

CHAPTER 418

AN ACT establishing a three-year youth apprenticeship pilot program.

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

1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a three-year youth apprenticeship pilot program to provide high school and college students between the ages of 16 and 21 an opportunity to develop valuable work skills while continuing their traditional education program. The goal of the pilot program shall be to prepare students to enter the workforce by providing some of the on-site employment training and related classroom instruction needed to obtain a license or certification for a skilled occupation.

b. A school district or institution of higher education which wants to participate in the program shall submit a proposal to the commissioner which outlines the district's or institution's plan to offer intensive career counseling and a customized learning experience to participating students.

c. The commissioner shall select two districts in each of the southern, central, and northern regions of the State to participate in the program and shall seek a cross section of school districts from urban, suburban, and rural areas of the State. The commissioner shall also select, in collaboration with the Secretary of Higher Education, four institutions of higher education to participate in the program.

d. As used in this section, "youth apprenticeship" means a paid structured learning experience in which students enrolled in an approved program are placed into an employer-sponsored training program to learn a skilled trade or technical occupation that is clearly identified and commonly recognized throughout an industry, and that is customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of on-the-job supervised training. Youth apprenticeship involves manual, mechanical, or technical skills and knowledge, and requires related theoretical instruction to supplement the on-the-job training. Youth apprenticeship programs are registered with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, in compliance with 29 C.F.R. s.29.29 and 29.30.

2. A participating school district or institution of higher education shall:

a. provide each participating student with intensive career counseling on career paths in the skilled trades and other fields that may offer apprenticeship opportunities;

b. ensure that a participating student has the flexibility needed to meet the demands of both the apprenticeship program and the academic program in which the student is enrolled; and

c. develop and implement, in collaboration with the approved employers selected pursuant to section 3 of this act, a class-based curriculum that complements and reinforces the work skills and knowledge developed through the student's apprenticeship experience.

3. a. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, shall develop:

(1) a list of approved employers with worksites near the participating school districts and institutions of higher education that have agreed to participate in the pilot program; and

(2) the process which shall be utilized for matching students to apprenticeship opportunities with the approved employers.

b. An approved employer shall pay a participating student an appropriate wage commensurate with the position held by the student, and shall offer periodic opportunities for performance review and wage increases, as appropriate.

c. An approved employer shall award an industry-recognized credential to a student upon his successful completion of the program.

4. Each participating school district or institution of higher education shall select its program participants. A student selected to participate in the program shall:

- a. complete work-based training under the supervision of an approved employer;
- b. complete the class-based curriculum developed pursuant to subsection c. of section 2 of this act; and
- c. be awarded credit toward a high school diploma or a postsecondary credential, or both, as applicable, for the work-based training and classroom instruction completed pursuant to this section.

5. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the Commissioner of Education shall submit a report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature. The report shall contain information on the implementation of the pilot program including, but not limited to:

- a. the number of students who participated in and who completed the program from each participating school district and institution of higher education;
- b. wage information regarding payments disbursed to students participating in the program;
- c. feedback from students participating in the program on ways to improve the program;
- d. the types of workforce skills and training that participating students acquired;
- e. the number of students who were hired as full-time employees by the employers with whom they were placed, following program completion; and
- f. the commissioner's recommendation on the feasibility of implementing the program on a Statewide basis.

6. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 21, 2020.