SYNOPSIS

Establishes three-year pilot program in DOE to support school district programs to increase length of school day or school year.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.
AN ACT establishing a pilot program to support school districts in
implementing programs to increase the length of the school day
or school year.

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

1. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
three-year pilot program, the purpose of which shall be to support
programs to increase the length of the school day or the school year
in school districts selected for participation in the pilot program.
Under the pilot program, the Commissioner of Education shall
award funds on a competitive basis, with priority given to school
districts that have student populations demonstrating a high level of
need for academic support based on the most recently available
Statewide assessment results, the percentage of students in the
district who graduate from high school, and the percentage of
students in the district who drop out of school prior to graduation.
The commissioner shall select no more than 20 school districts to
participate in the pilot program, which shall be selected in the
following manner:

   (1) five school districts from the southern region of the State;
   (2) five school districts from the central region of the State;
   (3) five school districts from the northern region of the State; and
   (4) five other school districts that shall be selected by the
department based on a priority ranking of districts that have student
populations demonstrating the highest level of academic need based
on the most recently available Statewide assessment results, the
percentage of students in the district who graduate from high
school, and the percentage of students in the district who drop out
of school prior to graduation.

b. A school district seeking funds under the pilot program shall
submit an application to the commissioner. In addition to any other
information the commissioner may deem necessary, the application
shall include:

   (1) a description of the need to offer some or all students in the
district a program to increase the length of the school day or the
school year and how extended learning time will support learning
acceleration;
   (2) details concerning the manner in which the district intends to
implement its program to increase the length of the school day or
school year, including whether or not the effort to increase the
length of the school day or school year will be available to all
students and, if not, the student eligibility criteria for inclusion in
the program;
   (3) a description of how the district has utilized funds, including
federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
moneys, for learning recovery and other initiatives to address the
educational impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students enrolled in the district and the amount of funds, if any, that have been dedicated to efforts to extend the length of the school day or the school year;

(4) a request for the amount of funds being sought by the district under the pilot program and an explanation of how the district plans to use grant funds in the event that it is selected for participation;

(5) a description of any additional funds, on top of those funds that may be currently utilized by the district or that may be granted under the pilot program, that the district plans to use to support its program to increase the length of the school day or school year; and

(6) documentation evidencing that the district’s plan to increase the length of the school day or the school year, as applicable, has received input and feedback from teaching staff members of the district and that a majority of the teaching staff members support the plan. If available, the application shall include the terms of a collective bargaining agreement or other contract that includes provisions for an increase in the length of the school day or school year.

c. (1) Subject to the provisions of subsection a. of this section, the commissioner shall select the school districts that will receive grants under the pilot program. A school district selected for participation in the pilot program shall be granted no more than $1,000,000 annually throughout the duration of the pilot program. A school district selected by the commissioner for participation shall utilize the funds for any costs associated with the implementation of a program to increase the length of the school day or school year, which costs the school district would not have otherwise incurred had it not implemented a program to increase the length of the school day or school year. The costs associated with the implementation of a program may include, but not be limited to:

(a) increased pay for teaching staff and other educational support staff to provide for a program to increase the length of the school day or school year, which increased pay shall be agreed upon and included in the terms of a collective bargaining agreement or other contract that includes provisions for an increase in the length of the school day or school year;

(b) the cost of providing additional student transportation; and

(c) the cost of extending the provision of other student support services.

