

ASSEMBLY, No. 4277

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 18, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes four-year “New Jersey Early Innovation Inspiration School Grant Pilot Program” in DOE to fund non-traditional Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics programs for students in grades K through 8.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/22/2020)

1 **AN ACT** establishing the “New Jersey Early Innovation Inspiration
2 School Grant Pilot Program” in the Department of Education.

3

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

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7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey
8 Early Innovation Inspiration School Grant Pilot Program Act.”

9

10 2. As used in this act:

11 “Low-income student” means a student who qualifies for free or
12 reduced price lunch under the federal school lunch program.

13 “Non-traditional STEM teaching method” means a STEM
14 education method or strategy such as incorporating self-directed
15 student-learning, inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning in
16 small groups, collaboration with mentors in the field of study, and
17 participation in STEM-related competitions.

18 “STEM” means science, technology, engineering, or
19 mathematics.

20

21 3. The Commissioner of Education shall develop and
22 administer a four-year New Jersey Early Innovation Inspiration
23 School Grant Pilot Program. The purpose of the pilot program shall
24 be to award grants to school districts to:

25 a. cultivate interest in the STEM fields at an early age;

26 b. support non-traditional STEM teaching methods for students
27 in grades kindergarten through 8;

28 c. promote innovation and broaden interest in careers in the
29 STEM fields by investing in programs supported by teachers and
30 professional mentors; and

31 d. encourage collaboration among students, engineers, and
32 other professional mentors.

33 The grants shall be allocated to school districts on a competitive
34 basis.

35

36 4. a. A school district that wants to apply for a grant under the
37 pilot program shall submit an application to the commissioner. The
38 application shall, at the minimum, include a description of how the
39 school district will:

40 (1) implement STEM teaching programs for students in grades
41 K through 8 that use a non-traditional STEM teaching method;

42 (2) identify and recruit partners and mentors to help implement
43 the programs, and to assist students who participate in STEM
44 programs, including through the use of technology;

45 (3) support teachers who lead the STEM programs, and
46 participants in the programs, through stipends or other incentives;

- 1 (4) recruit young women and students from other populations
2 historically underrepresented in the STEM fields to participate in
3 the programs;
- 4 (5) identify public and private partners that can support the
5 programs with cash or in-kind contributions;
- 6 (6) develop a plan for sustaining the programs financially
7 beyond the grant period; and
- 8 (7) develop a method to evaluate the impact of the STEM
9 teaching programs on participating students.
- 10 b. The commissioner shall award a one-time, up-front grant not
11 to exceed \$150,000 to each of the six qualifying school districts to
12 be used to implement the pilot program. The grant funds may be
13 used by the school district for a period of up to four years. The
14 commissioner shall award an equal number of grants to school
15 districts located in the north, central, and southern regions of the
16 State.
- 17 In awarding grants under the pilot program, the commissioner
18 shall give priority to applications from school districts that propose
19 to carry out activities that target:
- 20 (1) a rural or urban school;
- 21 (2) a low-performing school; or
- 22 (3) a school or school district that serves low-income students.
- 23 c. A school district that receives a grant may use the grant
24 funds for any of the following:
- 25 (1) the promotion of STEM education and career activities;
- 26 (2) the purchase of supplies needed to support participation in
27 non-traditional STEM teaching programs, such as robotics;
- 28 (3) to provide incentives and stipends for teachers involved in
29 non-traditional STEM teaching methods outside of their regular
30 teaching duties;
- 31 (4) to provide support and finance the expenses of student
32 participation in regional and national nonprofit STEM competitions;
- 33 (5) to finance items such as equipment, facility use, technology,
34 broadband access, and other expenses, directly associated with non-
35 traditional STEM teaching and mentoring; and
- 36 (6) to carry out other activities that are related to the goals of the
37 pilot program.
- 38 d. A school district that receives a grant under the pilot
39 program shall provide district matching funds in an amount equal to
40 25% of the grant amount. The district shall also secure matching
41 funds or in-kind contributions from corporate donors or other
42 private sector donors in an amount equal to 25% of the grant
43 amount. The matching funds shall be used by the district to support
44 the STEM-related activities outlined in the application submitted to
45 the commissioner for grant funds.
- 46 e. Grant funds provided to a school district shall be used to
47 supplement, and not supplant, funds used for STEM activities in the
48 district at the time of the application for the grant.

1 districts that intend to target activities in a rural or urban school, a
2 low-performing school, or a school or school district that serves
3 low-income students. The districts will be permitted to use the grant
4 funds for a period of up to four years.

5 A school district that receives a grant may use the funds to:
6 promote STEM education and career activities; purchase supplies
7 needed to support participation in non-traditional STEM teaching
8 programs; provide incentives and stipends for teachers involved in
9 non-traditional STEM teaching methods outside of their regular
10 teaching duties; provide support and finance the expenses of student
11 participation in regional and national nonprofit STEM competitions;
12 finance items such as equipment, facility use, technology,
13 broadband access, and other expenses, directly associated with non-
14 traditional STEM teaching and mentoring; and carry out other
15 activities that are related to the goals of the pilot program.

16 The bill establishes the “Early Innovation Inspiration School
17 Grant Fund” within the Department of Education to provide grants
18 to school districts under the pilot program. A school district that
19 receives a grant is required to provide district matching funds in an
20 amount equal to 25% of the grant amount. In addition, the district
21 must secure matching funds or in-kind contributions from corporate
22 donors or other private sector donors in an amount equal to 25% of
23 the grant amount.