

CHAPTER 85

AN ACT establishing the Clayton Model Pilot Program in the Department of Education.

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

1. a. There is established a five-year Clayton Model Pilot Program in the Department of Education. Under the pilot program, a universal, school-based, social emotional learning program shall be provided to public school students in grades kindergarten through five to help enhance positive youth development and academic achievement. The pilot program shall be implemented through two educational strategies. The first strategy teaches students about processing, integrating, and selectively applying social and emotional skills. The second strategy involves fostering students' social emotional development by creating safe and caring learning environments using tiered supports that incorporate peer and family activities, improved classroom management and teaching practices, and whole-school community-building activities.

b. The Commissioner of Education shall select three counties to participate in the pilot program. The commissioner shall select one county to represent the northern area of the State, one county to represent the central area of the State, and Gloucester County to represent the southern area of the State.

In each of the selected counties, the commissioner shall identify a maximum of 10 schools for participation in the pilot program. The schools shall be identified in collaboration with the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden.

c. The commissioner shall establish a steering committee that shall be responsible for providing accountability and guidance on policies and practices associated with the implementation of the pilot program. The steering committee shall, at a minimum, include the following members: a representative of the Department of Education appointed by the commissioner; a member of the public with expertise in issues related to the work of the steering committee appointed by the Senate President; a member of the public with expertise in issues related to the work of the steering committee appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly; the Superintendent of Schools of the Clayton School District, who shall serve *ex officio*; the Director of the Child Connection Center, who shall serve *ex officio*; and a representative of the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers University-Camden appointed by the commissioner upon the recommendation of the institute. The commissioner may appoint additional members to the steering committee with expertise in issues related to the work of the committee as deemed necessary.

d. The commissioner shall initiate the pilot program in phases and provide for full implementation by no later than the third year of the pilot program. The Clayton School District shall serve as the model site for the pilot program, support the accurate communication of the model to administrators and teachers in schools participating in the pilot program, and design and conduct the training for county-level social emotional learning coordinators. The county special services school district, educational services commission, or jointure commission serving each of the counties selected for participation in the pilot program shall be responsible for the management of the social emotional learning programming in its county under the pilot program. The county special services school district, educational services commission, or jointure commission shall hire social emotional learning coordinators at the county level who shall train and organize the placement of social emotional learning specialists, including social workers, behavioral health care providers, or other social emotional learning professionals, who shall provide social emotional learning supports at the school level under the pilot program.

2. a. The Senator Walter Rand Institute shall develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot program that measures outcomes for students, schools, and families and assesses the fidelity of the training and implementation of the model. The evaluation shall also include a cost-benefit analysis of the pilot program. The institute may conduct its evaluation in collaboration with such social emotional learning experts, researchers, and evaluators at Rutgers University and other institutions of higher education, as the institute deems appropriate.

b. No later than six months following the conclusion of the pilot program, the institute shall report the results of the evaluation to the Commissioner of Education and the steering committee.

3. a. The commissioner shall provide interim reports by June 30th during each year of the pilot program to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1). The interim reports shall include the costs of the pilot program to date, the number and names of the school districts and schools participating in the pilot program, the number of students served under the pilot program, and such other information that the commissioner deems appropriate.

b. The commissioner shall report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), after the receipt of the evaluation from the Senator Walter Rand Institute pursuant to section 2 of this act, on the implementation and effectiveness of the pilot program. The report shall include the commissioner's recommendation on the advisability of the program's continuation and expansion to additional public schools in the State.

4. Federal funds shall be utilized to support the implementation of years one and two of the Clayton Model Pilot Program. Federal funds shall first be utilized to support years three through five of this program. An appropriation of State funds may occur to support the implementation of the program for years three through five if available federal funds are insufficient to cover program costs.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved May 11, 2021.