Sponsored by:
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SYNOPSIS
Requires certain ratios of school library media specialists to students in public schools.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT concerning school library media specialists employed in public schools and supplementing chapter 27 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. a. (1) In each public school having an enrollment of less than 300 students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education shall employ, at a minimum, one half-time staff member who holds an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement.

(2) In each public school having an enrollment of between 300 and 1,499 students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education shall employ, at a minimum, one full-time staff member who holds an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement.

(3) In each public school having an enrollment of 1,500 or more students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education shall employ, at a minimum, two full-time staff members who hold an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement.

b. The Commissioner of Education may, upon application by a board of education, waive the staffing requirements established pursuant to subsection a. of this section for up to one school year if the application demonstrates that the school was unable to find a certified school library media specialist and that an offer of employment was made to a certified school library media specialist. The commissioner may not grant more than two waivers within a period of five school years.

c. In addition to the staffing requirements established pursuant to subsection a. of this section, a public school having an enrollment of 500 or more students on October 15 of the prior school year shall employ, at a minimum, one full-time staff member to serve as a library clerk, and shall employ one additional full-time staff member to serve as a library clerk for each additional 500 students enrolled in the school.

2. a. A school library media specialist employed pursuant to section 1 of this act in a secondary school in the district shall:

(1) in a secondary school having an enrollment of less than 100 students on October 15 of the prior school year, devote at least one period in each school day to school library work;

(2) in a secondary school having an enrollment of between 100 and 299 students on October 15 of the prior school year, devote at least two periods in each school day to school library work;
(3) in a secondary school having an enrollment of between 300 and 499 students on October 15 of the prior school year, devote at least one-half of each school day to school library work;

(4) in a secondary school having an enrollment of between 500 and 699 students on October 15 of the prior school year, devote at least five periods in each school day to school library work; and

(5) in a secondary school having an enrollment of 700 or more students on October 15 of the prior school year, devote the full school day to school library work.

b. As used in this section, “school library work” means the delivery of instruction in information literacy skills; the development and coordination of school library media programs and resources; and the delivery of instruction in the evaluation, selection, organization, distribution, creation, and utilization of school library media.

3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first be applicable to the first full school year following enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes minimum ratios of school library media specialists to students required in school districts. The ratios are:

- in each public school having an enrollment of less than 300 students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education is required to employ, at a minimum, one half-time staff member who holds an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement;

- in each public school having an enrollment of between 300 and 1,499 students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education is required to employ, at a minimum, one full-time staff member who holds an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement; and

- in each public school having an enrollment of 1,500 or more students on October 15 of the prior school year, the board of education is required to employ, at a minimum, two full-time staff members who hold an educational services certificate with a school library media specialist endorsement.

The bill specifies how much time in each school day the school library media specialist is required to devote to school library work in public secondary schools, which is dependent upon the enrollment in the school.
The bill also requires a public school having an enrollment of 500 or more students on October 15 of the prior school year to employ a minimum of one full-time staff member to serve as a library clerk, and to employ one additional full-time staff member to serve as a library clerk for each additional 500 students enrolled in the school.

In order to be college- and career-ready in the twenty-first century, students must be able to use a wide range of information resources including books, media, technology, and the Internet. All students must be able to locate, evaluate, and interpret information accurately for academic and professional success. A qualified school library media specialist is uniquely suited through educational training and professional development to provide this educational foundation for all students. Twenty-two states currently require school library media specialists in their schools and 12 use student enrollment to determine the number of school library media specialists the schools employ.