

SENATE, No. 1389

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator JOSEPH PENNACCHIO

District 26 (Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Conflict Resolution in Schools Commission.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing a “Conflict Resolution in Schools
2 Commission” and supplementing chapter 4 of Title 18A of the
3 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. a. The Conflict Resolution in Schools Commission is
9 created and established in the Executive Branch of the State
10 Government. For the purposes of complying with the provisions of
11 Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution,
12 the commission is allocated within the Department of Education,
13 but notwithstanding this allocation, the commission shall be
14 independent of any supervision or control by the department or any
15 board or officer thereof.

16 The commission shall consist of 11 members as follows: the
17 Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a designee; the Attorney
18 General, ex officio, or a designee; and nine public members. The
19 Governor shall appoint 5 public members including: a retired judge
20 with experience in the juvenile justice system; a representative of
21 the Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America; a
22 representative of the National Rifle Association; a representative of
23 the Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution of Rutgers, the
24 State University of New Jersey; and a criminologist. The Senate
25 President shall appoint a representative of the New Jersey School
26 Counselor Association. The Senate Minority Leader shall appoint a
27 representative of the New Jersey Association of School
28 Psychologists. The Speaker of the General Assembly shall appoint
29 a representative of the New Jersey Education Association. The
30 Minority Leader of the General Assembly shall appoint an
31 adolescent clinical psychiatrist.

32 b. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a
33 term of three years, except that of the initial public members so
34 appointed: three members appointed by the Governor shall serve for
35 terms of one year; two members appointed by the Governor and the
36 appointment by the Senate President shall serve for terms of two
37 years; and the remaining members shall serve for terms of three
38 years. Public members shall be eligible for reappointment. They
39 shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified, and
40 the term of the successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from
41 the expiration of the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring
42 other than by expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner
43 as the original appointment but for the unexpired term only.

44 c. Members of the commission shall serve without
45 compensation but shall be entitled to their actual and necessary
46 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties pursuant to this
47 act.

1 d. The commission shall annually elect a chairperson and a
2 vice-chairperson from among its members and a secretary who need
3 not be a member of the commission.

4 e. The commission shall appoint an executive director, who
5 shall serve at its pleasure and shall be a person qualified by training
6 and experience to perform the duties of the office.
7

8 2. The commission shall have the following responsibilities
9 and duties:

10 a. to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of conflict
11 resolution programming presently being provided in the schools of
12 the State, and to review the incorporation of conflict resolution
13 strategies into the current curriculum;

14 b. to coordinate educational events, such as assemblies, theater
15 programs, and workshops, for both students and educators on how
16 to use various conflict resolution strategies;

17 c. to develop programming and resources that improve the
18 ability of teachers and administrators to:

19 (1) identify the signs that a student is in need of mental health
20 services and supports; and

21 (2) make effective and timely referrals for students in need of
22 mental health services and supports;

23 d. to evaluate, report on, and recommend to the Governor and
24 the Legislature strategies and best practices that develop the social-
25 emotional skills of students enrolled in grades kindergarten through
26 12, including reports on:

27 (1) the merits and applicability of various conflict resolution
28 strategies in public elementary and secondary schools such as peer
29 mediation, process curriculum, peaceable classrooms and schools,
30 and restorative justice techniques;

31 (2) school policies that outline punitive actions for interpersonal
32 conflicts, including violent incidents or threats of violence;

33 (3) options for educating teachers and administrators on how to
34 best improve the social-emotional learning of students; and

35 (4) potential resources that will enable teachers to build
36 supportive classroom communities;

37 e. to meet with county and local school officials and other
38 interested public and private organizations, including service
39 organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning,
40 coordination or modification of courses of study dealing with the
41 subject of conflict resolution;

42 f. to develop a searchable database of regionally-available
43 activities and programs that help students develop crucial conflict-
44 solving skills while teambuilding, which shall be available to the
45 public on the website of the commission; and

46 g. to develop, in consultation with the Department of
47 Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on
48 conflict resolution strategies. Every board of education shall

1 incorporate the information in an appropriate place in the
2 curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

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4 3. a. The commission is authorized to call upon any
5 department, office, division or agency of the State, or of any
6 county, municipality or school district of the State, to supply such
7 data, program reports and other information, personnel and
8 assistance as it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities
9 under this act.

10 b. These departments, offices, divisions and agencies shall, to
11 the extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this
12 State, cooperate with the commission and shall furnish it with such
13 information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or
14 helpful to accomplish the purposes of this act.

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16 4. This act shall take effect on the 30th day after the date of
17 enactment.

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STATEMENT

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22 This bill establishes a "Conflict Resolution in Schools
23 Commission." Under the bill, the commission will be allocated in
24 the Department of Education and will consist of 11 members
25 including: the Commissioner of Education, ex officio, or a
26 designee; the Attorney General, ex officio, or a designee; five
27 public members to be appointed by the Governor; and one public
28 member appointed each by the Senate President, the Senate
29 Minority Leader, the Speaker of the General Assembly, and the
30 Minority Leader of the General Assembly. The public members
31 will include: a retired judge with experience in the juvenile justice
32 system; a representative of the Moms Demand Action for Gun
33 Sense in America; a representative of the National Rifle
34 Association; a representative of the New Jersey Education
35 Association; a representative of the New Jersey Association of
36 School Psychologists; a representative of the New Jersey School
37 Counselor Association; a representative of the Center for
38 Negotiation and Conflict Resolution of Rutgers, the State
39 University of New Jersey; a criminologist; and an adolescent
40 clinical psychiatrist.

41 Under the bill, the commission will have the following
42 responsibilities and duties:

- 43 • to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of conflict
44 resolution programming presently being provided in the
45 schools of the State, and to review the incorporation of
46 conflict resolution strategies into the current curriculum;

- 1 • to coordinate educational events, such as assemblies, theater
2 programs, and workshops, for both students and educators
3 on how to use various conflict resolution strategies;
 - 4 • to develop programming and resources that improve the
5 ability of teachers and administrators to:
 - 6 ○ identify the signs that a student is in need of mental
7 health services and supports; and
 - 8 ○ make effective and timely referrals for mental health
9 services and supports;
 - 10 • to evaluate, report on, and recommend to the Governor and
11 the Legislature strategies and best practices that develop the
12 social-emotional skills of students enrolled in grades
13 kindergarten through 12;
 - 14 • to meet with county and local school officials and other
15 interested public and private organizations, including service
16 organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning,
17 coordination or modification of courses of study dealing
18 with the subject of conflict resolution;
 - 19 • to develop a searchable database of regionally-available
20 activities and programs that help students develop crucial
21 conflict-solving skills while teambuilding, which shall be
22 available to the public on the website of the commission;
23 and
 - 24 • to develop, in consultation with the Department of
25 Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of
26 information on conflict resolution strategies. Every board of
27 education is directed under the bill to incorporate the
28 information in an appropriate place in the curriculum of
29 elementary and secondary school students.
- 30 The bill provides that the commission is authorized to call upon
31 any department, office, division or agency of the State, or of any
32 county, municipality or school district of the State, to supply such
33 data, program reports and other information, personnel and
34 assistance as it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities
35 under this bill.