



## NJDOE News

### **Garden State Coalition of Schools Twelfth Annual Breakfast Meeting**

Commissioner William L. Librera  
May 27, 2003

- Greetings Executive Director Strickland and members of the Garden State Coalition of Schools. I am impressed with your longevity as an association of suburban districts as you conduct your 12<sup>th</sup> annual breakfast meeting on behalf of the children in your many school districts. You are to be applauded for your advocacy and your dedication to excellence in your schools.
- I know that your major frustration is with a stalled economy that has prevented state aid increases in amounts that you are entitled to under the funding formula for the second year in a row. It is my observation that your schools are weathering the drought very well because you administrate your districts well so that you can withstand these periods of poor economic performance that are beyond any of our control.
- Governor McGreevey has done his best to fund districts with the greatest need in this budget, but we all know that is not very satisfying from your point of view. Everyone looks forward to the budget year that will open up our ability to spend on important state priorities once again, and education is at the top of the list in the McGreevey administration.
- Since the beginning of this administration, the department has been guided by some basic assumptions that will continue to influence our education agenda. These include the belief that all children can learn if taught well, and that there must be high expectations, as well as multiple and diverse opportunities for children to meet the standards. We also believe that research and analysis must be applied to teaching and learning effectiveness, and standards and outcomes must be held constant while we apply strategies and techniques in different ways.
- It is within these guiding principles and assumptions that we proceed as we carry out Governor James McGreevey's 21-point education reform plan.
- I can provide an update for you on the five major themes that Governor McGreevey and I have used to group his 21 educational reform initiatives. All of the critical issues in education fit within these five themes --
  - Teacher and administrator quality;
  - Raising student achievement;
  - Diverse and multiple paths for student success;
  - Innovative and outstanding practices/programs; and
  - Public engagement and communication and public accountability.
- In the area of teacher and administrator quality, we have begun to work intensively on initiatives that we hope will place the most capable teachers in the classroom and keep them there. Studies and statistics show that while we may be training enough people to fill the teaching ranks, the shortages are caused by an attrition rate that is much too high within the first few years. This is a problem that affects all of us to some degree and we must work collaboratively to improve it.
- As educators, we all know research clearly shows that student achievement of our standards depends heavily upon the capacity of educators to translate core standards into meaningful student learning. We know the critical role played by teachers and school leaders in promoting student success. As we raise the expectations and support for improved student learning, we must raise the expectations and support for high-quality teaching and leadership that focuses on improving and enhancing the instructional programs in our schools. We must ensure that those who work in our schools are well prepared to help students achieve in accordance with our Core Curriculum Content Standards.
- Earlier this year, the department presented the State Board of Education with a proposed licensing code for all who want to obtain a license to practice in New Jersey that embeds professional standards for teachers, school leaders and educator preparation programs.
- The new rules proposed for licensure are part of a comprehensive review of all chapters of the state

administrative code to identify regulations that were overly prescriptive, outdated, or creating high cost and low benefit to those affected by them. The new licensing rules are linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards and contain the following: the new draft professional standards; tighter certification requirements for teacher preparation programs; a continuous path of teacher training from college preparation to ongoing professional development; and definitions of a highly qualified teacher required by No Child Left Behind.

