

SENATE, No. 1227

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes pilot program in DOE to provide supplemental reading instruction to students in grades K through 3.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing a pilot program in the Department of
2 Education to provide supplemental reading instruction and
3 supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

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8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Literacy
9 Through Technology Program.”

10
11 2. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a three-
12 year public school district pilot program to provide supplemental
13 reading instruction to students enrolled in grades kindergarten
14 through 3 in the pilot districts. The goal of the pilot program shall
15 be to improve students’ literacy skills through the provision of an
16 after school program that uses a combination of targeted software
17 and traditional learning methods, thereby creating the strong
18 foundation in literacy that is required for continued learning in all
19 subjects.

20 b. A school district which wants to participate in the pilot
21 program shall submit an application to the commissioner. The
22 application shall include, but need not be limited to: the number and
23 percentage of students who did not meet expectations in grade 3 on
24 the most recent administration of the State assessment in English
25 Language Arts/Literacy; and information on how participation in
26 the pilot program will serve to advance the academic achievement
27 of students enrolled in the district.

28 c. The commissioner shall select up to 12 school districts for
29 participation in the pilot program. The commissioner shall select
30 districts in the southern, central, and northern regions of the State
31 and shall seek a cross section of school districts from urban,
32 suburban, and rural areas of the State. The commissioner shall
33 select districts in which more than 80% of third grade students did
34 not meet expectations on the most recent administration of the State
35 assessment in English Language Arts/Literacy.

36
37 3. The commissioner shall identify and distribute to all pilot
38 districts a list of supplemental reading instruction software
39 programs that have been approved for use in the after school
40 program. The commissioner shall select programs that are research
41 and evidence based that provide supplemental reading instruction
42 for students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 3. In selecting
43 the programs, the commissioner shall seek programs that: create a
44 personalized learning path for students that continually tailors
45 instruction to the student’s individual needs while providing the
46 teacher with the resources to deliver direct instruction based on
47 the student's performance data; align to the Core Curriculum
48 Content Standards; are developmentally appropriate; and accelerate

1 the development of reading skills. The commissioner shall include
2 one or more programs on the list that meet the unique needs of
3 students with English as a second language.

4
5 4. a. Each pilot district shall provide an after school learning
6 program to students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 3. The
7 pilot district shall offer the program to its K-3 students at no cost to
8 the students. The after school program shall be at a minimum one
9 hour in length. The program shall use one or more of the software
10 programs approved by the commissioner pursuant to section 3 of
11 this act.

12 A pilot district shall ensure that:

13 (1) the after school portion of the school day aligns with the
14 students' ongoing curriculum;

15 (2) each classroom has no more than 30 students;

16 (3) each classroom includes at least one appropriately certified
17 teacher and one classroom aide; and

18 (4) each student is able to use the software program for the
19 minimum minutes each day as recommended by the software
20 provider with the remainder of the after school portion of the day
21 being used for direct traditional instruction by the teacher.

22 b. Each pilot district shall report to the commissioner at the mid-
23 point and at the end of each program year, and at such other times as
24 the commissioner may direct:

25 (1) each participating student's reading grade level at the time of
26 the report compared with earlier reporting periods;

27 (2) for each participating student, data on the amount of time spent
28 using the program software and one or more indicators of student
29 progress during the reporting period;

30 (3) a summary report showing student progress data for all
31 participating students; and

32 (4) such other data as may be required by the commissioner to
33 measure student progress and the effectiveness of the program.

34
35 5. Each pilot district shall be eligible to receive State support,
36 as needed and determined by the commissioner, to implement the
37 pilot program. State support may be provided for costs associated
38 with: the purchase of approved software programs; the employment
39 of after school program staff; the training of program staff in the
40 use of the software; and any technology upgrades that may be
41 necessary for the implementation of the program.

42
43 6. The commissioner shall conduct regular site visits to
44 monitor the programs and shall annually review the pilot districts'
45 progress in implementing the after school program, using
46 information submitted by pilot districts pursuant to subsection b. of
47 section 4 of this act. The commissioner shall compare the number
48 and percentage of students who did not meet expectations in grade 3

1 on the most recent administration of the State assessment in English
2 Language Arts/Literacy from the scores of the previous year.

3
4 7. No later than June 30 of the third school year following the
5 establishment of the pilot program, the commissioner shall submit
6 to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of
7 P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), a report that evaluates the
8 effectiveness of the pilot program in increasing student achievement
9 in English Language Arts/Literacy. The report shall include a
10 recommendation on the advisability of the program's continuation
11 and extension to additional school districts.

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13 8. This act shall take effect immediately.

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16 STATEMENT

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18 This bill directs the Commissioner of Education to establish a
19 three-year public school district pilot program to provide
20 supplemental reading instruction to students enrolled in grades K
21 through 3 in select districts. The goal of the pilot program is to
22 improve students' literacy skills through the provision of an after
23 school program that uses a combination of targeted software and
24 traditional learning methods. Because a strong foundation in
25 literacy is required for continued learning in all subjects, it is
26 imperative that immediate and decisive action be taken to improve
27 early childhood literacy rates.

28 A school district which wants to participate in the pilot program
29 may submit an application to the commissioner in accordance with
30 the bill's provisions. The commissioner will select up to 12 school
31 districts for participation in the pilot program. The commissioner
32 must select districts in which more than 80% of third grade students
33 did not meet expectations on the most recent administration of the
34 State assessment in English Language Arts/Literacy.

35 The bill directs the commissioner to identify and distribute to all
36 pilot districts a list of supplemental reading instruction software
37 programs that have been approved for use in the after school
38 program. The commissioner must select programs that meet criteria
39 set forth in the bill's provisions.

40 Under the bill, each pilot district must provide an after school
41 learning program to students enrolled in grades kindergarten
42 through 3 at no cost to the students. The pilot district must use one
43 or more of the software programs approved by the commissioner.
44 The pilot district must ensure that:

- 45 • the after school portion of the school day aligns with the
- 46 students' ongoing curriculum;
- 47 • each classroom has no more than 30 students;
- 48 • each classroom includes at least one appropriately certified

1 teacher and one classroom aide; and

- 2 • each student is able to use the software program for the
3 minimum minutes each day as recommended by the software
4 provider with the remainder of the after school portion of the
5 day being used for direct traditional instruction by the teacher.

6 Each pilot district must report to the commissioner at the mid-
7 point and at the end of each program year, and at such other times as
8 the commissioner may direct, on student usage and outcomes as set
9 forth in the bill's provisions.

10 Each pilot district will be eligible to receive State support, as
11 needed and determined by the commissioner, to implement the pilot
12 program. State support may be provided for costs associated with:
13 the purchase of approved software programs; the employment of
14 after school program staff; the training of program staff in the use
15 of the software; and any technology upgrades that may be necessary
16 for the implementation of the program.

17 The commissioner is directed to conduct regular site visits to
18 monitor the programs and to annually review the pilot districts'
19 progress in implementing the after school program. The
20 commissioner is directed to compare the number and percentage of
21 students who did not meet expectations in grade 3 on the most
22 recent administration of the State assessment in English Language
23 Arts/Literacy from the scores of the previous year.

24 No later than June 30 of the third school year following the
25 establishment of the pilot program, the commissioner will submit to
26 the Governor and the Legislature a report that evaluates the
27 effectiveness of the pilot program in increasing student achievement
28 in language arts. The report will include a recommendation on the
29 advisability of the program's continuation and extension to
30 additional school districts.