



NJDOE News

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[Student Applications Received for the 10 Pilot Interdistrict Public School Choice Districts](#)

The New Jersey Department of Education today released the numbers and grade levels of students who have applied to participate in the state's new Interdistrict Public School Choice pilot program. The 10 pilot choice districts for the program's inaugural year in school year 2000-2001 have received approximately 150 applications from students interested in exercising a choice in the school that they attend. A chart is attached that provides application totals broken down by grade levels for each choice district.

"In the first year of this innovative program all timelines were tight, and student application deadlines spanned the winter holidays when many schools were closed," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "Despite those tight timelines, we are seeing a good start to this program. "The enthusiasm for this program is high as we continue to field calls from many parents interested in exercising a choice in their children's education. This first year has proved to be a momentum building year, and we expect the program to expand even further in the years to come."

"We launched the pilot program for interdistrict public school choice because we believe parents should be able to select the most appropriate educational program for their children," said Governor Whitman. "I believe that this program will improve student's chances for success as they strive to meet our rigorous academic standards."

"I am extremely pleased that several of our choice districts received the maximum number of student applications for the slots available," said Hespe. "For example, Upper Freehold High School received the maximum number of applications for the slots available in ninth grade, Folsom received the maximum number of applications for the slots available in grades three and four, Kenilworth received the maximum number of applications for the available slots in grade nine and Mine Hill received the maximum number of applications for all of their available slots."

Governor Whitman's school choice program was approved by the State Board of Education in 1999 and the Governor signed a bill into law enacting the school choice program last month. The program provides a solid funding base for school choice through the creation of a new aid category called "School Choice Aid" whereby each choice district will receive state funding for each student it accepts in the following amounts: \$7,083 for elementary students; \$7,933 for middle school students; and \$8,500 for high school students. The act also allows for the establishment of 10 choice districts in the first year of the program, 5 in the second, and 6 in the third, for a total of 21 choice districts limited to one per county.

"It is important to note that our experience here in New Jersey has mirrored the results we have seen in other states," said Hespe. "We must remember that we have had a good result given that this is a pilot program with only ten districts participating out of 600 statewide. In other states, where school choice has been a statewide program the number of students participating is usually around two percent.

"It is my belief that this pilot choice program will be so successful that we will quickly be able to expand the program statewide."

Districts participating in the pilot's first year are: Bloomsbury, Cumberland Regional, Englewood, Folsom, Hoboken, Kenilworth, Mine Hill, Salem City, Upper Freehold Regional, and Washington Township in Burlington County.

Additional information about Interdistrict Public School Choice is available on the Department of Education's website:

<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/choice>