

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5732

To authorize a competitive grant program to implement and evaluate digital learning in rural locales.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 10, 2012

Mr. LOEBACK introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To authorize a competitive grant program to implement and evaluate digital learning in rural locales.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Schools of the Future
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Digital learning technology holds the prom-
9 ise of transforming rural education by removing bar-
10 riers of distance and increasing school capacity.

1 (2) While many large urban local educational
2 agencies are at the forefront of implementing new
3 digital learning innovations, it is often harder for
4 smaller and more rural local educational agencies to
5 access these tools. Smaller local educational agencies
6 with less capacity may also find it more difficult to
7 provide the training needed to effectively implement
8 new digital learning technologies.

9 (3) Despite the potential of digital learning in
10 rural areas, these advancements risk passing rural
11 areas by without support for their implementation.
12 Rather than having schools and local educational
13 agencies apply digital learning innovations designed
14 for urban environments to rural areas, it is impor-
15 tant that digital learning technologies be developed
16 and implemented in ways that reflect the unique
17 needs of rural areas.

18 (4) Digital learning is rapidly expanding, and
19 new tools for improving teaching and learning are
20 being developed every day. A growing demand for
21 digital learning tools and products has made rig-
22 orous evaluation of their effectiveness increasingly
23 important, as this information would allow school
24 and local educational agency leaders to make in-
25 formed choices about how best to use these tools to

1 improve student achievement and educational out-
2 comes.

3 **SEC. 3. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

4 (a) GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIPS.—From
5 the amounts appropriated to carry out this Act, the Sec-
6 retary of Education is authorized to award grants, on a
7 competitive basis, to eligible partnerships to carry out the
8 activities described in section 6.

9 (b) DURATION OF GRANT.—A grant under subsection
10 (a) shall be awarded for not less than a 3-year and not
11 longer than a 5-year period.

12 (c) FISCAL AGENT.—If an eligible partnership re-
13 ceives a grant under this Act, a school partner in the part-
14 nership shall serve as the fiscal agent for the partnership.

15 **SEC. 4. APPLICATION.**

16 An eligible partnership desiring a grant under this
17 Act shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
18 time, in such manner, and containing such information as
19 the Secretary may require, which shall include the fol-
20 lowing:

21 (1) A description of the eligible partnership, in-
22 cluding the name of each of the partners and their
23 respective roles and responsibilities.

24 (2) A description of the technology-based learn-
25 ing practice, tool, strategy, or course that the eligi-

1 ble partnership proposes to develop or implement
2 using the grant funds.

3 (3) Information relevant to the selection criteria
4 under section 5(e).

5 (4) A description of the evaluation to be under-
6 taken by the eligible partnership, including—

7 (A) how the school partner and the evalua-
8 tion partner will work together to implement
9 the practice, tool, strategy, or course in such a
10 way that permits the use of a rigorous evalua-
11 tion design that meets the standards of the
12 What Works Clearinghouse of the Institute of
13 Education Sciences; and

14 (B) a description of the evaluation design
15 that meets such standards, which will be used
16 to measure any significant effects on the out-
17 comes described in paragraphs (1) through (3)
18 of section 7(a).

19 (5) An estimate of the number of students to
20 be reached through the grant and evidence of its ca-
21 pacity to reach the proposed number of students
22 during the course of the grant.

23 (6) An assurance that the school partner in the
24 eligible partnership will ensure that each school to
25 be served by the grant under this Act is designated

1 with a school locale code of Fringe Rural, Distant
2 Rural, or Remote Rural, as determined by the Sec-
3 retary.

4 (7) Any other information the Secretary may
5 require.

6 **SEC. 5. APPLICATION REVIEW AND AWARD BASIS.**

7 (a) PEER REVIEW.—The Secretary shall use a peer
8 review process to review applications for grants under this
9 Act. The Secretary shall appoint individuals to the peer
10 review process who have relevant expertise in digital learn-
11 ing, research and evaluation, and rural education.

12 (b) AWARD BASIS.—In awarding grants under this
13 Act, the Secretary shall ensure, to the extent practicable
14 diversity in the type of activities funded under the grants.