(2) To support school districts in establishing programs to increase the length of the school day or school year, the Department of Education shall provide technical assistance to school districts that are selected for participation in the pilot program. The technical assistance shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) guidance for maximizing the use of other funds, outside of funds currently being utilized by a district or that are granted under the pilot program, that may be available to support the
implementation of the program to increase the length of the school
day or school year;

(b) connecting districts to resources, including educational
nonprofit organizations and groups, that may be useful in making
the program to increase the length of the school day or school year
more effective in promoting academic achievement; and

(c) support in resolving issues related to the long-term
sustainability of a district’s program to increase the length of the
school day or school year.

d. (1) No later than July 30 of each school year in which grant
funds are distributed pursuant to this section, each school district
selected for participation in the pilot program shall submit a report
to the commissioner that includes the following information:

(a) the number of students who were eligible for, and
participated in, the district’s program to increase the length of the
school day or school year;

(b) the attendance rates among the students who participated in
the district’s program to increase the length of the school day or
school year; and

(c) any student-level information the commissioner may need to
produce the report required pursuant to paragraph (2) of this
subsection.

(2) No later than 180 days prior to the conclusion of the pilot
program, the commissioner shall submit to the Governor, and to the
Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1),
a report that evaluates the effectiveness of the pilot program in
increasing student achievement and reducing the extent of the
educational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in each school
district selected for participation in the pilot program. The report
submitted pursuant to this section shall include, at a minimum:

(a) descriptions of each school district’s program to increase the
length of the school day or school year;

(b) an analysis comparing the academic performance indicators
of students participating in each district’s program and those of
students not participating in the program, which academic
performance indicators shall include, but need not be limited to, the
most recently available Statewide assessment results, the percentage
of students in the district who graduate from high school, and the
percentage of students in the district who drop out of school prior to
graduation;

(c) an analysis comparing the academic performance indicators
of students participating in each district’s program and those of
students across the State, which academic performance indicators
shall include, but need not be limited to, the most recently available
Statewide assessment results, the percentage of district students
who graduate from high school, and the percentage of district
students who drop out of school prior to graduation;
(d) recommendations as to the feasibility and advisability of extending the duration of the pilot program.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes in the Department of Education a three-year pilot program, the purpose of which is to support programs to increase the length of the school day or the school year in school districts selected for participation. Under the pilot program, the Commissioner of Education would award funds on a competitive basis, with priority given to school districts that have student populations demonstrating a high level of need for academic support. The commissioner would select no more than 20 school districts to participate in the pilot program.

A school district seeking funds under the pilot program would submit an application to the commissioner. In addition to any other information the commissioner may deem necessary, the application would include:

- a description of the need to offer some or all students in the district a program to increase the length of the school day or the school year and how extended learning time will support learning acceleration;
- details concerning the manner in which the district intends to implement its program to increase the length of the school day or school year;
- a description of how the district has utilized funds, including federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund moneys, for learning recovery and other initiatives to address the educational impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students enrolled in the district and the amount of funds, if any, that have been dedicated to efforts to extend the length of the school day or the school year;
- a request for the amount of funds being sought by the district under the pilot program and an explanation of how the district plans to use grant funds in the event that it is selected for participation;
- a description of any additional funds the district plans to use to support its program to increase the length of the school day or school year; and
- documentation evidencing that the district’s plan to increase the length of the school day or the school year has received input and feedback from teaching staff members of the district and that a majority of the teaching staff members support the plan. If available, the application would include the terms of a collective bargaining agreement or other
contract that includes provisions for an increase in the length of the school day or school year.

A school district selected for participation in the pilot program would be granted no more than $1 million annually throughout the duration of the pilot program. A school district selected by the commissioner for participation would utilize the funds for any costs associated with the implementation of a program to increase the length of the school day or school year.

The bill requires that, no later than July 30 of each school year in which grant funds are distributed under the pilot program, each school district selected for participation would submit a report to the commissioner that includes the following information: the number of students who were eligible for, and participated in, the district’s program to increase the length of the school day or school year; the attendance rates among the students who participated in the district’s program to increase the length of the school day or school year; and any student-level information the commissioner may need to produce a separate report required under the bill. The separate report produced by the commissioner would be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature no later than 180 days prior to the conclusion of the pilot program. The report would evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program in increasing student achievement and reducing the extent of the educational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in each school district selected for participation in the pilot program.