



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

**Tom Rosenthal
Richard Vespucci
Jon Zlock
609-292-1126**

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Commissioner Librera, DOE Launch 12th Grade Option Pilot Program *Senior-year Initiative Plays Key Role in McGreevey Administration's Education Reform Plan*

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, joined in Trenton today by Department of Education (DOE) officials and a host of schools statewide, officially launched the 12th Grade Option Pilot Program, an initiative that allows students in their senior years the flexibility to further enhance their education after completing the high school graduation requirements.

"The senior-year program is essential to both the McGreevey Administration's and Department's commitment to providing multiple paths to success for our children — the most important part of our mission," Commissioner Librera said. "Through this program, schools throughout the state will provide their students with myriad chances to further their education as they close the book on their K-12 careers and embark on promising futures."

The basic premise of the 12th Grade Option Pilot Program is for students to increase their options and make their senior years as productive, challenging, and beneficial as they can, Librera said. The program allows seniors to get the most out of their last year and to begin preparing for a college education or a career following graduation.

Commissioner Librera was joined this afternoon at the State Museum by keynote speaker Harold Levy, former Chancellor of New York City Schools, and representatives from many of the more than 85 high schools participating in the project. The kick-off event, from 1 to 3 p.m. included a panel discussion on senior-year options.

Participating in the panel were Richard Ten Eyck, DOE Assistant Commissioner for Educational Programs and Assessment; Peter Contini, president of Salem Community College; Fred D'Antoni, principal of Bordentown High School; Ann Dudley, principal of Phillipsburg High School; Don Neal, a teacher at Franklin Township High School; and Orvyl Wilson, principal of Franklin Township High School.

Schools joining the program have until Friday, May 30 to file their senior-year initiatives with the regional offices of the Department of Education. A final list of participants will be established by early summer. The pilot project should be implemented in such schools in time for the 2003-2004 school year.

The pilot program encourages high school seniors who have finished all graduation requirements to enroll in college-credit courses or seek volunteer opportunities, among other endeavors, for both personal and intellectual growth.

Many schools throughout the state already subscribe to the basic tenets of the senior-year option program. The 12th Grade Option Pilot Project, in addition to setting the necessary framework for schools across the state, also helps bridge the gap between programs already in use in districts and programs that can be developed by districts in the future.

Examples of successful senior-year programs shared through the pilot program include, but are not limited to:

- A "Senior Studies" program at Newton High School, Sussex County. There, seniors are encouraged to participate in four areas — coursework through Sussex County Community College, a structured work program through school, a senior colloquium and a careers instruction program that helps students learn about various careers;
- "Target: Teach Parsippany" in Morris County. Seniors interested in the teaching profession participate in a mentoring program and take after-school evening sessions on various teaching initiatives. Students are also able to work with teachers in the classroom at each of the three grade levels: elementary, middle and high school; and
- Various programs at Phillipsburg High School, Warren County. Seniors are encouraged to enroll in

programs at Warren County Community College and participate in a structured work experience. Other options include an internship at Lafayette College for serious art students, a dual college and high school enrollment program conducted at the high school and an allied health certificate program.

Other examples of the types of opportunities for students who have successfully completed their high school graduation requirements and passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) include:

- Traditional programs as approved locally by district boards of education;
- Option B group or individual programs designed to meet group or individual needs. Such programs are certified by the principal and filed in the district. The projects are interdisciplinary, theme-based or individual studies. They are subject to review by the Commissioner;
- Service-learning projects offered as field-based, preferably through community partnerships, with close supervision and under the guidance of a school principal or designee from the community organization;
- Work-based internships or apprenticeships;
- Advanced placement programs; and
- College courses offered both on-site or off-site through agreements with two- or four-year colleges;

Schools involved in the pilot project are coordinated by the DOE regional offices. All 21 counties are represented by schools for the senior-year options program. Each school is encouraged to share best practices with both the regional offices and each other. The regional offices have helped facilitate the program through a series of meetings prior to today's event. They will continue to hold meetings in the future.

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