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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>SB387/SECS</u>	Sponsor	<u>SEC</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.231165.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Community School Fund & Framework</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hicks</u>	Original Date	<u>2/25/2025</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

The Senate Education Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 387 (SB387/SECS) would amend Section 22-32-4 NMSA 1978 to make two changes to current law governing community schools in New Mexico:

1. Allow annual community school implementation grants administered by the Public Education Department (PED) to be awarded in amounts of **up to** \$150 thousand; and
2. Rename the community schools fund as the Dr. Jeannie Oakes memorial community schools fund.

FISCAL IMPACT

SB387/SECS does not contain an appropriation.

The proposed language in SB387/SECS to provide flexibility in award amounts for implementation grants could result in public schools receiving lower implementation grant amounts than previously issued by PED, though could also allow a greater number of schools to receive implementation grant awards.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS) includes \$6 million for community schools for FY26.

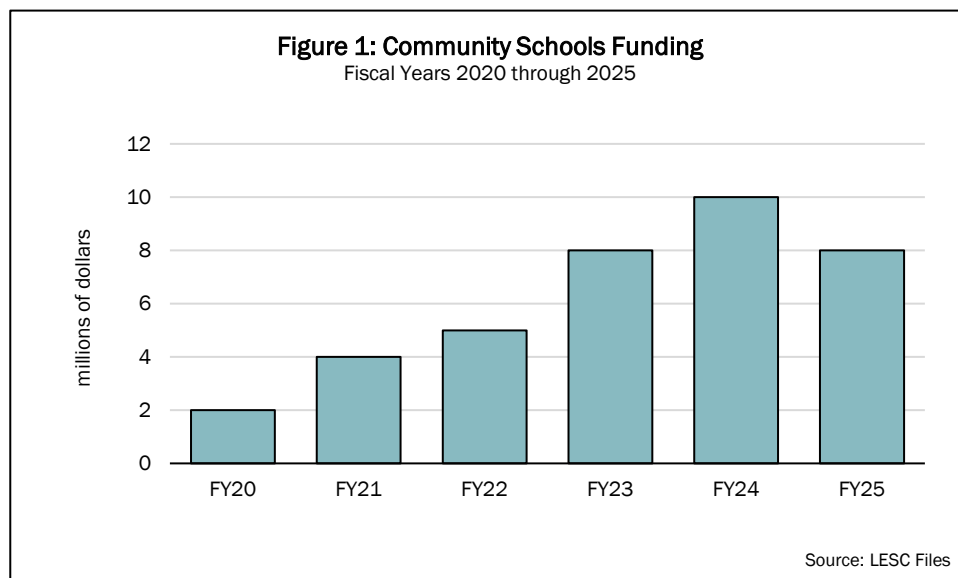
SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Community Schools in New Mexico. According to PED, there are currently 91 [community schools](#) throughout New Mexico that have received grant funding from the department. There are a number of community schools in the state that adopted the model prior to the creation of the community school fund. Accounting for these schools, there are approximately 150 community schools in New Mexico.

The [community school strategy](#) is based on the idea of whole community involvement in the educational process. In community school models, the school is understood as a central hub of a community and a place to leverage the various resources of the broader community to provide a wide range of supports to students and families—this means the school building is not only a place for learning, but also a place to for students to access, or be connected to, locally identified resources such as healthcare, meal options, clothing, and laundry, among others. [Research](#) has shown the community school strategy, when implemented effectively, can improve student attendance, behavior, engagement, and academic achievement.

As required by current statute, PED’s Community Schools Bureau oversees a competitive grant program to support schools in New Mexico wishing to adopt the community school framework. Grant awards are divided into three categories: planning (up to \$50 thousand), implementation (\$150 thousand per year for three years), and renewal (up to \$75 thousand). Following this period of grant funding, the expectation would be for schools to establish long-term funding for community school operations within their own budget. SB387/SECS would amend implementation awards to allow amounts up to \$150 thousand.

PED, in partnership with [Southwest Institute for Transformational \(SWIFT\) Community Schools](#), an organization focused on advocating for and supporting community schools in New Mexico, is developing an [accreditation plan](#) to ensure schools receiving grant funding in New Mexico are effectively implementing the community school strategy. To continuously assess the effectiveness of community school implementation in the state, PED has also partnered with Apex Evaluation, an Albuquerque-based consulting firm, to create an [evaluation plan](#) for the years ahead.



History of State Funding. State funding for community schools began in FY20 and continued in subsequent fiscal years. (See **Figure 1: Community Schools Funding**) In FY25, the Legislature appropriated \$8 million sourced from the public education reform fund and the community schools fund. Due to changes in the funding source and amount, PED adopted a different approach to award-making for the community schools grant program in FY25. Rather than providing awards to specific schools in the designated amounts above, the department issued block grants to school districts with multiple applicants. Distribution to specific school sites was left to the discretion of the district. For solo applicants, award amounts varied depending on funding availability. In the 2023 legislative session, the Legislature passed [House Memorial 44](#), directing PED to establish a task force to study sustainable funding for community schools, develop criteria for community

school accreditation, make associated funding recommendations, and develop a community schools strategic plan. A report from this memorial is expected in 2025.

Jeannie Oakes, PhD. SB387/SECS would rename the community schools fund established in statute in honor of the late Dr. Jeannie Oakes, a longtime Santa Fe resident. Dr. Oakes served as a senior fellow in residence at the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), an independent research organization focused on advancing evidence-based education policies. During her time at LPI, Dr. Oakes contributed to several national and New Mexico-specific research reports on community schools and other education policy topics, perhaps most notably a [2021 report](#) highlighting the state’s approach to community schools, and testified before LESC numerous times over the past decade. Dr. Oakes also served as a thought partner on an LESC evaluation of community schools, culminating in a [2019 report](#) on the subject.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to update administrative rule to reflect the changes to the community school grant award amounts proposed by SB387/SECS.

RELATED BILLS

Related to Senate Joint Resolution 8, Rights of Children, CA, which proposes a constitutional amendment expressly stating the rights of children, including access to fully resourced community schools.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico Regional Education Cooperatives Association (NMRECA)

CLH/mca/jkh