SENATE, No. 2809

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED AUGUST 13, 2020

Sponsored by: Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex) Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

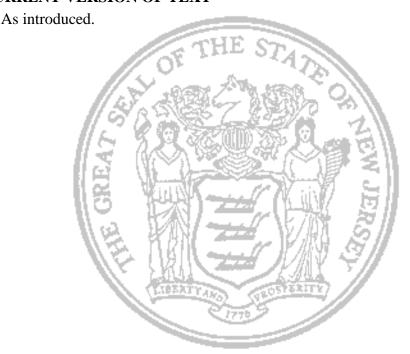
Co-Sponsored by: Senator Turner

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to provide virtual or remote instruction for beginning of 2020-2021 school year; permits in-person delivery of certain special education services; permits school districts to delay start of 2020-2021 school year.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 8/27/2020)

AN ACT concerning the reopening of public schools in the 2020-2021 school year.

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

- 1. a. (1) Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, a school district shall begin the 2020-2021 school year with a program of virtual or remote instruction only, except that a school district may provide in-person instruction to students who are in special education self-contained programs or who receive other intensive special education services, as determined by the school district in conjunction with the students' child study teams and in accordance with the students' individualized education programs. The Department of Education shall collect and disseminate to school districts resources and materials concerning best practices and digital tools for the delivery of virtual or remote instruction, including technology that may be used to ensure security for online assessments of students.
- (2) During the period in which virtual or remote instruction only is provided to students pursuant to this subsection, a school district may conduct outdoor events in which students, parents or guardians, and teachers have the opportunity to meet each other and engage in activities meant to foster a relationship between students and their teachers and classmates. The outdoor events may include the delivery of certain curriculum content, as deemed appropriate by the school district. The outdoor events shall comply with health and safety guidance issued by appropriate State and federal agencies to limit the transmission of COVID-19.
- (3) Beginning on October 31, 2020, the reopening of schools for in-person instruction shall be reevaluated on a monthly basis by the Governor, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of Health. The decision by the Governor to reopen schools for in-person instruction shall be contingent upon a number of factors in order to ensure the health and safety of students and school staff including, but not limited to, what stage of reopening the State is in and public health data regarding the spread and transmission of COVID-19 in communities across the State. A school district shall develop its own guidelines and plans for in-person instruction that adhere to guidance issued by appropriate State and federal agencies, for use when the decision is made to reopen schools for in-person instruction.

In the event that the Governor decides to reopen schools for inperson instruction, a school district may choose to continue to provide a program of virtual or remote instruction only.

b. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, a school district may delay the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year by up to two weeks from the district's regularly scheduled start

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date. In the event that a school district chooses to delay the beginning of its school year, the district shall, during the time in which the district chooses to delay the school year, conduct professional development training for teachers on the delivery of virtual or remote instruction.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill would require that school districts provide only a program of virtual or remote instruction to students at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Notwithstanding the requirement for virtual or remote instruction, in-person instruction may be delivered to students in special education self-contained programs or to students who receive other intensive special education services, as determined by the school district in conjunction with the child study teams and in accordance with the students' individualized education programs. The bill requires the Department of Education to collect and disseminate to school districts resources and materials concerning best practices and digital tools for the delivery of virtual or remote instruction. During the period in which virtual or remote instruction only is provided to students, a school district may conduct outdoor events in which students, parents or guardians, and teachers have the opportunity to meet each other and engage in activities meant to foster a relationship between students and their teachers and classmates. The outdoor events may include the delivery of certain curriculum content, as deemed appropriate by the school district.

The bill also provides that, beginning on October 31, 2020, the reopening of schools for in-person instruction will be reevaluated on a monthly basis by the Governor, in consultation with the Commissioners of Education and Health. The decision to reopen schools for in-person instruction will be contingent upon a number of factors in order to ensure the health and safety of students and school staff. A school district will develop its own guidelines and plans for in-person instruction. However, a school district has the option under the bill to continue to provide a program of virtual or remote instruction only, even if the Governor reopens schools for in-person instruction.

Lastly, under the bill, a school district has the option to delay the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year by up to two weeks from the district's regularly scheduled start date. If a school district chooses to delay the beginning of its school year, the district is required during that time to conduct professional development training for teachers on the delivery of virtual or remote instruction.

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1	The purpose of the bill it to protect the health and safety of
2	students, school staff, and their families. The bill will also act to
3	conserve school district resources associated with the purchase of
4	personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and staff costs
5	related to enhanced cleaning that may not actually be able to protect
6	individuals from infection.