



2023-2024 General Assembly

HOUSE BILL 259: 2023 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.62: SparkNC Pilot for High-Tech Learning Accelerator Credit

Committee:
Introduced by:
Analysis of: Sec. 7.62 of S.L. 2023-134

Date: December 1, 2023
Prepared by: Kara McCraw
Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: Section 7.62 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the SparkNC Pilot Program (Program) for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium. The Program authorizes SparkNC, Inc. to partner with selected public school units (PSUs) to develop nontraditional, student-driven, modular learning experiences focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) that, when aggregated, provide a competency-based equivalency to a traditional elective course credit.

PSUs partnering with SparkNC must enter a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to meet certain requirements for the Program, including the provision of a physical learning lab staffed by a learning lab facilitator that will provide a site for collaborative learning and virtual networking.

Partnering PSUs must award the elective credit to any student who completes a combination of modules determined by SparkNC to provide the competency-based elective credit in that course upon verification of successful completion of the learning experiences and integrity of student work products by the learning lab facilitator. The elective credit must be denoted on student transcripts as High-Tech Learning Accelerator and as achieved mastery.

Learning lab facilitators are not required to hold teacher licensure, but must meet the standards established by the MOU and will be the teacher of record for students enrolled in the Program. Learning lab facilitators are not required to be paid on the same salary schedule as other teachers. Additional non-licensed personnel can be contracted with for the purpose of providing timely, real-world content, industry expertise, and student learning experiences.

Students can participate in the Program and aggregate learning experiences throughout the time the students are enrolled in the PSU and are not limited to a semester or school year. Learning experiences can be provided to students in person, remotely, or through asynchronous modules.

The elective credit can satisfy any computer science graduation requirement if approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction upon recommendation of the Department of Public Instruction that the course meets the required domains of computer science.

For the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years, 18 designated PSUs can partner with SparkNC to participate in the Program.

SparkNC, in consultation with the partnering PSUs, must provide an interim report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by March 1, 2025, and a final report by March 1, 2026, disaggregated for each public school unit by grade level and school, on certain information including Program participation, retention, persistence, and completion, as well as student evaluation and interest in STEM following participation, cost per student, and recommendations for Program changes.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Jeffrey Hudson
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578