

CHAPTER 272

AN ACT establishing the "Twelfth Grade Postsecondary Transition Year Pilot Program" in the Department of Education.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established in the Department of Education a three-year Innovation Dual Enrollment II Pilot Program. The purpose of the program shall be to offer participating students in grades nine through 12 a guided start to postsecondary coursework, through the provision of targeted supports and low-cost courses in which students may simultaneously earn high school and college credits. The program will support school districts that have historically lower rates of college enrollment among high school graduates, and shall prioritize for eligibility students receiving free or reduced lunch.

b. The Commissioner of Education shall select districts representing each of the southern, central, and northern regions of the State to participate in the program. The commissioner shall select districts impacted substantially by the COVID-19 public health crisis which have a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students. The commissioner shall provide a grant to each of the pilot districts to finance costs associated with offering the pilot program, including the cost of tuition charged to the district pursuant to subsection e. of this section.

c. A school district that wants to participate in the pilot program shall submit an application to the commissioner. The application may include, but shall not be limited to:

(1) a partnership agreement with an institution of higher education which includes a commitment from the institution of higher education to apply any enrolled student's credits as outlined in subsection f. of this section;

(2) a commitment from the school district to apply any credits earned by students in the pilot program towards the student's secondary school graduation requirements;

(3) a commitment from the school district to provide student support and counseling services necessary to ensure the academic success of participating students;

(4) a commitment from the school district to provide free transportation to any courses held on the college campus, as needed; and

(5) a commitment from the school district to provide program and student data, disaggregated by demographic subgroups, to the department including, but not limited to, data on program enrollment, student completion, college credit attainment, student grades, and post-program college entrance rates.

d. A school district selected to participate in the pilot program shall require participating students to:

(1) enroll in no less than one academic credit at the postsecondary level, and no more than 15 academic credits at the postsecondary level, in each semester; and

(2) maintain a 2.0 grade point average for the student's secondary and postsecondary coursework in order to continue participation in the program.

e. An institution of higher education that enters into a partnership agreement with a participating school district pursuant to subsection c. of this section shall provide a program of one or more academic credits in each semester. The program shall offer students an opportunity to earn academic credits directly applicable to a credential or degree awarded by the institution. The institution shall waive student fees and charge the partnering district no more than \$100 per academic credit for each participating student. The institution shall provide reports each semester to the district, at a minimum, on the academic progress of the district's students enrolled in the program.

f. A public institution of higher education shall accept and apply towards an applicable degree program all credits earned by a student during the pilot program established pursuant to this section, in accordance with the institution's credit transfer policies. An independent institution of higher education may accept the credits earned by a student during the pilot program established pursuant to this section. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any public or independent institution of higher education to admit a student or to waive its admission standards, application procedures, and credit transfer policies.

g. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the commissioner shall submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature. The report shall contain information on the implementation of the pilot program and shall include, but not be limited to, the commissioner's recommendation on the feasibility of implementing the program on a Statewide basis.

2. a. There is created a non-lapsing fund known as the Innovation Dual Enrollment II Fund. All monies annually appropriated by the Legislature and any other monies made available for the purposes of the program shall be deposited in the fund. Monies deposited in the fund shall be available for the duration of the Innovation Dual Enrollment II Pilot Program and shall be used by the Department of Education to provide funding for the program.

b. The department shall, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, determine allowable uses for funds prior to accepting applications to participate in the program, and shall describe the allowable uses in a Notice of Grant Opportunity.

c. The department shall, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, prioritize pilot program investments in school districts that partner with New Jersey institutions of higher education.

3. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

4. This act shall take effect 240 days following the date of enactment, but shall remain inoperative until the first day of the first full school year following the effective date. The Commissioner of Education may take such anticipatory action as shall be necessary for the implementation of this act.

Approved January 16, 2024.