirations toward finishing school and going to college, fewer  
22 discipline issues, and cultivation of positive bonds with people and  
23 institutions that are reflected in students' exchanges with peers, family,  
24 school, and community;

25           (9) Research further shows that community school programs offer  
26 a strong return on investment of up to fifteen dollars (\$15.00) for every one  
27 dollar (\$1.00) invested in community schools;

28           (10) Community schools are a means through which the State of  
29 Arkansas may promote the goal of encouraging federal, state, and local  
30 governments to work with community-based organizations in order to improve  
31 the coordination, delivery, effectiveness, and efficiency of services  
32 provided to students and families;

33           (11) In evidence of this, federal funding can be used to support  
34 community schools, and research demonstrates that community schools meet the  
35 standard under 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq. for "evidence-based" approaches to  
36 support schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and

1 intervention; and

2 (12) Further guidelines and assistance for community school  
3 strategies are provided through the Full-Service Community Schools Program of  
4 the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the United States  
5 Department of Education.

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7 6-15-3003. Definitions.

8 As used in this subchapter:

9 (1)(A) "Community school" means a public school that implements  
10 a service and inclusion strategy that coordinates resources and relationships  
11 in order to accelerate equitable outcomes.

12 (B) Community school strategies may vary among public  
13 schools based on the needs of individual communities, but at a minimum  
14 include the following without limitation:

15 (i) One (1) or more of the four (4) key pillars of  
16 an evidence-based community school approach, which include:

17 (a) Integrated student supports;

18 (b) Expanded and enriched learning time and  
19 opportunities;

20 (c) Active family and community engagement;

21 and

22 (d) Collaborative leadership and practices

23 that:

24 (1) Promote conditions found in high-  
25 quality schools; and

26 (2) Address out-of-school barriers to  
27 learning;

28 (ii) A community school coordinator at each  
29 community school site; and

30 (iii) A community school plan;

31 (2)(A) "Community school coordinator" means a designated site  
32 resource coordinator at a public school or local education agency that  
33 provides a variety of resources, including without limitation partnerships  
34 with community resources, and whose primary responsibilities include without  
35 limitation:

36 (i) Leading needs and assets analyses;

1 (ii) Facilitating development and implementation of  
2 a community school plan in collaboration with other members of school-based  
3 leadership;

4 (iii) Building relationships between the school and  
5 community partners for the provision of identified supports and services; and

6 (iv) Connecting public school students and families  
7 to services and opportunities.

8 (B) To the extent possible, the responsibilities of a  
9 community school coordinator may be undertaken in coordination with a parent  
10 facilitator appointed under § 6-15-1702; and

11 (3) "Community school plan" means a plan that establishes how  
12 educators, school staff, governmental entities, and community partners will  
13 use and leverage all available assets to meet specific student and family  
14 needs in order to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.

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16 6-15-3004. Assistance by Division of Elementary and Secondary  
17 Education.

18 The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education may:

19 (1) Develop guidelines consistent with those that are provided  
20 through the Full-Service Community Schools Program of the Office of  
21 Elementary and Secondary Education of the United States Department of  
22 Education;

23 (2) Provide targeted professional development programs that  
24 teach the competencies required for:

25 (A) Managing successful community schools and expanded  
26 learning time;

27 (B) Planning and implementing services and strategies in  
28 collaboration with communities; and

29 (C) Blending and braiding funding to support community  
30 schools;

31 (3)(A) Require sufficient data to:

32 (i) Enable oversight of community schools; and

33 (ii) Inform ongoing school improvement.

34 (B) The division may also collect leading indicators and  
35 process data to better understand the degree to which the community school  
36 approach is being implemented; and

1           (4) Work to position community schools to become hubs for  
2 aligned and coordinated programs across state agencies.

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4           SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-15-2916(2), concerning the authority of  
5 the State Board of Education over a public school district classified as in  
6 need of Level 5 – Intensive support, is amended to add an additional  
7 subdivision to read as follows:

8           (L) Require a structured system of whole child supports  
9 through a community school plan, as defined by § 6-15-3003.

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11          SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 23, Subchapter 1, is amended  
12 to add an additional section to read as follows:

13          6-23-109. Community schools.

14          (a) The authorizer may designate a public charter school as a  
15 community school, as defined by § 6-15-3003.

16          (b) To be designated as a community school, the applicant shall  
17 include in its original application or charter amendment request:

18                 (1) A request to be designated as a community school; and

19                 (2) A community school plan, as defined by § 6-15-3003, which  
20 shall include without limitation an initial plan for serving student needs.

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22          SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-23-201(a)(2)(A), concerning a public  
23 school's application for conversion public charter school status, is amended  
24 to read as follows:

25                 (A) Adopting research-based school or instructional  
26 designs, or both, that focus on improving student and school performance,  
27 which may include without limitation the implementation of a community school  
28 plan, as defined by § 6-15-3003;

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30          SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-23-302(c)(2), concerning an application  
31 to become an open-enrollment public charter school, is amended to read as  
32 follows:

33                 (2) Describe a plan for academic achievement that addresses how  
34 the open-enrollment public charter school will improve student learning and  
35 meet the state education goals, which may include without limitation the  
36 implementation of a community school plan, as defined by § 6-15-3003;

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SECTION 6. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in substantial disruption to the educational system in the state’s kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) public schools and open-enrollment public charter schools; that amendments to the law as provided in this act are needed to address challenges faced by Arkansas students in succeeding in school and in life; and that this act is immediately necessary to maintain the orderly operation of public schools and open-enrollment public charter schools so that students in this state continue to receive an adequate education. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

(1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

(2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor, the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the bill; or

(3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.