- Professional standards will help to ensure that New Jersey teachers and school leaders have a clear vision of the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in helping students achieve at high levels. Professional standards will also help to ensure that teachers and administrators develop mastery of the content, pedagogy and leadership skills that are the building blocks of quality instruction and real school improvement.
- Once adopted, these standards will guide college administrator preparation programs, as well as mentoring and continuing professional development.
- The move to professional standards for teachers and school leaders moves us away from a concern with the list of courses educators take in order to be licensed toward an emphasis on the knowledge, skills and dispositions expected of those who are licensed to practice. The focus is on outcomes rather than inputs. The clearer we can be about what a responsible practitioner looks like, the better the standards will serve in guiding and supporting efforts to prepare, license and develop teachers and school leaders who can provide high-quality services to New Jersey students.
- New Jersey's professional development initiative for school leaders will also be based on and driven by standards. The initiative is expected to go into effect in September 2004 and will focus on supporting administrators in providing instructional leadership. Each administrator will develop an individualized professional development plan that aligns with the proposed state standards for school leaders, personal and professional goals and one or more specific school/district needs. Plans will ground activities in objectives related to interests and needs in the areas of improving teaching, learning and student achievement in accordance with state standards. The department will bring together an advisory group to develop the plan framework, oversee the development of resource planning materials and provide advice on implementation and best practices.
- Some areas of major change in the proposed licensing code in addition to inclusion of the proposed professional standards for teachers and administrators include-
  - Requiring certificate holders to obtain any licensure or certification that may be mandated by state or federal law or by a licensing board to hold their position.
  - Eliminating emergency certificates for all instructional certificates and establishing an alternate route for special education and bilingual/bicultural education teachers;
  - Providing for one year of mentoring for novice teachers;
  - Introducing a subject matter specialization to teach in grades six through eight to assure that all teachers are content prepared. This also aligns the state with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act as it relates to new middle school teachers;
  - Requiring national accreditation for college teacher preparation programs;
  - Proposing requirements for a distance learning instructor;
  - Requiring a master's degree for school business administrators;
  - Eliminating the assessment requirement for principals and superintendents;
  - Including a master's degree in curriculum and instruction for principal and superintendent certification
  - Adding a noninstructional school nurse certificate to allow a person to perform school nursing services but not be able to teach in areas related to health;
  - Renaming the pupil personnel services certificate "School Counselor," and eliminating the teaching requirement; and
  - Adding a new subchapter on professional development for school leaders.
- Issues that the State Board and the department are continuing to research through focus groups, public testimony, and other valuable input include:
  - Distance Learning;
  - Preparation needed for teaching middle school students;
  - No Child Left Behind and the state's high uniform standards for already certified teachers;
  - The vocational-technical certificates; and
  - Technology and the teaching of technology.
- As part of our efforts to address the teacher shortage, we took a look at our highly successful alternate route to certification that was instituted in 1983. At the May State Board meeting, we announced two new programs in the state's alternate route system to address concerns about the lack of pre-service

experiences and problems associated with the 20-day mentoring requirement in the original alternate route program. The first is a Master of Arts Teaching (MAT) that will be offered at New Jersey City University in the northern region and Stockton State in the southern. Both will provide satellite locations for increased access and convenience.

- The program will consist of a four-credit summer program that will provide experiences related to the initial needs of new classroom teachers to replace the 20-day initial mentoring requirements; a three-credit experience in the fall and spring semesters; and a three-credit summer experience following the first year of teaching. The year-long mentoring requirement will remain in effect.
- The second is the Community College Provider Plan developed in conjunction with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and New Jersey Association of School Administrators. This plan will feature a uniform curriculum at all community college sites. A major innovation will be an "Introduction to Teaching" pre-employment course that will begin during the summer to count for 45 of the 200 required hours for teachers in the conventional program.
- The second important area of concentration is that of raising student achievement. This goal goes to the heart of education's purpose and its promise. It is also the basis for the No Child Left Behind Act.
- A year ago, we consolidated all functions of the Abbott implementation mandates into one division. In order to assess the status of the reform process that began five years ago, the New Jersey Supreme Court granted our request for a year's time-out to assess where districts are with whole school reform efforts. In conjunction with this approved hiatus, we have required all Abbott districts to submit to the department by July 15, 2003 a three-year operational plan.
- The plan will include an assessment of the first four years of Abbott implementation, so that useful work will be preserved. The goal is to simplify the budgeting process while incorporating the requirements of NCLB. Program staff, fiscal staff, and Local Support Teams from the department will continue to assist schools and districts in planning and developing their three-year operational plans and annual school-based budgets.
- One of the central initiatives of the McGreevey Administration is the early literacy program. Research is clear that children who read at or above grade level by the third grade are going to have much greater success in the rest of their school years than those who cannot read by grade three. We have made significant progress over the last year by linking intensive Abbott early literacy programs with Reading First and all other department literacy efforts, such as the reading coach program. The coordination of these programs is yielding increased Abbott preschool enrollment.
- The Abbott preschool program is showing great promise for helping children to have early success in school. This program can be of critical importance to a child, especially one who is from an environment that puts him or her at risk of failure. Our preschool programs integrate educational, social, and family programs so that the child and the family can help develop the skills and self-esteem that children need in order to be successful in school and life beyond school.
- We have high hopes that our strong early childhood programs in districts where children are at risk of failing in school from the beginning will give those children the strong start they need to be reading on grade level by the end of third grade.
- In addition to attention to preschool programs, we have trained and assigned 30 reading coaches to teachers in 80 schools who are working with non-achieving students and may not know some of the most effective ways to reach slow readers. Governor McGreevey has committed \$10 million a year for four years to provide the reading coaches to districts most in need of this assistance.
- We have just about completed the first year of the reading coach program, and we have begun to assess its success. The program has proven highly successful for the coaches, the students, and the schools. We are making plans for the continuation of the initiative that will allow those who are trained each year to be part of a pool of experts available to the department as needed to expand the program. We are also offering an extension of the program to the coaches' home districts where there is an identified need for their expertise.
- The state also has begun to implement a six-year \$120 million Reading First grant to improve literacy from K-3. Districts with low reading scores are eligible for this grant money, specifically for early literacy initiatives.
- In order to assist teachers even more with what children should be taught in order to promote early literacy, we have revised the Core Curriculum Content Standards in math, science and language arts/literacy, which have been adopted by the State Board and are much more specific than the original ones adopted in 1996. They were especially strengthened in language arts literacy from preschool to grade three.

