

SENATE, No. 1857

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Singleton

SYNOPSIS

Establishes five-year community schools pilot program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/14/2020)

1 AN ACT establishing a community schools pilot 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:*

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7 1. As used in this act, “community schools” means partnerships
8 between public schools, nonprofit organizations, and local
9 governments to provide an integrated focus on academics, health,
10 and social services, youth and community development, expanded
11 learning time and opportunities, actively engage families, and foster
12 collaborative practices based on an individual community’s
13 identified need.

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15 2. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a five-
16 year “Community Schools Pilot Program” in the Department of
17 Education. The objective of the pilot program shall be to facilitate
18 the establishment of community schools. Under the pilot program,
19 any school district or charter school shall be able to receive training
20 regarding the establishment of a community school, and no more
21 than 50 schools shall be assigned a site coordinator who shall assist
22 in the establishment and operations of a community school.

23 b. No later than three months following the effective date of
24 this act, the commissioner shall issue a request for proposals to
25 identify a qualified nonprofit organization located in the State
26 whose mission is to facilitate high quality community schools in
27 New Jersey to manage the pilot program. Upon selecting an
28 organization to manage the pilot program, the commissioner shall
29 enter into a contract with that organization specifying its duties and
30 responsibilities including, but not limited to, those identified in
31 section 3 of this act.

32 c. No later than six months following the effective date of this
33 act, the commissioner shall survey school districts and charter
34 schools to assess the extent to which community schools have been
35 established. The survey shall obtain information including, but not
36 limited to: 1) identifying school districts and charter schools that
37 have established community schools; 2) listing the entities with
38 which the community school has entered into a partnership for the
39 provision of services; and 3) detailing services that are provided at
40 the community schools. The commissioner shall use the survey
41 results to establish an inventory of community schools, which shall
42 be updated annually.

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44 3. a. The organization selected by the commissioner to
45 manage the pilot program shall make technical assistance available
46 to school districts and charter schools that are participating in the
47 pilot program. The organization shall also make group training
48 sessions and materials about community school operations

1 accessible to any school district or charter school that expresses an
2 interest in developing a community school.

3 b. (1) The organization, in coordination with the department,
4 shall develop an application procedure for selecting schools,
5 including charter schools, to receive direct support from a site
6 coordinator assigned to the school. Schools shall be selected in
7 three application periods. In each of the first and second
8 application periods, the organization shall select no more than 15
9 schools to receive a site coordinator. In the third application period,
10 the organization shall select no more than 20 schools to receive a
11 site coordinator. The organization may increase the number of
12 schools that it selects in a subsequent application period if it did not
13 select the maximum number in a prior application period. In no
14 event shall the cumulative number of schools selected to receive a
15 site coordinator exceed 30 after the second application period, or 50
16 after the third application period.

17 (2) In selecting schools to receive a site coordinator, the
18 organization may give lower priority to a school district or charter
19 school that is currently receiving federal funds to establish or
20 operate a community school, or give higher priority to a school
21 located in a school district that does not have any schools in which
22 a site coordinator has been assigned.

23 c. The organization shall employ and train individuals who
24 shall be assigned to serve as a site coordinator in a school that has
25 been selected to receive a site coordinator. Individuals selected to
26 serve as site coordinators shall be employees of the organization,
27 and not the school district or charter school to which they are
28 assigned.

29 d. The organization may enter into an agreement with another
30 nonprofit entity to assist it in fulfilling any of the responsibilities
31 enumerated in subsections a. through c. of this section.

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33 4. a. The commissioner shall annually enter into a contract
34 with an independent entity to perform an audit of the organization's
35 accounts and financial transactions. The audit of the prior year's
36 activities shall be completed no later than five months following the
37 end of the organization's fiscal year. The audit shall be made
38 available on the Department of Education's website.

39 b. The commissioner shall enter into a contract with an
40 independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the pilot program.
41 The entity shall have expertise in evaluating educational programs
42 and the provision of a range of social services. The evaluator shall
43 issue a final report on the implementation of the pilot program no
44 later than six months prior to the pilot program's completion. The
45 commissioner shall forward the final report to the Governor, and to
46 the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-
47 19.1).

1 5. There is established in the Department of Education a
2 nonlapsing fund that shall be known as the Community Schools
3 Pilot Program Fund. The fund shall consist of any funds that are
4 appropriated by the Legislature for inclusion in the fund, investment
5 earnings of the fund, and moneys contributed to the fund by private
6 sources. The moneys in the fund shall be invested and reinvested
7 by the Director of the Division of Investment in the Department of
8 the Treasury. Expenditures from the fund shall be exclusively for
9 the purpose of implementing the provisions of this act.

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11 6. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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16 This bill establishes a five-year Community Schools Pilot
17 Program in the Department of Education. Under the bill, the
18 Commissioner of Education would issue a request for proposals to
19 identify a nonprofit organization located in the State to manage the
20 pilot program. The selected organization would be responsible for
21 providing technical assistance to any school district or charter
22 school that is participating in the pilot program, and would be
23 responsible for making group training sessions and information
24 about community schools available to any district or charter school
25 that is interested in establishing a community school. Additionally,
26 the organization would be responsible for selecting up to 50
27 schools, including charter schools, that would receive direct
28 assistance from a site coordinator assigned to the school.

29 The commissioner would annually enter into a contract with an
30 independent entity to perform an audit of the organization's
31 accounts and financial transactions. The audits, which must be
32 completed no later than five months following the organization's
33 fiscal year, would be posted on the Department of Education's
34 website. The bill also requires that the commissioner enter into a
35 contract with an independent entity to conduct an evaluation of the
36 pilot program. The final report, which the organization would
37 forward to the Governor and the Legislature, would be due no later
38 than six months prior to the conclusion of the pilot program.

39 It is the sponsor's intent that the pilot program would cost a total
40 of \$26 million over the five-year period. These expenses would
41 include the organization's administrative expenses for operating the
42 program, compensation for the site coordinators, and the cost of the
43 independent evaluation.