



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Librera Announces Governor's School of Excellence Criteria; Partnership Grants Program Information at State Board of Education Meeting

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced the criteria for the Governor's School of Excellence program that will provide awards of \$25,000 each to schools that demonstrate significant improvement during a two-year period.

"We know there are any number of schools in our state that are doing exceptional things to serve students," Commissioner Librera said at the State Board of Education's monthly meeting, where he outlined the criteria that will be used to judge the 25 schools that can each receive awards of \$25,000. "This is an opportunity for us to recognize these schools and share their accomplishments with others."

The schools can use the funds for educational purposes which they decide. The schools report to the Commissioner at the conclusion of the school year how they have used the money. Each school may be recognized only once in three years. Schools that receive awards will serve as demonstration centers for exemplary programs.

Commissioner Librera thanked the two corporations which are initially sponsoring the Governor's Schools of Excellence program -- Pepco/Conective, formerly Atlantic City Electric Company, and First Energy Corporations, formerly Jersey Central Power & Light Co. Both companies donated \$1 million each for the program.

Dr. Librera also thanked Jeanne Fox, president of the state Board of Public Utilities, and Seema Singh, director of the Division of the Ratepayer Advocate, for negotiating the sponsorship by the two utilities.

- Also during the State Board of Education meeting, Commissioner Librera announced a second award program, a Partnership Grants program where Higher Education institutions in New Jersey join with school districts in an important innovation.
- The grants — no award exceeds \$85,000 — are for one year in order to help projects begin. The grants are provided through a \$500,000 donation by Elizabethtown Gas to promote Higher Education - Public School Partnerships for educational quality.

Both the Governor's Schools of Excellence and Partnership Grants programs are prime examples of Gov. James E. McGreevey's and the Department of Education's dedication to the DOE mission statement: providing "leadership for a superior education by utilizing multiple and diverse paths to success for all children in New Jersey."

Governor's Schools of Excellence

Commissioner Librera said that in order to qualify for the Governor's Schools of Excellence program, schools must demonstrate academic achievement by significant improvement in state test scores, standardized test scores and other relevant measure, of achievement as well evidence, in at least five of the following:

- Outstanding growth in literacy measures as evident in state test scores, standardized test scores and other relevant measures of achievement;
- Meaningful improvement for parent involvement in school matters evident in both quality and quantity;
- Improvement in Student attendance, graduation rates and dropout reduction;
- Reduction in measures of violence and vandalism as supported by Annual Violence and Vandalism Report or other measures;
- Creative as well as increased and documented involvement with partnerships and/or the community;

- Creative and increased use of technology as a tool for learning;
- Demonstrated improvement in quality in professional development;
- Demonstrated success in providing better learning opportunities for specialized populations such as special education and second language learners; and
- Other category — this is an area where a school may provide particular documentation of significant improvement.

Nominees for the Governor's Schools of Excellence program may come from a variety of sources including self-nomination. A committee co-chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief of Staff will evaluate the nominations.

The other members of the committee include the department's three regional Assistant Commissioners, the Assistant Commissioner for Educational Programs and Assessment, the Governor's Counsel for Education, as well as one representative from New Jersey Education Association, Principals and Superintendents Association, New Jersey School Boards Association, Newark Teachers Union, New Jersey Association of School Administrators, and the State Board of Education. The committee will make recommendations to the Commissioner for action.

Partnership Grants Program

Under the Partnership Grants program, higher education institutions submit written proposals that describe the program and demonstrate how this one year support will assist in a multiyear partnership effort. The proposal must identify the partnership school district(s) along with other partners involved as well as plans as to how the effort will be sustained after the first year. Areas that will be given strong preference are:

- Broad Consortium of School Districts and Community Partners with efforts to bring schools, colleges, businesses and community partners together in innovative ways, to support learning and different models of learning.
- Professional Development with particular emphasis on group development along a continuum of novice to accomplished teachers.
- Parent Leadership and Involvement in Positive Redirection of School Community
- With special interest on efforts and programs likely to change low involvement to active, increased, and positive involvement relative to important matters in public schools.
- Mentoring for Students and Teachers that have creative ways in which mentoring can demonstrate results and be sustained over a significant period of time.
- Literacy, with primary emphasis on innovative partnerships that support Early Literacy as well as partnerships which have the potential to improve literacy among middle/high school students as well as adults.
- Leadership Training with particular interest for those new leadership models and programs that produce leadership development for teachers and students.
- Recruitment and Preparation for Science and Math Teachers with programs that are likely to increase quality and quantity of these educators are sought.
- Second Language Learners Education with emphasis on either important preparation for teachers and/or ways in which these students may master, at a more accelerated rate, the skills necessary for successful learning.

The proposals will be evaluated by a committee consisting of the Deputy Commissioner, Chief of Staff, appropriate Regional Assistant Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner for Educational Programs, Director of Innovative Programs, a representative from the State Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the State Board of Education. The Commissioner will make the final determination.

In September 2002, Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Librera hosted a statewide Educational Summit in which they outlined the Administration's 21-point plan for educational reform. The 21-point plan is available on the Department of Education's website: www.state.nj.us/education.

There are five key components of the Governor's 21-point plan for education. The Governor's Schools of Excellence program addresses all five key components, which are: recognizing teacher and administrator quality; raising student achievement; recognizing diverse and multiple paths for student success; celebrating innovative and outstanding practices/programs; and engaging the public communication and public accountability.

For more information about either program announced today, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.