



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

KEVIN DEHMER
Commissioner

July 18, 2025

Gerald Benaquista, Superintendent
Township of Union School District
2369 Morris Avenue
Union, NJ 07083

Debbie Finkelstein, School Lead
Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy
110 South Orange Avenue
Livingston, NJ 07039

Dear Mr. Benaquista and Debbie Finkelstein,

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to inform you that the nonpublic school, Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy, has been approved as a recipient of the FY2026 Teach STEM Classes in Nonpublic Schools grant. This grant is available to nonpublic schools that have formed a partnership with a public school teacher employed by a school district and their school district. The grant program provides additional remuneration for public school teachers to teach STEM classes in nonpublic schools during hours mutually agreed upon by the partnering teacher, school district and nonpublic school.

The grant award is based on the application submitted by Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy on March 18, 2025, in partnership with Michael Spekhardt, who is employed by the school district, and the signed agreements. The approved grant award for Michael Spekhardt is \$26,457.12, which is based on the teacher's 2024-25 employment contract with the school district at an hourly rate of \$87.03, and a maximum of 304.00 hours of teaching. If the teacher's 2025-26 contracted salary was not included with the grant application, please provide it, as the final grant award will be calculated based on the teacher's hourly rate from the 2025-26 contract and the actual hours taught at the nonpublic school, not to exceed the maximum hours listed above.

Following this letter is a Statement of Assurance that must be signed and returned to NonpublicSTEMGrant@doe.nj.gov **no later than July 31, 2025**. Note, the school district and the nonpublic school must each sign and return their respective Statement of Assurance.

The original legislation signed in 2019 ([P.L.2019, c.256](#)) and amended in November 2022 ([P.L.2022, c.119](#)) states the following:

- Grant funds for approved applications shall be allocated by the Department of Education to the school district of each eligible teacher participating in the

program. The school district shall use the funds to provide compensation to a participating eligible teacher pursuant to this subsection including applicable federal employment payroll taxes. The commissioner shall establish the amount of each grant awarded for an eligible teacher, subject to the following:

- A participating teacher shall receive an amount equal to the teacher's annual salary as calculated on a per-hour basis multiplied by the number of hours the teacher will teach STEM classes at a nonpublic school under the program multiplied by 1.25.
- Payments received by a participating teacher under the grant program shall not be considered "compensation" under P.L.2019, c.256 and P.L.2022, c.119 (amended in November 2022).
- As stated in the legislation and the application, at the conclusion of each school year, the nonpublic schools participating in this grant program agree to submit a report on the nonpublic school's implementation of the program, including:
 - (1) The teacher's class schedule for grant year, including the days and classroom hours that the participating eligible teacher taught in the nonpublic school;
 - (2) Any scheduling obstacles that were encountered and how they were addressed;
 - (3) Recommendations to improve the program and its effectiveness;
 - (4) Any observational information pertinent to the program;
 - (5) Copy of any teacher's proof of enrollment in a degree program or a coherent sequence of courses in science, mathematics, technology, or computer science for any partnering teacher who does not have certification in a STEM field;
 - (6) Copy of a valid and effective provisional or standard instructional certificate issued by the State Board of Examiners with an endorsement in a science field, mathematics, technology education, or computer science education for any partnering teacher who obtains certification during the grant period; and
 - (7) Additional information requested by the Commissioner.

Accounting and Payment Process

Grant funding for the teacher will be reimbursed by the NJDOE to the school district in two payments: for teaching that occurs from July 21, 2025, through January 31, 2026, and then again for teaching that occurs from February 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026. The school district will need to collect timesheets from the teacher that must be signed by the lead administrator of the nonpublic school to verify hours of STEM teaching at the school. After completion of the first project period (Jan. 31, 2026) and again after the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2026), the school district must submit to the NJDOE Office of School Finance a payroll expenditure report, including the teacher's name, payroll dates and amounts paid. The NJDOE will provide the detailed reporting instructions when appropriate. The NJDOE will then reimburse the school district for the hours the teacher worked at the nonpublic school.

Revenue to the school district for this grant should be recorded in special revenue fund in revenue code 20-3212 "Nonpublic Teacher STEM Grant," line number 762, in the special revenue fund "Revenue from State Sources" section. Appropriations should be recorded in fund 20 in program code 481, for "Nonpublic Teacher STEM Grant," in functions and objects as allowed by the grant program. The total expenses under this program will be recorded on new appropriation line 88135.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Greg Kocher at NonpublicSTEMGrant@doe.nj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Allen T. Dupree". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Allen" and last name "Dupree" clearly distinguishable.

