

SENATE, No. 1794

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Requires Commissioner of Education to declare educational state of emergency for certain districts with low proficiency rates in language arts and literacy and provides for corrective measures.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/19/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning the authority of the Commissioner of Education
2 and supplementing chapter 7F of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes.

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

7
8 1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall declare an
9 educational state of emergency for a school district in which, for at
10 least 75 percent of the schools in the district, 65 percent or more of
11 the students in the school to whom a State assessment was
12 administered have not achieved proficiency in the English language
13 arts/literacy subject area of the State assessment.

14 b. Upon declaring an educational state of emergency pursuant
15 to subsection a. of this section, the commissioner is authorized to
16 distribute supplementary State aid to the school district, which shall
17 be in addition to the State aid payable to the district pursuant to
18 P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.) or any other law. The
19 supplementary State aid shall be used for the specific purpose of
20 establishing a mandatory extended school program for students in
21 grades kindergarten through three, the duration of which is two and
22 a half hours from the end of the school day, which is designed to
23 increase student proficiency in English language arts and literacy.
24 The supplementary aid shall also be used for establishing voluntary
25 literacy programs for students in other grades, including after
26 school programs and summer programs. Teachers and
27 administrators employed in a school district in which an educational
28 state of emergency has been declared pursuant to subsection a. of
29 this section shall be responsible for determining the content of the
30 programs, which may include a combination of academic,
31 recreational, club, or other extracurricular activities.

32 c. When an educational state of emergency is declared for a
33 school district, the executive county superintendent of schools shall
34 hold a public meeting of interested stakeholders for the district
35 including, but not limited to, parents, students, teachers, school
36 administrators, community leaders, and business leaders. The
37 purpose of the meeting shall be to discuss community involvement
38 and potential corrective measures to address the district's low
39 proficiency rate in English language arts and literacy.

40 d. A school district that establishes programs to increase
41 student proficiency in English language arts and literacy pursuant to
42 subsection b. of this section shall continue to implement the
43 programs for a minimum of three years or for as long as the school
44 district meets the criteria of subsection a. of this section, whichever
45 is longer.

46
47 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to declare an “educational state of emergency” for school districts with very low proficiency rates in English language arts and literacy. Under the bill, an educational state of emergency must be declared for a district in which, for at least 75 percent of the schools in the district, 65 percent or more of the students in the school have not achieved proficiency in the English language arts/literacy portion of the State assessment.

The bill authorizes the commissioner, upon declaring an educational state of emergency, to distribute supplementary State aid to the school district, which will be in addition to the aid the district receives under the State school funding law, P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.), or any other law. The supplementary aid will be used for the specific purpose of establishing a mandatory extended school program for students in grades kindergarten through three that is designed to increase student proficiency in English language arts and literacy. The supplementary aid will also be used for establishing voluntary literacy programs for students in other grades, including after school programs and summer programs. School district teachers and administrators would be responsible for determining the content of the programs, which may be a combination of academic, recreational, club, or other extracurricular activities. A school district will be required to implement these programs for a minimum of three years, or for as long as the district continues to meet the bill’s criteria for an educational state of emergency, whichever is longer.

The bill also directs the executive county superintendent of schools to hold a public meeting when an educational state of emergency is declared for a school district in order to discuss community involvement and potential corrective measures to address the district’s low proficiency rate in English language arts and literacy. The meeting will include interested stakeholders for the district, including parents, students, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and business leaders.