

CHAPTER 216

AN ACT establishing a program to recognize educational services professionals and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

C.18A:29B-1 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Governor's Annual Educational Services Professionals Recognition Act."

C.18A:29B-2 Findings, declarations relative to recognition of educational services professionals.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. the public school system in this State is made more successful by the work of educational services professionals;

b. educational services professionals provide important services outside of the classroom environment that improve students' academic opportunities, workforce preparedness, and overall quality of life;

c. providing for local and Statewide recognition of outstanding educational services professionals will demonstrate our appreciation of their contributions and encourage others to strive for the same; and

d. the purpose of this act is to provide for Statewide awards and recognition of the excellence of current school district employees employed in a position requiring an educational services certificate.

C.18A:29B-3 "Educational services professional" defined.

3. As used in this act, "educational services professional" means a person who holds an educational services certificate issued by the State Board of Examiners and who is employed in a position that requires the certificate.

C.18A:29B-4 Educational services professional recognition selection panel.

4. In order to provide Statewide awards and recognition of the excellence of current educational services professionals, each school district may annually establish an educational services professional recognition selection panel composed of members of the teaching staff, administrative staff, parents and other citizens for the purpose of selecting recipients for the Governor's Annual Award for Outstanding Educational Services Professionals.

The panel shall be composed of up to nine members as follows:

a. three members to be selected by the local board of education;

b. three members to be selected by the local bargaining unit which represents the educational services professionals of the district. Should that bargaining unit choose not to appoint members to the panel, the board of education shall appoint up to three additional members; and

c. three additional members selected jointly by the members selected under subsections a. and b. of this section.

Should the members selected pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this section fail to agree on the selection of the three additional members, the additional members shall be selected by the local mayor from among the district's parent organization.

C.18A:29B-5 Nominations for Governor's Annual Educational Services Professionals Recognition Award.

5. The educational services professional recognition selection panel may nominate to the local board of education one educational services professional from each school in the district having 10 or more educational services professionals who, because of their knowledge, commitment, and creativity, have made an extraordinary contribution during the previous school year to the quality of education in that district. Schools having fewer than 10 educational services professionals may consolidate with other schools for the purpose of participating in this program, provided that the combined number of educational services professionals is 10 or more. In selecting educational services professionals for the Governor's Annual Award for Outstanding Educational Services Professionals, the panel may solicit nominations from teaching staff, administrative staff, parents, students, and community members.

Educational services professionals who are selected for the Governor's Annual Educational Services Professionals Recognition Award shall have distinguished themselves through exceptional contributions in the following areas:

- a. interactions with students, staff, and parents while functioning as a frontline advocate for the student between home and school;
- b. fostering an environment for learning and exploring creative alternatives to enable all students to achieve to their fullest potential;
- c. supporting classroom instruction by addressing the educational, social, and emotional needs of all students; and
- d. personal interactions with students that demonstrate professionalism while retaining respect, humor, compassion, and concern for the whole child.

The selection panel shall consider evidence of these contributions in making its decisions. Educational services professionals selected for this award shall have received exemplary local district evaluation reports. School districts may also consider other evidence of outstanding educational services performance.

Educational services professionals selected for the Governor's Award shall also have other acceptable personnel records which are devoid of recent sanctions or deficiencies.

The local board of education may certify to the commissioner the name of one educational services professional from each school or combination of schools in the district having 10 or more educational services professionals as a recipient of the Governor's Award. The local board may not certify the names of any educational services professionals who were not nominated by the educational services professionals selection panel. Districts that do not comply with all the provisions of this act shall not be included in the Governor's Award program.

Award recipients shall not be eligible for renomination for two years following their selection.

C.18A:29B-6 Convocation on "Excellence in Educational Services."

6. Annually, the Governor shall sponsor a convocation on "Excellence in Educational Services" at which time each educational services professional who has been selected by a local school district shall be awarded a certificate of commendation.

C.18A:29B-7 Rules, regulations.

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

8. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to the 2003-2004 school year.

Approved January 9, 2004.