15 (c) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In evaluating an eligible
16 partnership’s application for a grant under this Act, the
17 Secretary shall consider—

18 (1) the need for the proposed technology-based
19 learning practice, tool, strategy, or course;

20 (2) the quality of the design of the proposed
21 practice, tool, strategy, or course;

22 (3) the strength of the existing research evi-
23 dence with respect to such practice, tool, strategy, or
24 course;

- 1 (4) the experience of the eligible partnership;
2 and
3 (5) the quality of the evaluation proposed by
4 the eligible partnership.

5 **SEC. 6. USE OF FUNDS.**

6 (a) **REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—**

7 (1) **IN GENERAL.—**An eligible partnership re-
8 ceiving a grant under this Act shall use such funds
9 to implement and evaluate the results of technology-
10 based learning practices, strategies, tools, or courses,
11 including the practices, strategies, tools, or courses
12 identified under paragraphs (2) through (6).

13 (2) **TOOLS AND COURSES DESIGNED TO PER-**
14 **SONALIZE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.—**Tech-
15 nology-based tools and courses identified under this
16 paragraph include the following types of tools and
17 courses designed to personalize the learning experi-
18 ence:

19 (A) Technology-based personalized instruc-
20 tional systems.

21 (B) Adaptive software, games, or tools,
22 that can be used to personalize learning.

23 (C) Computer-based tutoring courses to
24 help struggling students.

1 (D) Games, digital tools, and smartphone
2 or tablet applications to improve students' en-
3 gagement, focus, and time on task.

4 (E) Other tools and courses designed to
5 personalize the learning experience.

6 (3) PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO
7 AID AND INFORM INSTRUCTION.—Technology-based
8 practices and strategies identified under this para-
9 graph include the following types of practices and
10 strategies designed to aid and inform instruction:

11 (A) Adaptive software, games, or tools that
12 can be used for the purpose of formative assess-
13 ment.

14 (B) Web resources that provide teachers
15 and their students access to instructional and
16 curricular materials that are—

17 (i) aligned with high-quality stand-
18 ards; and

19 (ii) designed to prepare students for
20 college and a career, such as a repository
21 of primary historical sources for use in his-
22 tory and civics courses or examples of de-
23 velopmentally appropriate science experi-
24 ments.

1 (C) Online professional development oppor-
2 tunities, teacher mentoring opportunities, and
3 professional learning communities.

4 (D) Tools or web resources designed to ad-
5 dress specific instructional problems.

6 (E) Other practices and strategies de-
7 signed to personalize the learning experience.

8 (4) TOOLS, COURSES, AND STRATEGIES DE-
9 SIGNED TO IMPROVE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STU-
10 DENTS WITH SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.—
11 Technology-based tools, courses, and strategies iden-
12 tified under this paragraph include the following
13 types of tools, courses, and strategies designed to
14 meet the needs of students with specific educational
15 needs:

16 (A) Digital tools specifically designed to
17 meet the needs of students with a particular
18 disability.

19 (B) Online courses that give students who
20 are not on track to graduate or have already
21 dropped out of school the opportunity for accel-
22 erated credit recovery.

23 (C) Language instruction courses, games,
24 or software designed to meet the needs of
25 English language learners.

1 (D) Other tools, courses, and strategies de-
2 signed to personalize the learning experience.

3 (5) TOOLS, COURSES, AND STRATEGIES DE-
4 SIGNED TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP 21ST CEN-
5 TURY SKILLS.—Technology-based tools, courses, and
6 strategies identified under this paragraph include
7 peer-to-peer virtual learning opportunities to be used
8 for the purposes of project-based learning, deeper
9 learning, and collaborative learning, and other tools,
10 courses, and strategies designed to help students de-
11 velop 21st century skills, such as the ability to think
12 critically and solve problems, be effective commu-
13 nicators, collaborate with others, and learn to create
14 and innovate.

15 (6) TECHNOLOGY-BASED OR ONLINE COURSES
16 THAT ALLOW STUDENTS TO TAKE COURSES THAT
17 THEY WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE ACCESS TO.—
18 Technology-based or online courses identified under
19 this paragraph include courses or collections of
20 courses that provide students access to courses that
21 they would not otherwise have access to, such as the
22 following:

23 (A) An online repository of elective
24 courses.

