

ASSEMBLY, No. 1496

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman KEVIN J. ROONEY

District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes grant program for school districts to develop in-district and collaborative special education programs and services to reduce need to place classified students out-of-district.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 AN ACT concerning special education programs and services in
2 certain school districts and supplementing chapter 6 of 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. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a program
9 to provide grants to school districts to develop in-district special
10 education programs and services. The purpose of the program shall
11 be to provide start-up funds to school districts to develop high
12 quality in-district special education programs and services to reduce
13 the need to place classified students out-of-district and consequently
14 reduce the costs to districts associated with those placements. The
15 in-district special education programs and services may be
16 developed by an individual school district or on a collaborative
17 basis by two or more districts.

18 b. Grant funds allocated under the program may be used for,
19 but not limited to, research and development, curriculum
20 development, materials and supplies, specialized equipment and
21 furniture, staff training, consultant fees, outreach and promotional
22 materials, and program evaluation.
23

24 2. a. Within 90 days of the effective date of this act, the
25 commissioner shall forward to school districts a request for
26 proposals for the establishment of in-district special education
27 programs. The commissioner shall consult with school districts in
28 the development of the request for proposals to ensure a streamlined
29 application process which clearly sets forth the criteria required for
30 selection of a grant recipient, and outlines the process and time
31 frame for the evaluation of proposals.

32 b. A school district or districts which applies to participate in
33 the grant program shall submit a proposal to the commissioner in
34 such form as prescribed by the commissioner. The proposal shall
35 include: a general description of the program; the types of student
36 educational disabilities that the program is designed to address; the
37 number of potential participants; the program's potential impact on
38 reducing the number of out-of-district placements for classified
39 students and the special education costs incurred by the district;
40 plans to continue the in-district special education program upon the
41 elimination of grant funding; program resources to assist parents
42 and teachers in appropriately addressing student educational
43 disabilities within the district; and any other information that may
44 be required by the commissioner.
45

46 3. The commissioner shall select grant recipients based upon
47 the quality of the proposed program and its potential to reduce out-
48 of-district placements and the costs associated with those

1 placements. The commissioner shall select grant recipients in the
2 northern, central and southern regions of the State and shall allocate
3 to each selected school district a grant in such amount as he may
4 deem necessary.

5
6 4. In the event that a school district which is awarded a grant
7 pursuant to section 3 of this act makes subsequent application to the
8 commissioner to expand the scope of the special education program
9 or service to classified students enrolled in grade levels beyond
10 those outlined in the initial application, the commissioner may
11 renew grant funding to support the start-up costs associated with the
12 expansion of the original program to additional grade levels.

13
14 5. The commissioner shall implement a plan to collect from
15 each participating school district data on the effectiveness of the
16 grant program in reducing the need to place classified students in
17 out-of-district placements. The data collected from each district
18 shall include, but not be limited to: information regarding the
19 student population served by the program, including the number and
20 educational disability of student participants; information on the
21 academic performance of the classified students in the program; the
22 number and qualifications of program staff; the cost-savings to the
23 school district attributable to a reduction in the number of classified
24 students requiring out-of-district placement; the level of parental
25 satisfaction with the program; and any other information required
26 by the commissioner.

27
28 6. No later than three years after the effective date of this act,
29 the commissioner shall submit to the Governor and the Legislature a
30 report that evaluates the effectiveness of the grant program in
31 providing high quality programs and services to classified students
32 while reducing the need for out-of-district placements and the costs
33 associated with those placements. The report shall include a
34 recommendation on the advisability of the grant program's
35 continuation and extension to additional school districts.

36
37 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

38
39

40 STATEMENT

41
42 This bill directs the Commissioner of Education to establish a
43 program to provide grants to school districts to develop in-district
44 special education programs and services. The purpose of the
45 program would be to provide start-up funds to school districts to
46 develop high quality in-district special education programs and
47 services to reduce the need to place classified students out-of-
48 district and consequently reduce the costs to districts associated

A1496 ROONEY

1 with those placements. The in-district special education programs
2 and services may be developed by an individual school district or
3 on a collaborative basis by two or more districts.

4 Under the bill, the commissioner would forward to school
5 districts a request for proposals for the establishment of in-district
6 special education programs. A school district which applies to
7 participate in the grant program must submit a proposal to the
8 commissioner that includes: a general description of the program;
9 the types of student educational disabilities that the program is
10 designed to address; the number of potential participants; the
11 program's potential impact on reducing the number of out-of-district
12 placements for classified students and the special education costs
13 incurred by the district; plans to continue the in-district special
14 education program upon the elimination of grant funding; program
15 resources to assist parents and teachers in appropriately addressing
16 student educational disabilities within the district; and any other
17 information that may be required by the commissioner.

18 The bill directs the commissioner to select grant recipients based
19 upon the quality of the proposed program and its potential to reduce
20 the district's out-of-district placements and the costs associated with
21 those placements. The commissioner is to select grant recipients in
22 the northern, central and southern regions of the State and would
23 allocate to each selected school district a grant in such amount as he
24 deems necessary.

25 The bill also directs the commissioner to implement a plan to
26 collect from each participating school district data on the
27 effectiveness of the grant program in reducing the need to place
28 classified students in out-of-district placements. Three years after
29 the bill's effective date, the commissioner is also required to submit
30 to the Governor and the Legislature a report that evaluates the
31 effectiveness of the grant program in providing high quality
32 programs and services to classified students while reducing the need
33 for out-of-district placements and the costs associated with those
34 placements. The report is to include a recommendation on the
35 advisability of the grant program's continuation and extension to
36 additional school districts.