



SPONSOR: Sen. McDowell & Sen. Henry & Rep. Heffernan &  
Rep. Longhurst  
Sens. Bushweller, Cloutier, Marshall, Pettyjohn; Reps.  
Brady, Briggs King, Mitchell

DELAWARE STATE SENATE  
149th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 19

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN EARLY PRIMARY GRADES FOCUSED ON REDUCED CLASS SIZE AND AN INTENSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly wishes to encourage Delaware schools to help disadvantaged students in primary grades 1 through 3 to attain a more robust level of academic achievement in the early primary grades and, by doing so, provide them with learning skills that will help sustain them through grade school, high school, and college; and

WHEREAS, it has been demonstrated that smaller class size is an important determinant of student outcomes; and

WHEREAS, smaller classes are particularly effective at raising achievement levels of low-income and minority children; and

WHEREAS, the factors associated with smaller class size, which can enhance academic achievement, include higher levels of student engagement, increased time on task, and the opportunity smaller class size affords to tailor instruction to the students in the class.

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

Section 1. Amend § 1724, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and insertions as shown by underline as follows:

§ 1724. ~~Academic Achievement Awards Pilot Program.~~ Pilot program for disadvantaged students in early primary grades.

(a) The purpose of this section is to implement a 3-year pilot program for disadvantaged students in primary grades 1 through 3.

(b) The General Assembly shall appropriate to the Department of Education \$3 million to fund this pilot program to be disbursed at \$1 million per year for 3 consecutive years.

(c) The Department of Education shall develop guidelines for public schools applying for the pilot program grants issued under this section and shall distribute those guidelines to every qualifying school in the State. The Department of Education shall include all of the following in the guidelines:

(1) Criteria for selecting students to participate in the pilot program. The criteria must include at least the following:

a. That each student in a classroom funded by the pilot program must be from a household whose income is not more than 150% of the 2016 Federal Poverty Level.

b. That the target group of students are those students who are not achieving at grade level and are not placed in or eligible for special education.

c. That the students may be identified through an early learner survey or assessment that helps to identify at-risk early education students who have not entered first grade.

d. That each student in a classroom funded under this section must be randomly selected from the population of students at the public school who meet the criteria in paragraphs (c)(1)a. and (c)(1)b. of this section.

(2) That all teachers assigned to a classroom funded under this section must have at least 5 years of teaching experience and satisfactory performance evaluations. Extra teachers funded under this section are not to be counted in the unit count of a public school receiving a grant under this section.

(3) That upon awarding of a grant under this section, the public school must create in the initial year of the pilot program a classroom for first graders that has a class size of 10 students with at least 1 teacher.

(4) That each student in a classroom funded under this section must receive at least 1 day or two half days of one-on-one reading instruction with a reading specialist teacher each month.

(d) On or before August 15, 2017, the Department of Education shall select public schools to receive grants under this section of up to a maximum of \$200,000 each for 3 consecutive years and shall distribute the funds to the selected public schools.

(1) To ensure uniformity in the collection of data regarding the pilot program created by this section, the Department of Education may not select a public school to receive a grant under this section if that public school has a selection process for the admission of students to the public school.

(2) The Department of Education shall award grants under this section to public schools in each county based as closely as possible on the student population of each county.

(e) The Department of Education shall provide funding in years 2 and 3 of the pilot program to each school that received a grant in the first year of the program at a rate at least equal to the first-year grant. A public school receiving a grant in years 2 and 3 of the pilot program must apply the funding to the same group of students as in year 1 who remain enrolled in the school, while retaining a class size of 10 students per class.

(f) A public school that receives a grant under this section may supplement the grant funding with other funds.

53           (g) The Department of Education shall invite Delaware State University, Delaware Technical and Community  
54 College, University of Delaware, and other institutions of higher learning within and outside the State to collect and analyze  
55 data to assess the effectiveness of the pilot program in conjunction with the Department of Education and the schools that  
56 receive a grant under this section. Any institution of higher learning that collects and analyzes data under this subsection  
57 shall forward its results to the Department of Education no later than September 15, 2020. The Department of Education  
58 shall forward the data collected and analyzed under this section to the Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee no  
59 later than October 15, 2020.

60           (h) The Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee shall conduct a review of the pilot program during the  
61 legislative session that begins in January 2021. The Committee's review shall include a review of the data forwarded to it  
62 by the Department of Education under subsection (g) of this section. The Committee shall report its findings to the General  
63 Assembly on or before May 30, 2021.

#### SYNOPSIS

Some students from disadvantaged backgrounds arrive at school lacking the same vocabulary and word recognition skills of their peers, putting them at a disadvantage when developing literacy skills in primary grades. In analyzing this disparity, studies have shown that the third grade is a critical turning point in educational development and that students who are not performing at grade level by this point will continue to fall behind their peers at an increasingly rapid pace.

This Act will seek to diminish this performance gap by creating a 3-year pilot program for disadvantaged students in primary grades in Delaware public schools. The State will provide \$1 million in grant funding per year, over a 3-year period, to support the pilot program. Under the Act, Delaware State University, Delaware Technical and Community College, and the University of Delaware are invited to help collect and analyze data to assess the program.

Author: Senator McDowell