



Department Announces Partnership with New Jersey Institute of Technology and the New Jersey School Boards Association to Coordinate 'Future Ready Schools-NJ' Recognition Program

For Immediate Release

Contact: Michael Yaple
David Saenz

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609-292-1126

Trenton, NJ – A new program designed to help New Jersey school districts identify and meet their needs for digital learning was announced by Education Commissioner David C. Hespe at today's meeting of the State Board of Education. The state Department of Education will partner with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) to develop the "Future Ready Schools-New Jersey" recognition program.

The "Future Ready Schools-New Jersey" (FRS-NJ) program is designed to promote digital learning throughout New Jersey's elementary and secondary public schools, and to engage students in developing 21st Century skills by encouraging the best use of digital learning tools by educators, according to Hespe.

"The program's ultimate goal will be to promote transformative change within our state's districts and schools to support student learning and to ensure that they are ready for college and a modern workforce," he said. "FRS-NJ will provide needed guidance and resources to school administrators, school board members and other school leaders, helping them identify gaps in districts' preparedness for digital learning, then directing them to resources that can help address those gaps," the Commissioner explained.

Modeled after the successful [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) program, and aligned to the national "Future Ready Schools" program, "Future Ready Schools-New Jersey" is slated to launch in October at the NJSBA's annual conference, Workshop 2016, in Atlantic City.

The FRS-NJ program will be housed in the Collaborative for Leadership, Education and Assessment Research (CLEAR) at NJIT, said Kevin Belfield, dean of NJIT's College of Science and Liberal Arts. Within CLEAR, the Education in a Digital Universe project will design, develop, implement and coordinate an integrated program to promote digital learning in school districts.

"The vision is to foster the effective use of digital learning tools by educators, so that all students will be college- and career-ready citizens, able to be productively engaged in the digital universe," said NJIT President Joel S. Bloom.

NJSBA Executive Director Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod noted the importance of technological skills for students entering college and the workforce.

"The National Commission on Mathematics and Science for the Twenty-first Century put a number on it: More than 60 percent of new jobs that our students will enter this century, will require a background in science, technology, engineering and math," Feinsod said. "The new FRS-NJ program will meet a crucial need by helping our public schools prepare our students for success in these fields."

FRS-NJ will use data derived from the Department of Education's NJTRAX digital learning technology readiness reporting system, and other metrics. Initially created to track schools' readiness for PARCC online testing, this system has contributed to New Jersey's having the highest state digital testing rate for PARCC in 2015. Results showed 99.4 percent of New Jersey students who took PARCC did so on computer.