- The other areas of standards are still being reviewed and discussed before adoption. There has been much intense discussion by the State Board and considerable public input about whether world languages and the arts should be required in high school. The State Board will also have the task of responding to the new law mandating them to make technology a Core Curriculum Content Standard and defining what that would entail. The board recently adopted a comprehensive technology plan entitled "Working Toward the Future with our Children" which already has guidelines on a sound technology programs for schools.
- Much of our education policy at every level must focus on the underachieving students in our schools. The department is in the planning phase for creating a student-level databaseso that we will be able to track students individually from year to year, especially to determine whether we are making adequate progress in helping underachieving students. These data are necessary for us to identify trends and patterns of achievement and pinpoint the gaps that still exist in all districts. Once it is operational, we can reduce the load on the districts from multiple data collections. A pilot project is expected this fall.
- The U.S. Department of Education announced May 8 that New Jersey's Accountability Workbook for NCLB has been approved for implementation. We will work with districts to make sure we are meeting all of the requirements under the law. This is a new set of requirements for all of us, and we need to proceed in a coordinated effort. The underlying premise for NCLB is to make sure every child in our care is achieving.
- When we talk about standards and achieving them, we are required to have instruments to measure progress. The department's new tests - NJ ASK 3 and 4 -- developed by the Educational Testing Service were administered the week of May 20 in language arts literacy and math for grades 3 and 4. Grade 4 science will start in spring 2004. This contract will improve our communications on testing and test scores to districts, teachers, parents, and students, with special emphasis on giving teachers information they can use to shape classroom instruction. We will not have to administer ESPA again because the federal government has given us permission to use the new test for uninterrupted reporting of progress to meet federal requirements.
- Once the third- and fourth-grade tests are implemented, the state will work with ETS to develop the tests for fifth and sixth grades by 2004-05 and seventh and eighth will follow.
- Another important initiative related to the development of new assessments is the one in which business and industry are partners. We have jointly announced the nine pilot districts for a program under a targeted grant to the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE) and the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) consortium in the amount of \$750,000, to be supplemented by \$100 thousand from the Business Coalition and \$400 thousand of in-kind support from CREATE member organizations. The grant is for a pilot project to create performance-based tests to be used in conjunction with standardized tests. We announced the nine pilot districts at the April State Board meeting. We have selected Willa Spicer from South Brunswick, a recognized expert, to head the pilot project.
- A third important policy area that we have identified is the creation of diverse and multiple paths for student achievement. We must all begin to release education from the restrictions of the past and begin to find new paths to student success.
- The department recently hosted regional meetings on the 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade Pilot Program designed to encourage high school seniors who have finished all graduation requirements to enroll in college-credit courses or seek volunteer opportunities, among other things, for both personal and intellectual growth. The 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade Pilot Program is an initiative high on the McGreevey administration's list of educational priorities. The pilot program encourages districts to offer high school seniors a variety of out-of-school options, such as online courses and community service work. There are 85 schools participating. Today we will have an event to launch this exciting program that will hopefully open up new educational possibilities for our seniors.
- In addition to a rigorous academic education, we also must consider that some careers need additional preparation and alternative paths even in high school. We have launched four different career academy programs operating where they did not exist last year. These began with the partnership of Pfizer and Morris School District with a \$500,000 commitment from Pfizer to build a career exploration laboratory for a medical/health program that will ultimately benefit all students at Morristown High School. The second was PSE&G that became a partner with the Trenton School District and Mercer County Community College to develop an engineering program. The third was Commerce Bank partnering with Cherry Hill, Drexel University, Rutgers University, and Camden County Community College to develop the Cherry Hill Academy for Studies and Experiences.
- One of the overarching issues that the department is concerned about is the articulation of instruction from pre-K through grades 12, 14, 16, or even 20. Our students will be served best if we can reduce redundancy and repetition in our education levels and truly build on the skills and knowledge with each year of education. This is one area that lends itself to increased cooperation between the department and institutions of higher education. Our newly revised standards are much more specific than the first set

adopted in 1996. That articulation can be extended beyond K-12.

