

CHAPTER 117

AN ACT establishing an arts based curriculum pilot program in the Department of Education and supplementing chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

C.18A:54G-1 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Arts Create Excellent Schools (ACES) Pilot Program Act."

C.18A:54G-2 Findings, declarations relative to arts based curriculum pilot program.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Although there currently exists support for the arts in education within the public schools of this State, there is a vast difference in how local school districts implement arts education and a significant number of students graduate from New Jersey schools without any exposure to the arts;

b. The Literacy in the Arts Task Force, created in 1987 by the Legislature to examine the state of arts education in New Jersey, recommended that schools include both intensive arts experiences and integration of the arts across an interdisciplinary curriculum and urged districts to adopt a curriculum framework using the arts as a means of providing all students the tools for an effective and more enriched learning experience;

c. Since the Literacy in the Arts Task Force completed its work, there have been a number of other developments at the State and national level which have affirmed the value of incorporating the arts into the school curriculum as a strategy to engage and challenge students and thus advance their motivation and level of academic achievement;

d. The value of infusing the arts into the public school curricular core has been supported and advanced through the revision of New Jersey's State Goals for Education in 1992, the Department of Education's draft of Core Curriculum Standards, the Department of Education's Strategic Plan for Systemic Change, and the national education reform effort embodied in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, all of which have pointed to the arts as a mechanism to improve the ability of students to think critically and to solve problems; and

e. In an era in which states and the federal government are searching for ways in which to advance the educational achievement of at-risk students, research has indicated that an arts-based curriculum offers a powerful tool to effectuate student academic achievement by increasing the motivation of students who may be disaffected from the learning process. There is empirical evidence that academic disciplines such as reading, writing, languages, social studies, science and math are reinforced through an arts-infused curriculum.

The Legislature further finds, therefore, that a program which provides for the development of arts-infused model schools can serve an important public policy function by determining if the strategies utilized by the model schools are effective and can be successfully replicated in districts throughout the State to enhance overall student performance.

C.18A:54G-3 "Arts Create Excellent Schools (ACES) Pilot Program."

3. There is established in the Department of Education the "Arts Create Excellent Schools (ACES) Pilot Program" to be administered by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of this act. The department shall consult with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in the Department of State in the operation and administration of the program. The program shall provide for the development of three model schools which incorporate an innovative arts-infused curriculum into the student learning process. The model schools, which shall be developed through organizational partnerships including State and local government agencies and the private sector, shall have the following goals:

a. to prepare students for educational achievement by developing imagination, reasoning, judgment and the critical thinking skills necessary for problem solving and decision making;

b. to develop an arts-infused curriculum based on interdisciplinary and thematic units;

c. to broaden the role of the teacher through staff development to include such diverse roles as instructor, coach, mentor and exemplar;

d. to improve student performance as determined by standard measures and alternative assessment strategies;

e. to enhance student self-concept as determined by measures of self-esteem;

- f. to encourage understanding of traditional, local and diverse cultures;
 - g. to integrate school activities with professional and community based arts organizations;
- and
- h. to further evaluate and research arts education.

C.18A:54G-4 Request for proposals for development of ACES schools.

4. The Commissioner of Education shall forward a request for proposals for the development of ACES schools to local school districts. Each school district shall disseminate the request for proposals to all schools within the district. A school which wants to participate in the pilot program shall, upon securing the approval of the 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 to enhance academic excellence, student motivation and self-esteem. The proposal shall include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- a. the specific mechanisms which will be used to integrate the arts within all academic disciplines offered in the school's curriculum;
- b. the utilization of technology within the school to advance student levels of organizational ability, critical thinking, problem solving and creative skills; and
- c. the manner in which professional development experiences in the arts will be factored into the school design to assist the teaching and administrative staff to define and implement the teaching strategies necessary to achieve the educational goals of an arts-infused curriculum.

C.18A:54G-5 Selection of schools to participate in program.

5. The commissioner shall select three schools to participate in the program based upon the commissioner's evaluation of the school's ability to successfully implement a model arts-based curriculum. In selecting the schools to participate, 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 geographical regions of the State. The selection process shall include visits to potential model schools to ascertain the administration and faculty commitment and ability to adopt an arts-based curriculum.

C.18A:54G-6 Evaluation component included within ACES program.

6. a. The commissioner shall provide for the inclusion of an evaluation component within the ACES program which shall be both formative and summative in nature. The assessment methods designed to evaluate the model schools shall be appropriate for assessing student educational outcomes and teacher development and shall place emphasis on student progress in problem solving, comprehension, critical thinking and reasoning.

b. During the initial four years of the ACES program each model school shall undergo an annual evaluation conducted by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection a. of this section. 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.

C.18A:54G-7 Rules, regulations.

7. The State Board of Education shall adopt, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this act.

- 8. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved September 16, 1996.