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Commissioner Gagliardi Presents 2000-01 Star Schools to State Board of Education

Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. today presented New Jersey's Star Schools for 2000-01 to the State Board of Education. Now in its eighth year, the Star Schools Program is designed to identify those New Jersey schools that have implemented an identifiable "cutting edge" specialization.

"New Jersey's Star Schools each year exemplify what is best about our public schools," Commissioner Gagliardi said. "They lead the way in their distinct and innovative approaches to raise student achievement. I am honored to present them to you today."

Each year, the Department of Education identifies 10 Star Schools. The selection process is one of rigorous competition that includes a multi-stage review. The schools, along with 50 exemplary classroom practices, were originally selected last spring as part of the state's annual Best Practices / Star Schools Program.

"Over the years, the Star Schools Program has shown us that New Jersey's best schools rank with the best schools in the nation," said State Board of Education President Maud Dahme. "We are proud of their accomplishments and wish them all continued success."

The 2000-01 Star Schools are:

- Reeds Road Elementary School, Galloway Township
- Brookside Upper Elementary School, Westwood Regional School District
- Highland-Godwin Elementary School, Midland Park
- Rancocas Valley Regional High School, Rancocas Valley Regional School District
- Readington Middle School
- South Brunswick High School
- Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts, Paterson School District
- Hillside Intermediate School, Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District
- Sunnymead School, Hillsborough Township School District
- Hackettstown Middle School

Jay Doolan, acting assistant commissioner for the Division of Academic Programs and Career Standards, recognized representatives of each school and briefly described the areas of specialization that make them distinctive.

"Our Star Schools share certain characteristics, such as strong leadership, competent professionals, active family involvement and a shared vision," Doolan said. "These schools have demonstrated that they use all school and community resources to increase student achievement."

Each Star School has a particular specialization, has faculty involved in professional development activities that contribute to exemplary practices, attracts the involvement of parents, businesses and the community, demonstrates fiscal efficiency and has an outstanding record of student performance and accomplishments.

Each school was invited to send two representatives to today's meeting.

All of the schools honored today were subjected to a rigorous review. In the first phase, the county offices of education reviewed each application for compliance with laws, regulations and department policy. Then, the applications were submitted to the Department of Education, where panels of experts reviewed the work of their peers and rated each application. A second peer review of the highest-scoring applications was then conducted. In the final phases, the focus of the evaluation returned to the county and local levels. The process culminated in site visits by panel members to verify information in the applications.

Information about the Best Practices / Star Schools Program can be found on the Department of Education's web site:

www.state.nj.us/njded/educators/rpr/recognition/