



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Hespe Announces [New Program to Recognize Exemplary Principals](#)

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today announced a new program to recognize New Jersey's outstanding school principals. Known as the *New Jersey Principal of the Year Program: Rewarding Visionary Leadership*, the initiative is a partnership of the Department of Education with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the higher education community.

"School principals play a vital role in their school districts' efforts to provide a safe learning environment where staff can offer students opportunities to attain the Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards," Commissioner Hespe said. "With much of the emphasis on school improvement now placed at the school building level, principals have become key agents in reform. Research is clear that a common characteristic of successful schools is the strong leadership and vision of principals who ensure that motivated and well-trained staff have the resources they need to help students improve their performance.

"Through the *New Jersey Principal of the Year Program: Rewarding Visionary Leadership*, the partnership will conduct an annual search to identify the individuals who represent the highest qualities of school leadership and who deserve our utmost thanks and appreciation," the Commissioner said.

The department and its partner organizations intend to select nine recipients each year representing all three levels of education: elementary, middle and secondary in the north, central and southern regions of the state.

Each principal selected will receive two awards: a \$10,000 stipend from Goals 2000 federal education funds and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation that may be applied to school-based improvements and professional development opportunities; and a \$1,000 unrestricted grant from the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence.

In return for accepting the honor and stipends, principals selected in the program assume responsibility for a special service of their choosing during their term of office. For example, the principals may opt to:

- Serve as adjunct professors or distinguished lecturers at colleges or universities.

- Advise the Department of Education on educational policy issues.

- Conduct research at the district or state level.

- Sponsor an open-house at the principal's school where visitors learn about innovative school practices.

In addition, all candidates selected in the program's inaugural year will be expected to participate in a convocation scheduled for the summer of 2002. The convocation will give the selected principals an opportunity to interact with national experts in the field of education, as well as a forum to discuss ways in which they can assist their peers in other school districts.

Candidates must be currently employed as a principal and have at least four years of experience as a principal. Interested individuals may nominate themselves, but the candidate's chief school administrator or school board president, and at least three references must submit a letter of recommendation on behalf of the candidate.

Applications will be distributed next month and will be due back to the Department of Education by December 1, 2000. The applications will be reviewed and winning candidates will be announced in May 2001.

For more information, contact the Office of Innovative Programs, 609-777-0800.