

SENATE, No. 2421

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Purple Ribbon Schools Program” in DOE to recognize public and nonpublic schools with positive school climate.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** concerning positive school climates and supplementing
2 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. There is created a Purple Ribbon Schools Program in
8 the Department of Education. Under the program, the
9 Commissioner of Education shall annually recognize as a Purple
10 Ribbon School those public and nonpublic schools that provide or
11 have made significant progress to:

12 (1) provide a safe and inclusive environment for students and
13 staff;

14 (2) raise awareness of the issue of student suicide and suicide
15 prevention; and

16 (3) address the issue of student mental health and teacher mental
17 health first aid training.

18 b. The commissioner shall establish a Purple Ribbon Schools
19 Working Group. The purpose of the working group shall be to
20 develop criteria to be used in the selection of public and nonpublic
21 schools as a Purple Ribbon School. The working group shall
22 consist of members appointed by the commissioner and shall be
23 composed of, but need not be limited to: a school principal; a
24 school administrator; a middle school teacher; a high school
25 teacher; a school counselor; a school social worker; a school
26 psychologist; a person with personal or family experience with
27 suicide; a person with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of
28 youth suicide in high-risk populations; a person who has a
29 background in, or special knowledge of, the legal, policy,
30 educational, social, or psychological aspects of bullying; and a
31 student who has been the victim of harassment, intimidation, or
32 bullying.

33 c. The criteria established by the working group for a Purple
34 Ribbon Schools designation pursuant to subsection b. of this section
35 shall include, but need not be limited to, the school's efforts to:

36 (1) raise awareness and promote suicide prevention programs;

37 (2) highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and
38 belonging;

39 (3) create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all
40 students, faculty, and staff regardless of race or sexual and gender
41 identities, including the establishment of wellness rooms for
42 mindfulness and social-emotional learning;

43 (4) implement policies and programs to assist students
44 struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues;

45 (5) participate in the Anti-Defamation League's "No Place for
46 Hate" campaign or a similar program; and

47 (6) provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for
48 instruction in mental health issues and trauma-informed care

1 provided by a licensed health care professional with training and
2 expertise in mental health issues.

3 d. The working group, in consultation with the commissioner,
4 shall establish a scoring system based on the criteria developed
5 pursuant to subsection c. of this section to be used by the
6 commissioner in the selection of Purple Ribbon Schools.

7
8 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

9
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11 STATEMENT

12
13 This bill establishes a Purple Ribbon Schools Program in the
14 Department of Education. Under the program, the Commissioner of
15 Education will annually recognize as a Purple Ribbon School those
16 public and nonpublic schools that provide or have made significant
17 progress to:

- 18 • provide a safe and inclusive environment for students and
19 staff;
20 • raise awareness of the issue of student suicide and suicide
21 prevention; and
22 • address the issue of student mental health and teacher
23 mental health first aid training.

24 Under the bill, the commissioner will establish a Purple Ribbon
25 Schools Working Group which will develop criteria for public and
26 nonpublic schools to qualify for a Purple Ribbon School
27 designation. The working group will consist of members appointed
28 by the commissioner and will be composed of, but need not be
29 limited to: a school principal; a school administrator; a middle
30 school teacher; a high school teacher; a school counselor; a school
31 social worker; a school psychologist; a person with personal or
32 family experience with suicide; a person with knowledge and
33 expertise in the prevention of youth suicide in high-risk
34 populations; a person who has a background in, or special
35 knowledge of, the legal, policy, educational, social, or
36 psychological aspects of bullying; and a student who has been the
37 victim of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

38 The criteria established by the working group for a Purple
39 Ribbon Schools designation will include, but need not be limited to,
40 the school's efforts to:

- 41 • highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and
42 belonging;
43 • create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for
44 all students, faculty, and staff regardless of race or sexual
45 and gender identities, including the establishment of
46 wellness rooms for mindfulness and social-emotional
47 learning;

- 1 • implement policies and programs to assist students
2 struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues;
3 and
 - 4 • provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for
5 instruction in mental health issues and trauma-informed
6 care provided by a licensed health care professional with
7 training and expertise in mental health issues.
- 8 The working group, in consultation with the commissioner, will
9 establish a scoring system based on the criteria developed to be
10 used by the commissioner in the selection of Purple Ribbon
11 Schools.