

# New Grant Opportunity for Schools and Communities to Improve School Climate

On September 23, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed the **Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund: Learning Communities for School Success** program into law. This new program will provide grants to local school districts to implement research-based strategies to improve school climate and to mitigate the school-to-prison pipeline.

## Background:

The program was created by [AB 1014](#) (Thurmond) and an identical bill SB 527 (Liu), and was funded at nearly \$28 million in the current budget. The legislation directs savings from Prop 47 (\$9.86 million)—and an additional \$18 million in one-time funds that Children Now helped secure—to create this new grant program. Children Now, Public Counsel and PolicyLink led the advocacy efforts to ensure **grant funds must be used for planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities in support of evidence-based, non-punitive programs and practices to keep the state's most vulnerable pupils in school.**

The language below summarizes key components of the new grant program as outlined in the legislation. For more detail, please review [AB 1014](#) (Thurmond).

## Get Ready to Apply

We encourage school districts and community organizations to start preparing now for this competitive grant opportunity.

**A Request for Proposal process is expected to begin in early 2017.**

## Qualifications:

The grant program will be administered by the State Department of Education. **Local educational agencies (school districts, county offices of education or charter schools) may apply for a grant.** Grant recipients must provide a matching expenditure of cash or in kind contributions that equal at least 20 percent of the total grant award. Each application shall be for three years of funding. Grant recipients must align their funded strategies with their goals in their local control accountability plan (LCAP). The activities supported by the grants must be used for planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities in support of evidence-based, non-punitive programs and practices to keep the state's most vulnerable pupils in school and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Establishing a community school (a school that integrates comprehensive services through community partnerships)
2. Implementing strategies to improve attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism.
3. Implementing restorative practices, restorative justice models or other programs to improve retention rates and reduce suspensions and to reduce student contact with law enforcement agencies.
4. Implementing activities that advance social-emotional learning, positive behavior interventions and supports, culturally responsive practices and trauma-informed strategies.
5. Establishing partnerships with community-based organizations to support the implementation of evidence-based, non-punitive approaches.
6. Adding or increasing staff within a local school entity whose primary purpose is to address chronic attendance problems.

Funding for the grant program shall not be used to pay for law enforcement activities. In selecting grant recipients, the Department of Education will give priority to local educational agencies based on the following criteria:

1. High rates of chronic absenteeism, out-of-school suspension, or school dropout
2. Located in a community with a high crime rate
3. Have a significant representation of foster youth among its pupil enrollment.

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**URGENT:** The Department of Education has begun planning for the implementation of the program with a RFP process expected to begin in early 2017. **School districts and community organizations can immediately start by identifying priorities and begin planning for this competitive grant program now.**

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