

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2716

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 23, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator JAMES BEACH

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Corrado, A.M.Bucco, Pou, Turner and Gopal

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Student Wellness Grant Program in DOE.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As amended by the Senate on June 21, 2021.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2021)

1 AN ACT establishing the Student Wellness Grant Program and
2 supplementing 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. The Commissioner of Education, in ¹full¹ consultation
8 with the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall establish the
9 Student Wellness Grant Program. The purpose of the Student
10 Wellness Grant Program shall be to provide grants that support
11 school districts in implementing school-based programs and
12 practices that promote mental wellness, social and emotional
13 learning, and student resilience.

14 b. A grant awarded through the Student Wellness Grant
15 Program shall be used to support school districts in:

16 (1) the provision of school-based mental health clinics or
17 workshops for both students and families that engage the
18 community on universal topics of student wellness and mental
19 health;

20 (2) the implementation and coordination of policies, practices,
21 and programs that support the mental, emotional, and social needs
22 of students;

23 (3) the provision of mental health services on-site at the school
24 to students in need of short-term counseling or crisis intervention
25 focused on mental health or situational concerns, such as grief or
26 family transitions, by a properly trained and licensed mental health
27 professional; and

28 (4) the timely and appropriate referral of students in need of
29 long-term therapeutic counseling or mental health intervention with
30 available community resources.

31

32 2. a. A school district which elects to participate in the grant
33 program created pursuant to this act shall submit an application to
34 the Commissioner of Education ¹to be reviewed by a team of
35 qualified professionals within the Department of Education and
36 Department of Children and Families¹ in such form as required by
37 the commissioner. The application shall include, but need not be
38 limited to:

39 (1) a description of current school district actions to support the
40 socioemotional needs of students in a stigma-free environment and
41 how a grant will support the expansion of those efforts;

42 (2) a commitment to provide staff training, including a clearly
43 outlined plan on who will receive training, the resources needed for
44 training, and how the training will be implemented. The training

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate floor amendments adopted June 21, 2021.

1 shall include content on how to recognize symptoms of mental
2 health conditions in the student population, and a component on
3 identifying at-risk students most likely to be in need of mental
4 health supports; and

5 (3) the school district protocol for on-site and community
6 referrals for targeted therapeutic interventions, such as short-term
7 and long-term counseling.

8 b. The Commissioner of Education, in 'full' consultation with
9 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall develop criteria
10 for the evaluation of applications for grants. Based upon the
11 criteria developed by the commissioners, and within the limit of
12 available appropriations, the Commissioner of Education shall
13 allocate to each selected school district a grant in such amount as
14 determined by the commissioner. ~~'[The Commissioner of~~
15 ~~Education shall give special]~~ Special¹ consideration 'shall be
16 given¹ to applicants that: can demonstrate strong ties to relevant
17 community resources, such as mental health providers; or have
18 secured external funding for their student wellness program from
19 community partners.

20
21 3. No student shall be compelled to participate in any programs
22 or services offered by a school district pursuant to a student
23 wellness grant received under this act, if the student or the student's
24 parent or guardian objects to participation.

25
26 4. The Commissioner of Education, in 'full' consultation with
27 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall develop and
28 disseminate to all school districts ~~'[model policies and]'~~
29 practices in school-based programs that promote mental wellness,
30 social and emotional learning, and student resilience.

31
32 5. Each school district that receives a student wellness grant
33 shall prepare and submit to the Commissioner of Education
34 annually a report on its experience with and the effects of the
35 program. The report shall include, at a minimum, the specific
36 programs and practices implemented as a result of the grant to
37 promote mental wellness, social and emotional learning, and student
38 resilience, and any notable changes in school climate, attendance
39 rates, student achievement, school discipline, or other measures
40 since receiving the grant. The report shall include, to the greatest
41 extent feasible, quantifiable measures of the program's impact.

42
43 6. The Commissioner of Education, in 'full' consultation with
44 the Commissioner of Children and Families, shall submit annually a
45 report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
46 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature containing information on the
47 implementation of the Student Wellness Grant Program. The report

1 shall include relevant information from the reports submitted to the
2 Commissioner of Education by the grant recipients pursuant to
3 section 5 of this act.

4

5 7. The Department of Education shall use any available federal
6 funds which may become available, including funds provided under
7 the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act,
8 Pub.L. 116-136, to effectuate the purposes of this act. Any federal
9 funds available to the department shall first be used to provide grant
10 awards to school districts, prior to using State funds under the grant
11 program established pursuant to this act.

12

13 8. This act shall take effect immediately.