

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1739

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 17, 1996

The Assembly Education Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 1739.

This bill establishes the "Arts Create Excellent Schools (ACES) Pilot Program" in the Department of Education. The ACES program will be designed to implement research that has found that an arts-based curriculum can serve as a powerful tool in achieving educational improvement by increasing student motivation and reinforcing progress in academic disciplines such as reading, writing, languages, social studies, science, and math. In conducting the program, the department is to consult with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Under the bill's provisions, the Commissioner of Education is to select three schools to be developed as model schools which will incorporate an innovative arts-infused curriculum into the student learning process. A school which wants to participate in the pilot program shall, upon securing the approval of its board of education, submit a proposal to the commissioner. The proposal shall outline the school's plan to infuse the arts into all aspects of the curriculum. The proposal is to include, but not be limited to: the specific mechanisms the school will employ to integrate the arts within all academic disciplines; the utilization of technology to advance student levels of organizational ability, critical thinking, problem solving and creative skills; and the manner in which professional development experiences in the arts will be factored into the school design to enable teachers to effectively implement the strategies of the arts-infused curriculum.

The schools shall be selected to participate based upon the commissioner's evaluation of the school's ability to successfully implement a model arts-based curriculum. The commissioner shall seek a cross section of schools from urban, suburban, rural and State-operated school districts with equal consideration given to schools located in the north, central and southern regions of the State. The selection process will include visits to potential model schools to ascertain the administration and faculty commitment and ability to adopt an arts based curriculum.

Finally, the ACES program shall include an assessment component designed to evaluate the model schools' progress in advancing student educational outcomes and teacher development. The assessment shall

place emphasis on student progress in problem solving, comprehension, critical thinking and reasoning. During the initial four years of the ACES program each model school is to undergo an annual evaluation conducted by the DOE. After the program's fourth year, the commissioner shall submit to the Governor and Legislature an evaluation of the ACES program and a recommendation on the advisability of its continuation and expansion to other schools within the State.