

SENATE, No. 3785

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 20, 2021

Sponsored by:
Senator VIN GOPAL
District 11 (Monmouth)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes “Purple Star Schools Program” in DOE to recognize public and nonpublic schools which emphasize importance of assisting children of military families.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** concerning school programs and services for children of
2 military families and supplementing chapter 6 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:*

7
8 1. a. There is created a Purple Star Schools Program in the
9 Department of Education. Under the program, the Commissioner of
10 Education shall annually recognize as Purple Star Schools those
11 public and nonpublic schools that provide for, or have made
12 significant progress to respond to, the educational and social-
13 emotional challenges military-connected students encounter during
14 the transition to a new school when the student's parent or guardian
15 is an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces and is
16 relocated due to the active duty member's continued military
17 service. A Purple Star School shall be designated as such if it
18 provides programs and services that include, but need not be limited
19 to, the following:

20 (1) training for faculty and staff members to ease entry into the
21 new school environment for military-connected students;

22 (2) student-led programs to help create social connections,
23 including an emphasis on programs for students who arrive mid-
24 year and miss out on the normal cycles of sports and club activities;

25 (3) a military family webpage on the school website to inform
26 parents and guardians about programs and services;

27 (4) relevant professional development opportunities for
28 additional school staff; and

29 (5) holding school-wide military recognition events that raise
30 awareness and recognize the value of military service.

31 The goal of the programs and services is to ensure that staff can
32 help manage the challenges military-connected students encounter
33 when they move between schools with different cultures, curricula,
34 standards, course offerings, schedules, and graduation requirements.

35 b. The commissioner shall establish a Purple Star Schools
36 Working Group. The purpose of the working group shall be to
37 develop criteria to be used in the designation of public and
38 nonpublic schools as Purple Star Schools. The working group shall
39 consist of members appointed by the commissioner and shall be
40 composed of, but need not be limited to: a school principal; a
41 school administrator; an elementary school teacher; a middle school
42 teacher; a high school teacher; a school counselor; a school social
43 worker; and a school psychologist.

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

47 (1) raise awareness and recognize the value of military service,
48 including the sacrifices of military-connected families;

1 (2) respond to the unique educational and social-emotional
2 challenges of military-connected students;

3 (3) highlight and promote equity, inclusion, and belonging;

4 (4) create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all
5 students, faculty, and staff;

6 (5) provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for
7 instruction in easing the entry into the new school environment for
8 military-connected students; and

9 (6) provide programs and services that align with those
10 enumerated in paragraphs (1) through (5) of subsection a. of this
11 section.

12 d. The working group, in consultation with the commissioner,
13 shall establish a scoring system based on the criteria developed
14 pursuant to subsection c. of this section to be used by the
15 commissioner in the designation of Purple Star Schools. The
16 commissioner shall establish a process by which public and
17 nonpublic schools may nominate their school to be designated as a
18 Purple Star School.

19
20 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

21 22 23 STATEMENT

24
25 This bill creates a Purple Star Schools Program in the
26 Department of Education. Under the program, the Commissioner of
27 Education will annually recognize as Purple Star Schools those
28 public and nonpublic schools that provide for, or have made
29 significant progress to respond to, the educational and social-
30 emotional challenges military-connected students encounter during
31 the transition to a new school when the student's parent or guardian
32 is an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces and is
33 relocated due to the active duty member's continued military
34 service.

35 Under the bill, a Purple Star School will be designated as such if
36 it provides programs and services that include, but need not be
37 limited to, the following:

38 (1) training for faculty and staff members to ease entry into the
39 new school environment for military-connected students;

40 (2) student-led programs to help create social connections,
41 including an emphasis on programs for students who arrive mid-
42 year and miss out on the normal cycles of sports and club activities;

43 (3) a military family webpage on the school website to inform
44 parents and guardians about programs and services;

45 (4) relevant professional development opportunities for
46 additional school staff; and

47 (5) holding school-wide military recognition events that raise
48 awareness and recognize the value of military service.

1 The bill also requires the commissioner to establish a Purple Star
2 Schools Working Group. The purpose of the working group is to
3 develop criteria to be used in the designation of public and
4 nonpublic schools as Purple Star Schools. The working group will
5 consist of members appointed by the commissioner and will be
6 composed of: a school principal; a school administrator; an
7 elementary school teacher; a middle school teacher; a high school
8 teacher; a school counselor; a school social worker; and a school
9 psychologist.

10 The criteria established by the working group for a Purple Star
11 Schools designation will include, but need not be limited to, the
12 school's efforts to:

13 (1) raise awareness and recognize the value of military service,
14 including the sacrifices of military-connected families;

15 (2) respond to the unique educational and social-emotional
16 challenges of military-connected students;

17 (3) highlight and promote equity, inclusion, and belonging;

18 (4) create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all
19 students, faculty, and staff;

20 (5) provide teachers, faculty, and staff with opportunities for
21 instruction in easing the entry into the new school environment for
22 military-connected students; and

23 (6) provide the programs and services necessary to ensure that
24 staff can manage the challenges military-connected students
25 encounter, as enumerated by the bill.