ASSEMBLY, No. 5363

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO
District 20 (Union)
Assemblyman WILLIAM B. SAMPSON, IV
District 31 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to include instruction on significance of Juneteenth Independence Day as part of implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/10/2026)

AN ACT concerning public school instruction on the significance of Juneteenth Independence Day and supplementing chapter 35 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Juneteenth Independence Day, also known as Juneteenth, Emancipation Day and Black Independence Day, is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

b. Juneteenth commemorates the events of June 19, 1865, in which Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas to announce the end of the Civil War and that enslaved persons in the Confederate States were made free through the Emancipation Proclamation.

c. Word of the ending of slavery in the Confederate States finally reached the slaves in Texas approximately two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863.

d. The news was welcomed joyously and celebrated by the hundreds of thousands of enslaved men, women, and children who had continued to toil as slaves following the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War.

e. The celebration of Juneteenth symbolizes African American freedom, celebrates the abolition of slavery, and reminds all Americans of the significant contributions African Americans have made to society. It is also a time for self-improvement and for reflection and education on the United States' history regarding slavery and its legacy.

f. A State law enacted in 2004 as P.L.2004, c.3 (C.36:2-80 et seq.) designated the third Saturday in June of each year as Juneteenth Independence Day in New Jersey to commemorate and celebrate the emancipation of African Americans and foster respect for all cultures.

g. While Juneteenth has gained growing interest, recognition, and celebration among organizations and communities in the State and across the country, there remains a continued need for education and awareness of the event's historical impact. It is paramount that all New Jersey residents continue to have a dialogue surrounding the historical significance of Juneteenth, to promote racial healing, reconciliation, restoration, and justice.

h. Although section 4 of P.L.2004, c.3 permits boards of education to offer instruction on Juneteenth Independence Day at an appropriate place in the curriculum, it is proper and fitting that the State of New Jersey require instruction on the historical and cultural

significance of such an important day in United States history as Juneteenth Independence Day.

2. a. A board of education shall include instruction on the events and historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth Independence Day, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies. The instruction shall be included in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary school, middle school, and high school students. The instruction shall provide students with information on, at a minimum:

(1) the events that occurred on June 19, 1865, otherwise known as Juneteenth Independence Day;

(2) the historical context in which Juneteenth Independence Day occurred;

(3) why word of the end of the Civil War did not reach enslaved persons in Texas until approximately two months after the war's conclusion and why word of the Emancipation Proclamation did not reach those individuals until nearly two and a half years after it took effect; and

(4) what Juneteenth Independence Day means and symbolizes in United States history and how communities across the country celebrate and reflect on the day.

b. The Commissioner of Education shall provide school districts with age-appropriate sample learning activities and resources designed to enhance students' overall understanding of Juneteenth Independence Day and its historical and cultural significance.

3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

Juneteenth Independence Day is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. The day commemorates the events of June 19, 1865, in which Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas to announce the end of the Civil War and that the enslaved were made free through the Emancipation Proclamation. Today, the celebration of Juneteenth symbolizes African American freedom, celebrates the abolition of slavery, and reminds all Americans of the significant contributions African Americans have made to society. It is also a time for self-improvement and for reflection and education on the United States' history regarding slavery and its legacy.

In 2004, a State law was enacted that designated the third Saturday in June of each year as Juneteenth Independence Day in

New Jersey to commemorate and celebrate the emancipation of African Americans and foster respect for all cultures. Pursuant to that law, school districts were permitted to offer instruction regarding the day at an appropriate place in the curriculum. This bill would require school districts to provide instruction on the events and historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth Independence Day, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies. The instruction would provide students with information on, at a minimum: the events that occurred on Juneteenth Independence Day; the historical context in which Juneteenth Independence Day occurred; why word of the end of the Civil War did not reach enslaved persons in Texas until approximately two months after the war's conclusion and why word of the Emancipation Proclamation did not reach those individuals until nearly two and a half years after it took effect; and what Juneteenth Independence Day means and symbolizes in United States history and how communities across the country celebrate and reflect on the day. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education will provide school districts with age-appropriate sample learning activities and resources designed to enhance students' overall understanding of Juneteenth Independence Day and its historical and cultural significance.