



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**

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## **New Jersey Department of Education Announces Availability of \$3.95 Million in Grant Funding to Improve Student Literacy**

**Trenton, NJ** – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) today announced the availability of \$3.95 million to support continued literacy education throughout the state. The funding will be made available to school districts via two grant programs designed to improve student literacy.

“Strong literacy skills serve as the foundation to a world-class education,” **said Governor Mikie Sherrill**. “My Administration is committed to ensuring every child has access to the best education possible. That is why we are continuing to invest in evidence-based resources – like the FOCUS and BRIDGE grants – that help to foster our kids’ academic development, giving them the tools necessary to succeed in the classroom and beyond.”

“We want to give children strong literacy skills early in their educational journeys, and we have clear evidence for what works,” **said Education Commissioner Lily Laux**. “Reading depends on two skills: recognizing written words and making sense of them. This ongoing effort brings two initiatives together to support both skills. The FOCUS and BRIDGE grants are a part of New Jersey’s broader strategy to strengthen early learning by helping districts improve literacy. Taking a truly comprehensive approach to literacy is critical to improving outcomes for students across New Jersey.”

### *FOCUS Grants*

Last school year, the NJDOE awarded Funding for Optimal Comprehensive Universal Screeners (FOCUS) grants to 305 school districts. This year, the NJDOE is awarding a total of \$1.95 million to continue FOCUS programs in those school districts.

The grants assist school districts as they continue to implement and improve efforts required by the State to conduct at least two literacy screening assessments each year for all students in kindergarten through grade three. Schools are also required to keep parents informed of screening results. The funding may also be used to provide professional development for teachers.

### *BRIDGE Grants*

The NJDOE is also awarding Building Responsive Instruction through Data-Guided Evaluation (BRIDGE) grants to support schools in using screening data to implement evidence-based literacy instruction in grades kindergarten through grade three. There were 19 school districts that received BRIDGE grants last school year, and those districts have the opportunity to apply for \$570,000 in continued funding this school year.

Separately, an additional 20 school districts will receive \$1.4 million to establish new BRIDGE programs. Districts have until April 23, 2026 to apply for the competitive BRIDGE grants, and the awardees are expected to be announced this summer. BRIDGE grants target almost 120 eligible school districts with the greatest need: those with at least 70 percent of students not meeting proficiency standards in statewide assessments.

The FOCUS and BRIDGE grants announced today were funded in the Fiscal Year 2026 state budget. The Notice of Grant Opportunity and application information for both competitive programs can be found on the NJDOE's [Current Grant Opportunities](#) webpage, with technical assistance sessions being offered for prospective applicants the week of April 13, 2026. Registration information for those sessions is located on the NJDOE's [Events Registration](#) webpage.

“Lasting progress doesn’t come from a single change or mandate, which is why we are also focused on supporting educators to effectively use the data from those screenings and ensuring teachers have the training and preparation they need to improve classroom instruction,” **said Dr. Laux.**

To view how New Jersey school districts have benefited from FOCUS and BRIDGE grants, as well as federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grants, check this online [Literacy Grants Distribution Map](#) for New Jersey.



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