

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 447

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
217th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2016 SESSION

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District 28 (Essex)

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Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Turner, Greenstein, Assemblyman Wolfe, Assemblywomen Caride, McKnight, Lampitt and Assemblyman Gusciora

SYNOPSIS

Requires Commissioner of Education to include data on chronic absenteeism and disciplinary suspensions on School Report Card and requires public schools to make certain efforts to combat chronic absenteeism.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Education Committee on February 6, 2017, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/9/2018)

1 AN ACT concerning student attendance records, amending
2 P.L.1995, c.235, and supplementing chapter 38 of the Title 18A
3 of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

7
8 1. Section 3 of P.L.1995, c.235 (C.18A:7E-3) is amended to
9 read as follows:

10 3. Report cards issued pursuant to section 2 of this act shall
11 include, but not be limited to, the following information for:

12 a. the school district and for each school within the district, as
13 appropriate:

14 (1) results of the elementary assessment programs;

15 (2) results of the Early Warning Test;

16 (3) results of the High School Proficiency Test;

17 (4) daily attendance records for students and professional staff;

18 (5) student graduation and dropout rates;

19 (6) annual student scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test;

20 (7) total student enrollment, percentage of limited English
21 proficient students, percentage of students in advanced placement
22 courses, and any other school characteristics which the
23 commissioner deems appropriate;

24 (8) instructional resources including teacher/student ratio,
25 average class size and amount of instructional time per day, as
26 calculated by formulas specified by the commissioner;

27 (9) a written narrative by the school principal or a designee
28 which describes any special achievements, events, problems or
29 initiatives of the school or district;

30 (10) data identifying the number and nature of all reports of
31 harassment, intimidation, or bullying; **[and]**

32 (11) indicators of student career readiness;

33 (12) the number and percentage of students who were chronically
34 absent, ¹**[where chronically absent means a student's attendance**
35 record includes a total number of absences, including excused
36 absences, unexcused absences, and absences due to disciplinary
37 actions, that meets or exceeds 10 percent of the total number of
38 school days in the school year, or in the case of a student who
39 enrolls in the school after the beginning of the school year, 10
40 percent of the total number of days from the date of enrollment until
41 the end of the school year. The calculation of "chronically absent"
42 shall not include absences due to a student's ongoing illness,
43 medical, psychiatric, or other disability, provided that a physician
44 or other medical professional provides written documentation

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 SED committee amendments adopted February 6, 2017.

1 confirming that the student’s condition requires absences beyond
2 the number of days permitted by the school district’s policy. It
3 shall be the duty of the school to verify this information to ensure
4 that these absences are not counted toward the school’s calculation
5 of “chronically absent”¹ as defined in rules and regulations
6 promulgated by the Commissioner of Education within 90 days of
7 the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
8 Legislature as this bill)¹; and

9 (13) the number and percentage of students who received a
10 disciplinary suspension; and

11 b. the school district, as appropriate:

12 (1) per pupil expenditures and State aid ratio;

13 (2) percent of budget allocated for salaries and benefits of
14 administrative personnel;

15 (3) percent of budget allocated for salaries and benefits of
16 teachers;

17 (4) percentage increase over the previous year for salaries and
18 benefits of administrative and instructional personnel;

19 (5) the number of administrative personnel and the ratio of
20 administrative personnel to instructional personnel;

21 (6) a profile of the most recent graduating class concerning their
22 educational or employment plans following graduation; and

23 (7) any other information which the commissioner deems
24 appropriate.

25 For the purposes of this section, the Commissioner of Education
26 shall establish a uniform methodology for the reporting of the data
27 concerning administrative personnel on a full-time equivalent basis.
28 (cf: P.L.2014, c.71)

29

30 2. (New section) a. As used in this section, “chronically
31 absent” ¹【means a student’s attendance record includes a total
32 number of absences, including excused absences, unexcused
33 absences, and absences due to disciplinary actions, that meets or
34 exceeds 10 percent of the total number of school days in the school
35 year, or in the case of a student who enrolls in the school after the
36 beginning of the school year, 10 percent of the total number of days
37 from the date of enrollment until the end of the school year. The
38 calculation of “chronically absent” shall not include absences due to
39 a student’s ongoing illness, medical, psychiatric, or other disability,
40 provided that a physician or other medical professional provides
41 written documentation confirming that the student’s condition
42 requires absences beyond the number of days permitted by the
43 school district’s policy. It shall be the duty of the school to verify
44 this information to ensure that these absences are not counted
45 toward the school’s calculation of “chronically absent.”¹ shall be
46 defined in rules and regulations promulgated by the Commissioner
47 of Education within 90 days of the effective date of P.L. ,

- 1 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).¹
2 b. In the event that 10 percent or more of the students enrolled
3 in a public school are chronically absent, the school shall ¹【convene
4 a Chronic Absenteeism Coalition. The coalition shall include at
5 least one parent and one teacher from the school community, and
6 such other members as determined by the principal of the school.
7 The purpose of the coalition shall be to regularly review and
8 monitor school chronic absenteeism and¹ develop a corrective
9 action plan to improve absenteeism rates. ¹【The coalition shall
10 review school chronic absenteeism without examining individual
11 student information. In developing the¹ The¹ corrective action plan
12 ¹【, the coalition¹ shall ¹【address how the school can¹ include, but
13 need not be limited to, the following¹:
14 (1) ¹【communicate clearly and often to parents on the
15 importance of school attendance;
16 (2) establish contact with parents when children begin to show a
17 pattern of absences;
18 (3) identify¹ identifying¹ problems and barriers to school
19 attendance ¹【and develop¹ ;
20 (2) developing¹ recommendations to address ¹【them¹】 the
21 problems and barriers to school attendance that have been
22 identified¹; ¹【and
23 (4) foster positive school relationships with families¹】
24 (3) outlining communication strategies to educate and inform
25 parents on the importance of school attendance;
26 (4) establishing protocols on informing and engaging parents
27 when a child begins to show a pattern of absences; and
28 (5) reviewing school policies to ensure that they support
29 improved school attendance¹ .
30 ¹【The coalition shall annually present to the board of education its
31 findings and recommendations until the percentage of the student
32 body that is chronically absent falls below ten percent¹】 In
33 developing the corrective action plan, the school shall solicit input
34 from parents of students currently attending the school. The
35 solicitation shall include, at a minimum, a parental survey that
36 includes questions related to parents' beliefs regarding the reasons
37 why students are chronically absent and recommendations on the
38 best ways to improve attendance. In developing the corrective
39 action plan, the school shall engage the school's parent
40 organization, if one exists, in identifying the causes of the school's
41 high absenteeism rate and possible solutions. If there is no parent
42 organization at the school, the school shall hold a public meeting to
43 provide parents with an opportunity to provide input during the
44 development of the corrective action plan.
45 c. The school shall present the corrective action plan to the
46 board of education. The school shall annually review and revise the

1 corrective action plan, and present the revisions to the board, until
2 the percent of students who are chronically absent is less than 10
3 percent¹.

4
5 3. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall
6 annually review the chronic absenteeism rates of each school and
7 school district, as included on the School Report Cards issued
8 pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1995, c.235 (C.18A:7E-2), and report
9 on the rates to the State Board of Education.

10
11 4. This act shall take effect immediately.