ASSEMBLY, No. 2678

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE
District 37 (Bergen)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Purple Ribbon Schools Program” in DOE to recognize public and nonpublic schools with positive school climate.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning positive school climates and supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. a. There is created a Purple Ribbon Schools Program in the Department of Education. Under the program, the Commissioner of Education shall annually recognize as a Purple Ribbon School those public and nonpublic schools that provide or have made significant progress to:

(1) provide a safe and inclusive environment for students and staff;

(2) raise awareness of the issue of student suicide and suicide prevention; and

(3) address the issue of student mental health and teacher mental health first aid training.

b. The commissioner shall establish a Purple Ribbon Schools Working Group. The purpose of the working group shall be to develop criteria to be used in the selection of public and nonpublic schools as a Purple Ribbon School. The working group shall consist of members appointed by the commissioner and shall be composed of, but need not be limited to: a school principal; a school administrator; a middle school teacher; a high school teacher; a school counselor; a school social worker; a school psychologist; a person with personal or family experience with suicide; a person with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of youth suicide in high-risk populations; a person who has a background in, or special knowledge of, the legal, policy, educational, social, or psychological aspects of bullying; and a student who has been the victim of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

c. The criteria established by the working group for a Purple Ribbon Schools designation pursuant to subsection b. of this section shall include, but need not be limited to, the school's efforts to:

(1) raise awareness and promote suicide prevention programs;

(2) highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;

(3) create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students, faculty, and staff regardless of race or sexual and gender identities, including the establishment of wellness rooms for mindfulness and social-emotional learning;

(4) implement policies and programs to assist students struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues;

(5) participate in the Anti-Defamation League's "No Place for Hate" campaign or a similar program; and

(6) provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for instruction in mental health issues and trauma-informed care

provided by a licensed health care professional with training and expertise in mental health issues.

d. The working group, in consultation with the commissioner, shall establish a scoring system based on the criteria developed pursuant to subsection c. of this section to be used by the commissioner in the selection of Purple Ribbon Schools.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes a Purple Ribbon Schools Program in the Department of Education. Under the program, the Commissioner of Education will annually recognize as a Purple Ribbon School those public and nonpublic schools that provide or have made significant progress to:

- provide a safe and inclusive environment for students and staff;
- raise awareness of the issue of student suicide and suicide prevention; and
- address the issue of student mental health and teacher mental health first aid training.

Under the bill, the commissioner will establish a Purple Ribbon Schools Working Group which will develop criteria for public and nonpublic schools to qualify for a Purple Ribbon School designation. The working group will consist of members appointed by the commissioner and will be composed of, but need not be limited to: a school principal; a school administrator; a middle school teacher; a high school teacher; a school counselor; a school social worker; a school psychologist; a person with personal or family experience with suicide; a person with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of youth suicide in high-risk populations; a person who has a background in, or special knowledge of, the legal, policy, educational, social, or psychological aspects of bullying; and a student who has been the victim of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

The criteria established by the working group for a Purple Ribbon Schools designation will include, but need not be limited to, the school’s efforts to:

- highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;
- create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students, faculty, and staff regardless of race or sexual and gender identities, including the establishment of wellness rooms for mindfulness and social-emotional learning;

- implement policies and programs to assist students struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues; and
- provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for instruction in mental health issues and trauma-informed care provided by a licensed health care professional with training and expertise in mental health issues.

The working group, in consultation with the commissioner, will establish a scoring system based on the criteria developed to be used by the commissioner in the selection of Purple Ribbon Schools.