

# SENATE, No. 447

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 217th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2016 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator DIANE B. ALLEN**

**District 7 (Burlington)**

**Senator M. TERESA RUIZ**

**District 29 (Essex)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senator Turner**

**SYNOPSIS**

Requires Commissioner of Education to include data on chronic absenteeism and disciplinary suspensions on School Report Card and requires public schools to make certain efforts to combat chronic absenteeism.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning student attendance records, amending  
2 P.L.1995, c.235, and supplementing chapter 38 of the Title 18A  
3 of the New Jersey Statutes.

4  
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
6 of New Jersey:

7  
8 1. Section 3 of P.L.1995, c.235 (C.18A:7E-3) is amended to  
9 read as follows:

10 3. Report cards issued pursuant to section 2 of this act shall  
11 include, but not be limited to, the following information for:

12 a. the school district and for each school within the district, as  
13 appropriate:

14 (1) results of the elementary assessment programs;

15 (2) results of the Early Warning Test;

16 (3) results of the High School Proficiency Test;

17 (4) daily attendance records for students and professional staff;

18 (5) student graduation and dropout rates;

19 (6) annual student scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test;

20 (7) total student enrollment, percentage of limited English  
21 proficient students, percentage of students in advanced placement  
22 courses, and any other school characteristics which the  
23 commissioner deems appropriate;

24 (8) instructional resources including teacher/student ratio,  
25 average class size and amount of instructional time per day, as  
26 calculated by formulas specified by the commissioner;

27 (9) a written narrative by the school principal or a designee  
28 which describes any special achievements, events, problems or  
29 initiatives of the school or district;

30 (10) data identifying the number and nature of all reports of  
31 harassment, intimidation, or bullying; **[and]**

32 (11) indicators of student career readiness;

33 (12) the number and percentage of students who were chronically  
34 absent, where chronically absent means a student's attendance  
35 record includes a total number of absences, including excused  
36 absences, unexcused absences, and absences due to disciplinary  
37 actions, that meets or exceeds 10 percent of the total number of  
38 school days in the school year, or in the case of a student who  
39 enrolls in the school after the beginning of the school year, 10  
40 percent of the total number of days from the date of enrollment until  
41 the end of the school year. The calculation of "chronically absent"  
42 shall not include absences due to a student's ongoing illness,  
43 medical, psychiatric, or other disability, provided that a physician  
44 or other medical professional provides written documentation

**EXPLANATION** – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 confirming that the student's condition requires absences beyond  
2 the number of days permitted by the school district's policy. It  
3 shall be the duty of the school to verify this information to ensure  
4 that these absences are not counted toward the school's calculation  
5 of "chronically absent"; and

6 (13) the number and percentage of students who received a  
7 disciplinary suspension; and

8 b. the school district, as appropriate:

9 (1) per pupil expenditures and State aid ratio;

10 (2) percent of budget allocated for salaries and benefits of  
11 administrative personnel;

12 (3) percent of budget allocated for salaries and benefits of  
13 teachers;

14 (4) percentage increase over the previous year for salaries and  
15 benefits of administrative and instructional personnel;

16 (5) the number of administrative personnel and the ratio of  
17 administrative personnel to instructional personnel;

18 (6) a profile of the most recent graduating class concerning their  
19 educational or employment plans following graduation; and

20 (7) any other information which the commissioner deems  
21 appropriate.

22 For the purposes of this section, the Commissioner of Education  
23 shall establish a uniform methodology for the reporting of the data  
24 concerning administrative personnel on a full-time equivalent basis.

25 (cf: P.L.2014, c.71)

26

27 2. (New section) a. As used in this section, "chronically  
28 absent" means a student's attendance record includes a total number  
29 of absences, including excused absences, unexcused absences, and  
30 absences due to disciplinary actions, that meets or exceeds 10  
31 percent of the total number of school days in the school year, or in  
32 the case of a student who enrolls in the school after the beginning of  
33 the school year, 10 percent of the total number of days from the  
34 date of enrollment until the end of the school year. The calculation  
35 of "chronically absent" shall not include absences due to a student's  
36 ongoing illness, medical, psychiatric, or other disability, provided  
37 that a physician or other medical professional provides written  
38 documentation confirming that the student's condition requires  
39 absences beyond the number of days permitted by the school  
40 district's policy. It shall be the duty of the school to verify this  
41 information to ensure that these absences are not counted toward  
42 the school's calculation of "chronically absent."

43 b. In the event that 10 percent or more of the students enrolled  
44 in a public school are chronically absent, the school shall convene a  
45 Chronic Absenteeism Coalition. The coalition shall include at least  
46 one parent and one teacher from the school community, and such  
47 other members as determined by the principal of the school. The  
48 purpose of the coalition shall be to regularly review and monitor

1 school chronic absenteeism and develop a corrective action plan to  
2 improve absenteeism rates. The coalition shall review school  
3 chronic absenteeism without examining individual student  
4 information. In developing the corrective action plan, the coalition  
5 shall address how the school can:

6 (1) communicate clearly and often to parents on the importance  
7 of school attendance;

8 (2) establish contact with parents when children begin to show a  
9 pattern of absences;

10 (3) identify problems and barriers to school attendance and  
11 develop recommendations to address them; and

12 (4) foster positive school relationships with families.

13 The coalition shall annually present to the board of education its  
14 findings and recommendations until the percentage of the student  
15 body that is chronically absent falls below ten percent.

16

17 3. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall  
18 annually review the chronic absenteeism rates of each school and  
19 school district, as included on the School Report Cards issued  
20 pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1995, c.235 (C.18A:7E-2), and report  
21 on the rates to the State Board of Education.

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23 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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#### STATEMENT

27

28 This bill requires that, in the event that ten percent or more of the  
29 students enrolled in a public school are chronically absent, the  
30 school must convene a Chronic Absenteeism Coalition. The  
31 coalition must include at least one parent and one teacher from the  
32 school community, and such other members as determined  
33 appropriate by the principal. The purpose of the coalition will be to  
34 regularly review and monitor school chronic absenteeism and  
35 develop a corrective action plan to improve absenteeism rates. The  
36 coalition's review will not involve the examination of individual  
37 student information. The coalition must annually present its  
38 findings and recommendations to the board of education until the  
39 percentage of the student body that is chronically absent falls below  
40 ten percent.

41 The bill also requires the Commissioner of Education to include  
42 on School Report Cards data on the number and percentage of  
43 students who were chronically absent and the number and  
44 percentage of students who received a disciplinary suspension. The  
45 commissioner must annually review the chronic absenteeism rates  
46 of each school and school district and report on the rates to the State  
47 Board of Education.

1       As used in the bill, “chronically absent” means a student’s  
2 attendance record includes a total number of absences, including  
3 excused absences, unexcused absences, and absences due to  
4 disciplinary actions, that meets or exceeds 10 percent of the total  
5 number of school days in the school year, or in the case of a student  
6 who enrolls in the school after the beginning of the school year, 10  
7 percent of the total number of school days from the date of  
8 enrollment until the end of the school year. The calculation of  
9 “chronically absent” does not include absences due to a student’s  
10 ongoing illness, medical, psychiatric, or other disability, provided  
11 that a physician or other medical professional provides written  
12 documentation confirming that the student’s condition requires  
13 absences beyond the number of days permitted by the school  
14 district’s policy.