

By Mrs. Harkins of Needham, petition of Lida E. Harkins and other members of the House for legislation to establish innovation schools in the public school system. Education, Arts and Humanities.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-Four.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING INNOVATION SCHOOLS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Section 89 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, inserted by
2 section 55 of chapter 71 of the acts of 1993, is hereby amended
3 by striking section 89 in its entirety and substituting therefor the
4 following:—

5 Section 89. (a) Each school district shall promulgate policies
6 for the establishment of innovation schools by June thirtieth, nine-
7 teen hundred and ninety-four. An “innovation school” shall be a
8 public school, operated under the authority of the school district,
9 which meets state educational standards and requirements.

10 The purposes for establishing innovation schools are:

11 (1) to stimulate the development of innovative programs within
12 public education;

13 (2) to provide opportunities for innovative learning and
14 assessment;

15 (3) to provide parents and students with greater options in
16 choosing schools within their school districts;

17 (4) to provide teachers with a vehicle for establishing schools
18 with alternative, innovative methods of educational instruction
19 and school structure and management;

20 (5) to encourage performance-based education programs.

21 (b) Teachers or administrators eligible to submit an application
22 to establish an innovation school shall include, but not be limited
23 to, two or more certified teachers and/or administrators employed
24 by the district.

25 The school committee shall establish the information needed in
26 an application for the approval of an innovation school. Appli-
27 cations to establish an innovation school shall be submitted each
28 year by February fifteenth.

29 (c) Innovation schools shall be open to all students, on a space
30 available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race,
31 color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, mental or physical
32 disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, or
33 proficiency in the English language. Innovation schools may limit
34 enrollment to specific grade levels. In the event that applications
35 for enrollment exceed the space available, a lottery shall be held
36 to determine which students shall be accepted.

37 Students who are residents of the district may attend the
38 innovation schools of their choice regardless of the geographic
39 location of the school in the school district within which the
40 student lives. Costs of transportation shall be provided in the same
41 manner as are provided for other public early childhood, elemen-
42 tary, secondary and vocational-technical school students in the
43 district.

44 A student may withdraw from an innovation school at any time
45 and enroll in another public school in the district.

46 (d) An innovation school may be located in part of an existing
47 public school building, in space provided on a private work
48 site, in a public school building, or any other suitable location
49 approved by the school committee.

50 (e) Students in innovation schools are required to meet the
51 same performance standards, testing and portfolio requirements
52 set by the board of education and the school committee for
53 students in other public schools in the district.

54 (f) The school committee may waive any district policies which
55 would otherwise apply to an innovation school with regard to
56 curriculum and other areas of educational policy.

57 (g) Each local school district shall grant a temporary reassign-
58 ment to any teacher in the public school system requesting such
59 reassignment in order to teach in an innovation school. A teacher
60 may request such a reassignment for up to two years.

61 At the end of the two-year period, the teacher may make a
62 request to the superintendent that such reassignment be extended
63 for an additional two years, and approval for said request shall

64 not be unreasonably withheld, or he may return to his former
65 teaching position. At the end of the fourth year, the teacher may
66 either return to his former teaching position or, if he chooses
67 to continue teaching at the innovation school, accept a transfer to
68 that position.

69 (h) The innovation schools shall have a school council, estab-
70 lished under the provisions of section 59C of this chapter.

71 (i) An innovation school must comply with all applicable state
72 and federal health and safety laws and regulations.

73 (j) Innovation schools must comply with the provisions of
74 chapter 71B of the General Laws.

75 (k) The school committee may disband an innovation school if:

76 (1) the school has not fulfilled any conditions imposed by the
77 school committee on the school; or

78 (2) the school is deemed to be underperforming, the school
79 shall have a reasonable amount of time, as determined by the
80 school committee, to improve its performance and to respond to
81 any alleged deficiencies, prior to being disbanded.

82 (l) The school committee shall develop procedures and guide-
83 lines for revocation and renewal of a school's status as an inno-
84 vation school.

85 (m) Innovation schools shall be evaluated by the commissioner
86 pursuant to guidelines established by the board of education.

