



NJDOE News

Contact: Richard Vespucci
For Release: September 28, 1999

Commissioner Hespe Announces Expansion of FANS Project

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today announced that the Department of Education has expanded a three-year project aimed at helping parents gain a better understanding of the state's academic standards. The program, known as FANS (Families Achieving the New Standards), was launched in July 1997.

The goals of the FANS Project are to:

- Inform parents about the Core Curriculum Content Standards as adopted by the State Board of Education
- Involve parents in helping their children reach the standards; and
- Encourage parents to support local efforts to implement the standards in their curricula.

The FANS Project began with a grant from the National Science Foundation to the New Jersey Mathematics Coalition. The Math Coalition, in partnership with the Department of Education, is in the process of providing up to 10,000 FANS workshops for 300,000 parents throughout the state. Today's announcement describes similar partnerships with Fairleigh Dickinson University and Rutgers University to conduct parent workshops in the content areas of world languages and language arts literacy (reading, writing), respectively.

Pilot workshops for world languages and language arts literacy are scheduled for spring, with a full slate of workshops scheduled to begin at this time next year.

"Our rigorous new standards and the more challenging tests that go along with them are essential to the future success of our children," Commissioner Hespe said. "The FANS Project gives parents a firsthand understanding of what we're asking their children to know and do, and how they can become more effective partners in their children's school careers."

The FANS model involves a 90-minute workshop led by trainers and attended by parents. Each workshop includes hands-on activities that are based on the standards and similar to those that their children are doing in class. Parents leave the workshop with suggested activities that they can do with their children.

The newly announced FANS Project for Language Arts Literacy through Rutgers University will follow the model workshop and will be highlighted by an interactive training video. The new FANS Project for World Languages through Fairleigh Dickinson University is envisioned as a three-year program that includes preparing for and conducting the workshops. In addition, this project proposes recruiting world language teachers from prospective teaching candidates and from colleges and universities.

The announcement of the FANS grants today marks the latest effort led by the state to implement the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards, adopted by the State Board of Education in May 1996, describe what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. The standards are in the areas of the visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, language arts literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and world languages. In addition, the board adopted five cross-content workplace readiness standards, which apply to all areas of instruction.

The Department of Education has produced and distributed handbooks, known as frameworks, to schools throughout the state to provide teachers with real-life examples of how they can teach the standards to students. The state is also working very closely with its test contractor and with panels representing a cross-section of New Jersey's educational community to ensure that state tests given at the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades reflect the standards.