- To advance this concept, we have also announced plans for an Entrepreneurship/ Business Management Academy with Camden County College, Rutgers University, and six Camden High Schools participating. The academy is the first seamless pre-kindergarten through senior year of college initiative in the state of New Jersey, and it is a model program for the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade pilot program and senior year initiative.
- We also are prepared to initiate seven "renaissance schools" as a pilot program. These will be small schools designed to improve learning, as well as improve the surrounding neighborhoods. These will be pilot projects and we will observe the effects of these schools on urban development, as well as on academic success. The first was launched in Trenton earlier this year and the second in Neptune last week.
- If we are to motivate schools and school personnel to really invest their total talents and resources into teaching our students more effectively, we must reward success. A fourth important element in our reform plan is to create rewards for innovative and outstanding practices and programs.
- The department announced in May the criteria for the Governor's Schools of Excellence Program that will provide awards of \$25,000 each to schools that demonstrate significant improvement in a two-year period. The funds can be used for educational purposes to be decided by the school. The school will report to the Commissioner at the end of the school year on how it used the award and it will serve as a demonstration center for exemplary programs. A school can win once in three years.
- Pepco/Conective, formerly Atlantic City Electric Company, and First Energy Corporations, formerly Jersey Central Power & Light Co. donated \$1 million each for the three-year program.
- Working with higher education, we also announced in May a Partnership Grants program where institutions of higher education (IHEs) in New Jersey can join with school districts in an important innovation. The IHE must submit a proposal describing the program and demonstrate how one-year support will assist in a multiyear partnership effort. The proposal must identify the partner school district, as well as other partners, and an explanation of how the effort will be sustained after the first year.
- Preferred areas for the innovative project include successful models of learning, a continuum of professional development; parent leadership, mentoring, literacy, math and science teacher recruitment, and programs for second language learners. Grants are for one year, will not exceed \$85,000 and are provided through a \$500,000 donation by Elizabethtown Gas to promote partnerships of schools and higher education to improve educational quality.
- The department has worked with the Governor's Character Education Commission created in February 2002 to define best practices and made recommendations to the Governor in September. The DOE has won a new \$1.9 million federal Partnerships in Character Education grant over the next four years to measure the impact on students of best practices in curriculum infusion and science-based programs. New Jersey is one of only five states to receive a Partnership in Character Education award because of the progress we have already made in establishing character education services and programs for students. This is another programmatic path to student success. It is difficult to be an achieving student if negative behaviors are allowed to affect your performance in school.
- The last area of our administration's program is public communication, engagement and accountability.
- We have shifted away from emphasis on compliance and oversight to one of support and technical assistance to local districts by reorganizing the department into two functional sectors - central operations and field operations.
- By having regional offices in the north, center and south of the state, we will be better able to deliver direct services and technical support to all districts. Some of the services that are available in our regional office are statewide planning; creation of a seamless system of education pre-k to 14, 16, or 20; shared services; county AVA commissions, ETTCs, and Educational Services Commissions; certification examiners; replication of effective programs; and technical assistance for problem areas.
- We have utilized our regional structure numerous times to present information on important initiatives to all superintendents and other staff from your districts. The most recent were the Amistad regional events earlier this month where we could explain the work of the new Amistad Commission created by statute and alert districts to their role in curriculum development for social studies that incorporates topics related to African-American history.
- Our latest communication initiative is the network of schools. This will create a technology-based link between school districts and the DOE and will address three areas: the achievement imperative, special

education reform, and small schools. The department hosted a videoconference from Trenton that included seven other sites for about 60 superintendents and other educators. It is crucial that we use creative ways to allow the education community to share information on practices that work.

- We have plans for many more initiatives in these five critical areas as the year progresses, as well as for working toward full implementation of the many we have already launched. I look forward to many more opportunities to work with your organization as we develop programs to provide the finest possible education for all of our students.