

P.L. 2021, CHAPTER 456, *approved January 18, 2022*
Assembly, No. 4434 (*Second Reprint*)

1 **AN ACT** establishing the Student Wellness Grant Program and
2 supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. The Commissioner of Education, in ¹full¹ consultation
8 with the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall establish the
9 Student Wellness Grant Program. The purpose of the Student
10 Wellness Grant Program shall be to provide grants that support
11 school districts in implementing school-based programs and
12 practices that promote mental wellness, social and emotional
13 learning, and student resilience.

14 b. A grant awarded through the Student Wellness Grant
15 Program shall be used to support school districts in:

16 (1) the provision of school-based mental health clinics or
17 workshops for both students and families that engage the
18 community on universal topics of student wellness and mental
19 health;

20 (2) the implementation and coordination of policies, practices,
21 and programs that support the mental, emotional, and social needs
22 of students;

23 (3) the provision of mental health services on-site at the school
24 to students in need of short-term counseling or crisis intervention
25 focused on mental health or situational concerns, such as grief or
26 family transitions, by a properly trained and licensed mental health
27 professional; and

28 (4) the timely and appropriate referral of students in need of
29 long-term therapeutic counseling or mental health intervention with
30 available community resources.

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32 2. a. A school district which elects to participate in the grant
33 program created pursuant to this act shall submit an application to
34 the Commissioner of Education ¹to be reviewed by a team of
35 qualified professionals within the Department of Education and
36 Department of Children and Families¹ in such form as required by
37 the commissioner. The application shall include, but need not be
38 limited to:

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.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate floor amendments adopted June 21, 2021.

²Assembly amendments adopted in accordance with Governor's
recommendations January 10, 2022.

1 (1) a description of current school district actions to support the
2 socioemotional needs of students in a stigma-free environment and
3 how a grant will support the expansion of those efforts;

4 (2) a commitment to provide staff training, including a clearly
5 outlined plan on who will receive training, the resources needed for
6 training, and how the training will be implemented. The training
7 shall include content on how to recognize symptoms of mental
8 health conditions in the student population, and a component on
9 identifying at-risk students most likely to be in need of mental
10 health supports; and

11 (3) the school district protocol for on-site and community
12 referrals for targeted therapeutic interventions, such as short-term
13 and long-term counseling.

14 b. The Commissioner of Education, in ¹full¹ consultation with
15 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall develop criteria
16 for the evaluation of applications for grants. Based upon the
17 criteria developed by the commissioners, and within the limit of
18 available appropriations, the Commissioner of Education shall
19 allocate to each selected school district a grant in such amount as
20 determined by the commissioner. ¹~~【The Commissioner of~~
21 ~~Education shall give special】~~ Special¹ consideration ¹shall be
22 given¹ to applicants that: can demonstrate strong ties to relevant
23 community resources, such as mental health providers; or have
24 secured external funding for their student wellness program from
25 community partners.
26

27 3. No student shall be compelled to participate in any programs
28 or services offered by a school district pursuant to a student
29 wellness grant received under this act, if the student or the student's
30 parent or guardian objects to participation.
31

32 4. The Commissioner of Education, in ¹full¹ consultation with
33 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall develop and
34 disseminate to all school districts ¹~~【model policies and】~~¹ best
35 practices in school-based programs that promote mental wellness,
36 social and emotional learning, and student resilience.
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38 5. Each school district that receives a student wellness grant
39 shall prepare and submit to the Commissioner of Education
40 annually a report on its experience with and the effects of the
41 program. The report shall include, at a minimum, the specific
42 programs and practices implemented as a result of the grant to
43 promote mental wellness, social and emotional learning, and student
44 resilience, and any notable changes in school climate, attendance
45 rates, student achievement, school discipline, or other measures
46 since receiving the grant. The report shall include, to the greatest
47 extent feasible, quantifiable measures of the program's impact.

1 6. The Commissioner of Education, in ¹full¹ consultation with
2 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall submit annually a
3 report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
4 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature containing information on the
5 implementation of the Student Wellness Grant Program. The report
6 shall include relevant information from the reports submitted to the
7 Commissioner of Education by the grant recipients pursuant to
8 section 5 of this act.

9
10 7. The Department of Education ²~~shall~~ may² use any
11 ²~~available~~² federal funds which may become available, including
12 funds provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
13 Security (CARES) Act, Pub.L. 116-136, to effectuate the purposes
14 of this act. ²~~Any federal~~ Federal² funds available to the
15 department ²to effectuate the purposes of this act² shall ²~~first~~² be
16 used to provide grant awards to school districts ²in amounts deemed
17 appropriate by the Commissioner of Education² , prior to using
18 State funds ²~~under~~ which may be appropriated by the Legislature
19 for² the grant program established pursuant to this act. ²If
20 sufficient funding is unavailable, the grant program shall be paused
21 and shall resume once funding becomes available by way of
22 legislative appropriation or other means.²

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24 8. This act shall take effect immediately.
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29 Establishes Student Wellness Grant Program in DOE.