1 (B) Online or software-based courses in
2 foreign languages, especially in languages iden-
3 tified as critical or in schools where a teacher
4 is not available to teach the language or course
5 level a student requires.

6 (C) Online advanced or college-level
7 courses that can be taken for credit.

8 (b) AUTHORIZED USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible part-
9 nership receiving a grant under this Act may use grant
10 funds to—

11 (1) develop the technology for technology-based
12 learning strategies, practices, courses, or tools to be
13 carried out under the grant;

14 (2) purchase hardware or software needed to
15 carry out such strategies, practices, courses, or tools
16 under the grant, except that such purchases may not
17 exceed 50 percent of total grant funds;

18 (3) address the particular needs of student sub-
19 groups, including students with disabilities and
20 English-language learners;

21 (4) provide technology-based professional devel-
22 opment or professional development on how to maxi-
23 mize the utility of technology; and

24 (5) address issues of cost and capacity in rural
25 areas and shortage subjects.

1 **SEC. 7. DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible partnership receiv-
3 ing a grant under this Act shall require its evaluation
4 partner to complete a comprehensive, well-designed, and
5 well-implemented evaluation that meets the standards of
6 the What Works Clearinghouse after the third year of im-
7 plementation of the grant to measure the effect of the
8 practice, tool, strategy, or course on—

9 (1) student achievement, as measured by high
10 quality assessments that provide objective, valid, re-
11 liable measures of student academic growth and in-
12 formation on whether a student is on-track to grad-
13 uate ready for college and career;

14 (2) where applicable, student achievement gaps,
15 graduation and dropout rates, college enrollment,
16 college persistence, college completion, and teacher
17 or principal effectiveness as measured by student
18 achievement and other applicable measures; and

19 (3) costs and savings to the school partner.

20 (b) IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION.—An evaluation
21 partner may use funds under this Act to carry out an im-
22 plementation evaluation designed to provide information
23 that may be useful for schools, local educational agencies,
24 States, consortia of schools, and charter school networks
25 seeking to implement similar practices, tools, strategies,
26 or courses in the future.

1 (c) PUBLICATION OF RESULTS.—Upon completion of
2 an evaluation described in subsection (a) or (b), the eval-
3 uation partner shall—

4 (1) submit a report of the results of the evalua-
5 tion to the Secretary; and

6 (2) make publicly available such results.

7 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act:

9 (1) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—The term “eligi-
10 ble partnership” means a partnership that includes
11 a school partner and not less than 1—

12 (A) digital learning partner, except that in
13 a case in which a school partner or evaluation
14 partner demonstrates expertise in digital learn-
15 ing to the Secretary; and

16 (B) evaluation partner.

17 (2) SCHOOL PARTNER.—The term “school part-
18 ner” means a—

19 (A) local educational agency;

20 (B) a charter school network;

21 (C) a consortium of elementary schools or
22 secondary schools;

23 (D) a regional educational service agency
24 or similar regional educational service provider;

25 or

1 (E) a consortium of the entities described
2 in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

3 (3) DIGITAL LEARNING PARTNER.—The term
4 “digital learning partner” means an organization
5 with expertise in the technology required to develop
6 or implement the digital learning practices, tools,
7 strategies, or courses proposed by the school partner
8 with which the digital learning partner will partner
9 or has partnered under this Act, such as—

10 (A) an institution of higher education;

11 (B) a nonprofit organization; or

12 (C) an organization with school develop-
13 ment or turnaround experience.

14 (4) EVALUATION PARTNER.—The term “evalua-
15 tion partner” means a partner that has the expertise
16 and ability to carry out the evaluation of a grant re-
17 ceived under this Act, such as—

18 (A) an institution of higher education;

19 (B) a nonprofit organization with expertise
20 in evaluation; or

21 (C) an evaluation firm.

22 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
23 term “institution of higher education” has the
24 meaning given the term in section 102 of the Higher
25 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002).

1 (6) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term
2 “local educational agency” has the meaning given
3 the term in section 9101 of the Elementary and Sec-
4 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

5 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
6 the Secretary of Education.

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