

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
ASSEMBLY, No. 5126
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

DATED: MARCH 2, 2021

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Requires Commissioner of Education to prepare learning loss report and report on public school operations during COVID-19 public health emergency.

Type of Impact: Potential one-time expenditure increase for the State and local school districts

Agencies Affected: Department of Education; Local School Districts

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>FY 2021</u>
State Cost Increase	Indeterminate
Local Cost Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill may lead to an indeterminate one-time, marginal increase in State expenditures to the Department of Education (DOE) related to the development of the learning loss report and the report on public school operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
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- The OLS believes that the DOE already possesses the staff, technical infrastructure, and data systems necessary to allow it to collect the data and information required to be submitted by school districts under the bill.
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- The OLS anticipates that local school districts may incur marginal costs related to the collection of data that is not already collected and submitted by school districts pursuant to existing requirements and efforts.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to prepare two reports on the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on public schooling. The first report will be a learning loss report that identifies and quantifies the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on

student academic outcomes. The second report will be a report on the continuation of school services during the same period.

Under the bill, the commissioner will require each school district to submit data on student outcomes within 30 days of the bill's effective date. The data must be provided for all students enrolled in the school district in the time period beginning on the date of the school district's closure in March of 2020 and ending on the bill's effective date, unless otherwise specified by the commissioner. Within 60 days of the effective date of the bill, the commissioner is required to prepare and submit a report to the Governor and to the Legislature identifying and quantifying the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on student academic outcomes and student achievement disparities.

The bill also directs the commissioner to require each school district, within 90 days of the effective date of the bill, to submit data and information related to the continuation of school services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The data and information must be provided for the time period beginning on the date of the school district's closure in March of 2020 and ending on the bill's effective date. The bill provides that within 120 days of the bill's effective date, the commissioner must prepare and submit to the Governor and the Legislature a final report that summarizes the collected information. The final report will be a comprehensive overview of the continuation of school services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The bill limits the commissioner's use of the collected data and information to the bill's purposes.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS determines that this bill may lead to an indeterminate one-time, marginal increase in State expenditures to the DOE related to the development of the learning loss report and the report on public school operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The DOE may also incur marginal costs to develop and distribute technical guidance to school districts in their submittal of the data and information required under the bill. The OLS believes that the DOE already possesses the staff, technical infrastructure, and data systems necessary to allow it to collect the data and information required to be submitted by school districts under the bill. Local school districts may incur one-time marginal costs to collect any data and information required under the bill that is not already being collected under existing requirements or efforts.

The OLS notes that certain data and information required under the bill may already be collected by school districts and submitted to the DOE through existing reporting requirements and efforts. While the data on student academic outcomes required for the development of a learning loss report is not explicitly identified under the bill, the DOE currently collects from school districts a variety of data on student academic outcomes through the School Performance Report, which is the successor to the School Report Card and required under current law. In a broadcast dated October 14, 2020, the DOE indicated that a "Special Topic" narrative field on instruction and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was added as part of school district submission of data to be incorporated in the 2019-2020 School Performance report.

The OLS also finds that the DOE currently collects from school districts much of the information required under the bill for the development of a report on the continuation of school services during the public health emergency. In addition to data that may already be collected for

the School Performance Report and through other means, answers from the DOE to budget questions presented as part of the FY 2021 budget process indicated that it planned to undertake efforts to collect data specific to school district operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the DOE stated that it was:

- finalizing a means to collect high-quality, student-level digital device data to the New Jersey Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART) student information system. The DOE said that it was launching a separate data collection effort that districts would complete monthly to measure remaining device needs for students;
- modifying its existing student-level NJ SMART data collection to include a field on the student learning environment in order to identify the number of students participating in full-time remote instruction, disaggregated by student subgroups; and
- collecting data concerning instruction, curricula, and other data points to identify where students' learning is stalled or where schools and districts are not providing all students access to high quality instruction.

Section: Education

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).