Allen T. Dupree, Director
Office of School Finance

DC/PB/gk

c: David F. Corso, Assistant Commissioner
Paula Bloom, Executive Director



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**FY2026 Teach STEM Classes in Nonpublic Schools Grant Award to School District Teachers
Statement of Assurances for School Districts**

As the duly authorized chief school administrator of the school district in which Michael Spekhardt is employed, I am aware that the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) has approved the application submitted on March 18, 2025, for Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy (Nonpublic School) to form a partnership with Michael Spekhardt (Teacher) to teach STEM classes at the nonpublic school in FY2026 at such times and during such hours mutually agreed upon by the teacher, nonpublic school, and school district, which may include hours beyond regular public school day hours such as extended day, evening, or weekend programming. The teacher's salary, number of teaching hours, and maximum award amount are specified in the award notification letter dated July 18, 2025. I certify that Township of Union School District shall:

- Submit to the Office of School Finance all required documents to support the amounts paid to the teacher grantee for teaching that occurs from July 21, 2025, through January 31, 2026, and then again for teaching that occurs from February 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026. The Department will reimburse the school district based on the teacher's hourly salary, as indicated in the attached notification letter, and hours worked.
- Fully comply with the original legislation signed in 2019 (P.L.2019, c.256) and amended in November 2022 (P.L.2022, c.119) governing the grant program, noting the following provisions:
 - Grant funds for approved applications shall be allocated by the Department of Education to the school district of each eligible teacher participating in the program. The school district shall use the funds to provide compensation to a participating eligible teacher including applicable federal employment payroll taxes. The commissioner shall establish the amount of each grant awarded for an eligible teacher, subject to the following:
 - A participating teacher shall receive an amount equal to the teacher's annual salary as calculated on a per-hour basis multiplied by the number of hours the teacher will teach STEM classes at a nonpublic school under the program multiplied by 1.25.
 - Payments received by a participating teacher under the grant program shall not be considered "compensation" under N.J.S.18A:66-2.

Township of Union Public Schools

School District Name

08.05.2025

Date

Administrator

Marissa McKenzie

Signature of Chief School Administrator
(Electronic signature is acceptable)

Marissa McKenzie, Asst. Superintendent

Name and Title of Chief School



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**FY2026 Teach STEM Classes in Nonpublic Schools Grant Award to School District Teachers
Statement of Assurances for Nonpublic Schools**

As the duly authorized chief school administrator of Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy in which Michael Spekhardt, currently employed by Township of Union School District, will teach STEM classes in FY2026, I am aware that the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has approved the application submitted on March 18, 2025. The teacher's salary, number of teaching hours, and maximum award amount are specified in the award notification letter dated July 18, 2025. I certify that Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy shall:

- Fully comply with the information as submitted in the aforementioned application, including the subjects and hours taught and represented in the Agreement between the teacher and the nonpublic school. The teacher shall teach only the classes stipulated under the program.
- Verify the hours of STEM teaching by the teacher at the school and sign their timesheets. The teacher shall be paid through their school district of employment, and the NJDOE will reimburse the school district in two annual payments: for teaching that occurs from July 21, 2025, through January 31, 2026, and then again for teaching that occurs from February 1, 2026, through June 30, 2026.
- Fully comply with the legislation signed in 2019 ([P.L.2019, c.256](#)) and amended in November 2022 ([P.L.2022, c.119](#)) governing the grant program, noting the following provisions:
 - The teacher shall provide only secular instruction at the nonpublic school;
 - At the conclusion of each school year, a nonpublic school participating in the grant program established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2019, c.256 and amended in November 2022, P.L.2022, c.119 shall submit a report to the Commissioner of Education containing information on the school's implementation of the program. The report shall include, but need not be limited to, information regarding: (1) the days and classroom hours that the participating eligible teacher taught in the nonpublic school; (2) any scheduling obstacles that were encountered and how they were addressed; (3) any recommendations to improve the program and its effectiveness; and (4) any observational information pertinent to the program.

Nonpublic School Name

Signature of School Lead
(Electronic signature is accepted)

Date

Name and Title of School Lead