



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: June 2, 2021  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, and Principals  
From: Kathleen Ehling, Acting Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Student Services  
Apply by: July 2, 2021

## Restorative Justice in Education Pilot Program

In accordance with [P.L.2019, c. 412](#), the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is required to establish a three-year pilot program to implement trauma-sensitive restorative justice practices in 15 public schools equally representing the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of New Jersey. School districts interested in participating in the pilot program shall complete an [application](#) identifying one school within the school district to implement restorative justice practices. Schools selected for participation will be provided with three years of training, consultative support, and resources from Kean University, which was awarded a grant to provide training and technical assistance on behalf of the NJDOE to support this project.

Many educators acknowledge the limitations and adverse effects of student discipline that involves student removals like suspensions or expulsions, leading increasing numbers of school and district leaders to seek alternative, restorative discipline strategies. The philosophy behind restorative practices in education is that school discipline should repair the harm caused to the school community and/or individuals as well as elicit empathy from those who caused harm to the community and/or individuals. When implemented with fidelity, restorative practices can transform educational experiences for staff and students, and research has found that adopting restorative practices can be an effective way to address the discipline disparities negatively affecting Black and Hispanic students when compared to their White counterparts.

The NJDOE supports districts seeking to implement discipline strategies that limit suspensions and/or expulsions, when possible. In alignment with the statute authorizing this pilot program, the conditions to be addressed through the Restorative Justice in Education Pilot Program include:

- Reducing racial disparities in school discipline;
- Improving the socioemotional and behavioral responses of students through the use of more appropriate, and less punitive, interventions; and
- Reducing recidivism rates among students who violate the school district code of conduct.

Schools selected for participation in this pilot program will be reimbursed annually up to \$12,000 for expenses associated with implementing trauma-informed restorative practices. This program is funded entirely by the Restorative Justice Education Fund, which is to be annually credited with moneys appropriated by the New Jersey Legislature. The findings and outcomes of the three-year pilot program will inform the Commissioner's recommendation regarding the expansion of the program to other schools and districts in New Jersey.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about this opportunity, please contact the Office of Student Support Services at [StudentSupports@doe.nj.gov](mailto:StudentSupports@doe.nj.gov).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education  
NJDOE Staff

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group