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## NJDOE News

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### Jersey City Test Scores Show Impressive Gains - Progress Noted in Newark and Paterson -

Math and writing scores measured by the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) reached an all-time high during the 1998-1999 school year in Jersey City, a state-operated school district that the State Board of Education is considering gradually returning to local control.

For the first time since state takeover, Jersey City now meets certification standards in writing with an 85 percent HSPT score in this subject area. Jersey City had previously met all certification standards in grade eight.

"I am extremely pleased with the progress shown by Jersey City high school students," said Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe. "Clearly, the district is on track for a return to local control.

"The students and their teachers deserve credit for a job well done. State District Superintendent Dr. Richard DiPatri also deserves commendation for leading the school system to heights it has not reached in a long time."

Continuing signs of improvement in Jersey City include the fact more than 4,000 students have registered for the district's comprehensive summer school program, which is open to all students. In addition, the district won five "Best Practices" awards from the Department of Education this year. Over the last three years, Jersey City has won 11 such awards, a feat that has never been achieved by any other school district in the history of the awards.

"I am proud of the children of Jersey City for doing so well on the HSPT," said DiPatri. "Improvements that were once slow to come in the early days of state operation are now coming at a rapid pace. There is still room for improvement on the HSPT, but clearly today's results are a validation of the high quality education being received by the children of Jersey City and the hard work being done by these children as they achieve at high levels. The administration and teaching staff are to be commended for their hard work and efforts during the past year."

HSPT test results for the three state-operated school districts -- Jersey City, Newark and Paterson -- were presented to the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meeting today. Overall, scores in the districts were up in five of nine rating categories. Math scores were up across the board.

The HSPT scores for Jersey City were 85 percent in writing, up 6.5 percentage points from last year; 75.9 percent in math, up 6.1 percentage points; and 69.8 percent in reading, down 5.1 percentage points. While lower than last year, Jersey City's reading scores are still above what they were in 1993-94, the first administration of the HSPT.

For the first time since state-operation began, Newark made solid progress, posting strong gains in two categories. Newark's writing score was 65.7 percent, up 4.6 percentage points from last year; math score, 57 percent, up 7 percentage points; and reading score, 53.5 percent, down 9.8 percentage points.

Hespe said he was disappointed that reading scores were down in all three districts. "However," said the Commissioner, "as our whole school reform program takes hold, and as we refocus our attention on reading at the secondary level, I fully expect test scores to move up over time."

Paterson showed impressive gains in math in the 1998-99 school year. Its score, 68 percent, was up 9.4 percentage points from last year. The district's writing score was 62.3 percent, down 4.1 percentage points, and its reading score, 52.3 percent, down 12.2 percentage points.

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