

CHAPTER 279 , LAWS OF 1971
(Assembly Bill No. 1092, 1970, Approved August 4,1971)

AN ACT providing for the promotion, establishment and operation of local school district environmental education programs, the establishment and operation of a network of Regional Environmental Education Facilities and Centers for the purpose of providing environmental education programs for public and non-profit school students and teachers, for the establishment and operation of a network of Environmental Educational Curriculum Research and Development Centers, and making an appropriation.

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

1. This act shall be known as the "Environmental Education Act."
2. The Legislature finds and declares:
 - a. The concern for the environment of man has become a dominant social issue of our time;
 - b. Since New Jersey is the most highly urbanized and the most industrialized State in the Nation, it serves as a microcosm of the entire country, and shows abundant evidence of environmental breakdown;
 - c. New Jersey's environmental crisis is not limited to tangible pollution problems;
 - d. The State Departments of Education and Environmental Protection have specific interest in improving education as a force for environmental quality.
 - e. The public and Legislature have expressed their concern by the passage of the Green Acres Bond Act of 1961, the Water Bond Act of 1969 and the establishment of a Department of Environmental Protection; and
 - f. It is a prime objective to create an environmentally literate citizenry, who understand their interdependence with and responsibility for the total environment, and who possess the knowledge and concern to solve existing problems and to prevent future ones.
3. The Commissioner of Education is hereby authorized and directed to promote the establishment and operation of local public and non-profit elementary and secondary school environmental education programs, and to assist in the development of such programs.
4. The Commissioner of Education in consultation with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection is hereby authorized to designate and operate and develop Regional Environmental Education Centers and facilities for the purposes of assisting in the development of environmental education programs in each school district and providing environmental education instruction to public and non-profit elementary and secondary students and teachers.
5. Any public or non-profit educational agency may apply to the Commissioner of Education for designation as a Regional Environmental Education Center.
6. Courses of study and schedules of fees of Regional Environmental Education Centers shall be subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education and the State Board.
7. Instruction at Regional Environmental Education Centers shall include, but not be limited to the study of man and his environments, and problems of environmental pollution, erosion and survival as they relate to the fields of ecology and other sciences, social sciences, language arts, mathematics, the arts and humanities.

8. Any public or non-profit school in the State may arrange its schedule in accordance with rules of the Commissioner of Education so that its elementary and secondary school pupils may utilize the services and facilities of an environmental education center and any school, except such school as is operated for profit in whole or in part, may, upon application, cause its pupils to utilize the services and facilities of a Regional Environmental Education Center.
9. Upon proper application submitted to the Commissioner of Education by the local school district, the Commissioner is authorized, subject to available appropriations, to enter into agreements with, and to make cost sharing grants of money to local school districts, New Jersey Public Broadcasting authority or Regional Environmental Education Centers for the purposes of assisting in the costs of services for local student participation and other education services provided by the Regional Environmental Education Centers and the New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority.
10. Upon proper application submitted to the Commissioner of Education by a local school district, the Commissioner is authorized, subject to available appropriations to enter into agreements with, and to make grants of money to such local school district for the purpose of paying half of the cost of constructing and equipping local environmental education facilities.
11. Stepping Stone Environmental Education Center at Branchville, the Conservation and Environmental Studies Center at Browns Mills, and the Sandy Hook Environmental Education Center, by virtue of their long standing and demonstrated capability aided by nearly \$2,000,000.00 in Federal grants, are hereby designated as Environmental Education Curriculum Research and Development Centers for the purpose of providing to local, public and non-profit school districts services such as, but not limited to, development and dissemination of curriculum materials, teacher training, demonstration pilot programs, guidance in facility development and use, and consultative services to municipal conservation commissions and other environmental interest groups. The Environmental Education Curriculum Research and Development Centers shall concentrate their research and curriculum development efforts on problems related to pollution, erosion, land use, ecology, survival and related natural, physical and social sciences.
12. The Commissioner of Education with the approval of the State Board of Education shall:
 - a. Make rules and regulations for the establishment and operation of the Environmental Education Curriculum Research and Development Centers for the purpose of providing for local, public and non-profit school services such as, but not limited to, development and dissemination of curriculum materials, teacher training, demonstration pilot programs, guidance in facility development and use, and consultative services to municipal conservation commissions and other environmental interest groups. The Environmental Education Curriculum Research and Development Center shall concentrate their research and curriculum development efforts on problems related to pollution, erosion, land use, ecology, survival and related natural, physical and social sciences.
 - b. Employ such personnel as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the act.
13. There is hereby appropriated to the Department of Education the sum of \$100,000.00 for the purpose of carrying out the purposes of this act through June 30, 1972, the expenditure of which shall be conditioned upon the approval of at least an equal amount of Federal funds.
14. This act shall take effect immediately.