



# Education



## **A Commitment to Department of Education Priorities** *Providing Leadership to Prepare Students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### **A Commitment to the Department of Education's Mission**

Our State Constitution requires that New Jersey maintain a system of public education that ensures every child has access to a thorough and efficiently provided education. Recognizing that children are not all the same, the Department is committed to going beyond this constitutional minimum and offering the children of every community a multitude of excellent educational options -- options tailor-made to their different needs, learning styles, and interests. Given the increasingly competitive nature of the global economy, the State's goal must be to help every child learn as successfully as possible.

### **Protecting Priorities in the Face of an Economic and Fiscal Crisis**

The Department's priorities reflected in the Fiscal Year 2011 Budget:

- New Jersey takes its commitment to Pre-K to 12 education seriously, which is why the State resources devoted to school district aid have been increased by approximately 1% in this year's budget. Two important aid categories that were increased include preschool education aid and extraordinary special education cost aid;
- The Department will seek to replace approximately 20% to 40% of the decrease in federal resources through submitting a second Race to the Top application. The Department believes that with sufficient support from New Jersey's education stakeholders, the application will have a good chance of success.

### **Making Tough Decisions**

The Department's leadership understands the need to share in the burden of overall budget-cutting, and has identified areas where reductions can occur.

- Pre-K to 12 education consumes over one-third of State and local spending in New Jersey. In a fiscal crisis as serious as today's, every single departmental budget has been reduced, even the budget of the Department of Education. Funding for after-school programs and adult education was eliminated in this Proposed Budget. These programs are highly valued, but with resources severely limited, the Department is focusing upon fulfilling its core obligations to the children of New Jersey.

### **Making the Department of Education Work Better for New Jersey**

To ensure that every New Jersey child receives the excellent education he or she deserves, the Department of Education plans to move away from a relationship with its school districts that might be termed Accountability by Regulation and towards an Accountability for Results approach. School districts will feel less burdened by

excessive report filing requirements and picayune regulations, and more supported as they work to help every child progress in content knowledge and the mastery of essential skills.