

SENATE, No. 316

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator RONALD L. RICE

District 28 (Essex)

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Turner and Ruiz

SYNOPSIS

Establishes the Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth in DOE, and the Student Dropout Prevention Task Force.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/13/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning students who drop out of school and
2 supplementing chapter 4 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. There is established in the Department of Education the
8 Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of Out-of-School
9 Youth. The purpose of the office shall be to develop a Statewide
10 strategic plan of action to prevent students from dropping out of
11 school, address the need for the reenrollment of student dropouts,
12 and develop strategies to increase reenrollment.

13 b. The Office of Dropout Prevention and Reengagement of
14 Out-of-School Youth, in consultation with the Student Dropout
15 Prevention Task Force established pursuant to section 2 of P.L. c.
16 (pending before the Legislature as this bill), shall at a minimum:

17 (1) collaborate with school districts in the development of a
18 Statewide strategic plan to address the problem of student dropouts;

19 (2) develop and recommend to school districts programs to
20 prevent students from dropping out of school; and

21 (3) address issues associated with the reenrollment of students
22 and develop programs to facilitate the return of such students to the
23 classroom.

24 c. The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a person to
25 head the office who shall be a person qualified by training and
26 experience to perform the duties of the office and shall devote his
27 entire time to the performance of those duties.

28
29 2. a. There is established the Student Dropout Prevention
30 Task Force. The purpose of the task force shall be to analyze the
31 causes of students leaving school prior to graduation, recommend to
32 school districts best practices for reducing the student dropout rate,
33 and develop strategies to increase the reenrollment of students who
34 have left school.

35 b. The task force shall consist of 17 members as follows:

36 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or his designee, who shall
37 serve ex officio;

38 (2) the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, or his
39 designee, who shall serve ex officio;

40 (3) two members of the Senate, no more than one of whom shall
41 be of the same political party, appointed by the Senate President;

42 (4) two members of the General Assembly, no more than one of
43 whom shall be of the same political party, appointed by the Speaker
44 of the General Assembly; and

45 (5) eleven members appointed by the Governor, who shall
46 include: three superintendents of schools, one each from an urban,
47 suburban, and rural school district; two presidents of New Jersey
48 county colleges; two members of the public with demonstrated
49 expertise in issues relating to the work of the task force; two

1 members employed at a high school in an urban school district with
2 a high student drop out rate, one of whom shall be a principal and
3 one of whom shall be a guidance counselor; and two teachers, one
4 of whom shall be employed in an urban school district with a high
5 student drop out rate.

6 c. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled
7 in the same manner as the original appointments were made.
8 Members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but
9 shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the
10 performance of their duties as members of the task force.

11 d. The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's
12 designee, shall serve as chairperson of the task force. The task
13 force shall organize as soon as practicable following the
14 appointment of its members and shall select a vice-chairperson from
15 among its members. The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who
16 need not be a member of the task force.

17 e. The Department of Education shall provide such
18 stenographic, clerical, and other administrative assistants, and such
19 professional staff as the task force requires to carry out its work.
20 The task force shall also be entitled to call to its assistance and avail
21 itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or
22 municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it
23 may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

24
25 3. It shall be the duty of the task force to analyze the causes of
26 students leaving school prior to graduation and to recommend best
27 practices for reducing the student dropout rate and increasing the
28 number of students who re-enroll in school. The task force shall, at a
29 minimum:

30 a. examine current data, research, programs, and initiatives
31 concerning student dropouts;

32 b. examine reasons why students leave school;

33 c. identify effective ways for school districts to reduce the
34 number of students who leave school prior to graduation and increase
35 student engagement while in school;

36 d. develop mechanisms to increase the reenrollment of students
37 who have left school; and

38 e. develop recommendations on the most effective ways for
39 school districts to support students in order to prevent them from
40 leaving school.

41
42 4. a. The task force shall issue a final report to the Governor,
43 and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L. 1991, c.164
44 (C.52:14-19.1), containing its findings and recommendations,
45 including any recommendations for legislation that it deems
46 appropriate, no later than nine months after the task force organizes.

47 b. The task force shall expire on the 30th day after the issuance
48 of its final report.

1 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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6 This bill establishes the Office of Dropout Prevention and
7 Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth in the Department of
8 Education. The bill requires the Office of Dropout Prevention and
9 Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth: to collaborate with school
10 districts in the development of a Statewide strategic plan to address
11 the problem of student dropouts; recommend and develop programs
12 to prevent students from dropping out of school; and address issues
13 associated with the reenrollment of students who have left school
14 prior to graduation.

15 This bill also establishes the Student Dropout Prevention Task
16 Force to analyze the causes of students leaving school prior to
17 graduation, recommend to school districts best practices for
18 reducing the student dropout rate, and develop strategies to increase
19 the reenrollment of students who have left school. The task force
20 will, at a minimum:

21 a. examine current data, research, programs, and initiatives
22 concerning student dropouts;

23 b. examine the reasons why students leave school;

24 c. identify effective ways for school districts to reduce the
25 number of students who leave school prior to graduation and
26 increase student engagement while in school;

27 d. develop mechanisms to increase the reenrollment of students
28 who have left school; and

29 e. develop recommendations on the most effective ways for
30 school districts to support students in order to prevent them from
31 leaving school.

32 The 17-member task force will include the Commissioners of
33 Education and Department of Corrections; two members of the
34 Senate, one from each political party; two members of the General
35 Assembly, one from each political party; three superintendents of
36 schools, one each from an urban, suburban, and rural school
37 district; two presidents of New Jersey county colleges; two
38 members of the public with demonstrated expertise in issues
39 relating to the work of the task force; two members employed at a
40 high school in an urban school district with a high student drop out
41 rate, one of whom will be a principal and one of whom will be a
42 guidance counselor; and two teachers, one of whom will be
43 employed in an urban school district with a high student drop out
44 rate. The task force will issue a final report to the Governor and to
45 the Legislature containing its findings and recommendations,
46 including any recommendations for legislation that it deems
47 appropriate, no later than nine months after the task force organizes.