

CHAPTER 220

AN ACT establishing a community service pilot program for high school students in the Department of Education.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. a person is not only an individual, but part of a broader community of family, friends, neighbors and fellow citizens;
 - b. an important goal of public education should be to teach young people about their role in society and to develop in them a sense of civic responsibility, especially toward those in the community who may demonstrate greater social need, such as the elderly, the sick, the poor, and the homeless;
 - c. a student can best learn about civic responsibility by participating in community organizations and activities which are aimed at addressing some of the social problems and concerns facing our society;
 - d. a number of school districts throughout the country currently require high school students to participate in a community service program; and
 - e. the establishment of a community service requirement for high school students in this State on a pilot basis would provide young people with an opportunity to actively participate in their communities and would help them to mature into responsible citizens and adults with strong social and civic values.

2. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a community service pilot program. Pursuant to the pilot program, beginning in the 2005-2006 school year and in each of the following two school years thereafter, a high school junior in a selected school shall complete a minimum of 15 hours of community service. The high school junior:
 - (1) may complete the community service requirement during the evenings, on weekends, or during the summer, but shall not complete the requirement during school hours;
 - (2) may complete the community service requirement with a non-profit agency or organization, a public agency or institution, a non-profit or for-profit health care facility, or any other community organization which the commissioner deems appropriate; and
 - (3) shall not receive compensation for community service or substitute employment for the service requirement.
- b. The commissioner shall select 30 schools to participate in the pilot program based upon the commissioner's evaluation of the school's ability to successfully implement the program. In selecting the schools to participate, the commissioner shall include urban and suburban schools from the north, central and southern regions of the State with at least one school per county.
- c. The commissioner shall authorize the board of education of a school district in which a selected school is located to exempt a student from all or part of the community service requirement if, in the judgment of the board, the requirement would result in undue hardship for the student. In addition, the commissioner may authorize the board of education to exempt a student who is classified pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes from all or part of the service required pursuant to the pilot program if, in the judgment of the board, the performance of that service would be inconsistent with the Individual Education Plan of that student.

3. The commissioner shall periodically review the progress of the community service pilot program to ensure that the program is achieving the intended goals, and shall report to the Governor and the Legislature by December, 2008 on the effectiveness of the pilot program. The report shall include a recommendation on the advisability of the pilot program's continuation and expansion to all high schools within the State.

4. Nothing in this act shall be construed to exempt the agencies, organizations, and institutions which permit high school students to perform community service from complying with child labor laws pursuant to P.L.1940, c.153 (C.34:2-21.1 et seq.).

5. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the

"Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved September 9, 2005.