



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.23: Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Competitive Grant Program

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.23

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Section 7.23 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) establishes the Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Grant Program (ELISS) to fund high-quality, independently validated extending learning and integrated student support service programs for at-risk students. Nonprofit corporations and nonprofit corporations collaborating with local school administrative units can apply for an ELISS grant for the operation of student programs that focus on the following:

- Use of an evidence-based model with a proven track record of success.
- Inclusion of rigorous, quantitative performance measures to confirm effectiveness.
- Deployment of multitiered systems of support to address student barriers to achievement.
- Alignment with State performance measures, academic goals, and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- Prioritization of programs that integrate clear academic content with a focus on STEM or reading development and proficiency.
- Minimization of class size when providing instruction or instructional support and interventions.
- Expansion of access to high-quality learning activities and academic support that strengthen student engagement and leverage community-based resources, such as mentoring services and private-sector employer involvement.
- Utilization of digital content to expand learning time, when appropriate.

Grants must be used for new or exiting programs that focus on serving (i) at-risk students not performing at grade level, (ii) students at risk of dropping out, and (iii) students at risk of displacement due to suspension or expulsion as a result of antisocial behaviors. Priority consideration must be given to applications demonstrating models that focus services and programs in low-performing schools. Grant recipients can receive up to \$500,000 for up to two years. Recipients must match grant funds at a rate of \$3 in grant funds to \$1 in nongrant funds, which must not include any other State funds. Priority must be given to any nonprofit organization collaborating with a local school administrative unit allowing the use of federal funds or local funds to match grant funds. Matching funds can include in-kind contributions for up to half of the required match.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must use up to \$7 million from the At-Risk Student Services Alternative School Allotment each fiscal year to fund the ELISS program, of which \$200,000 can be used to administer the program.

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No later than July 15 of each year in which a grant recipient participates in ELISS, the recipient must report to DPI on the use of the funds. Recipients cannot receive a second year of grant funding until they have submitted their reports to DPI. Recipients must also submit a final report on key performance data.

No later than September 15 of each year of the program, DPI must submit to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee a report on ELISS, including recommendations regarding effective program models, standards, and performance measures based on student performance, leveraging of community-based resources to expand student access to learning activities, academic and behavioral support services, and potential opportunities for the State to invest in proven models for future grant programs for at-risk students.

This section becomes effective July 1, 2027, and applies beginning with the 2027-2028 school year.