

Testing Reform— Creating a New Vision for Assessment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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▶ [Testing Reform: Creating a New Vision for Assessment, Summary of Pilot Proposal](#) (PDF )



Governor, Education Commissioner Launch Program to Reform Student Assessment

PISCATAWAY, November 15, 2002—Governor James E. McGreevey and Commissioner of Education William Librera today announced a project to pilot a new method of assessing student progress toward New Jersey's academic standards.

Speaking to more than 300 parents, educators and local school officials during a conference at Livingston College at Rutgers, the State University, the governor and commissioner described the five-year program, which will use a system of "performance-based assessments" in nine pilot school districts beginning in January. Performance-based assessments include student projects, demonstrations, competitions and problem-solving tasks that complement the state's standardized testing program. The project will lead to the development of performance-based assessment programs in all areas of the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards, starting with math, language arts and science, according to McGreevey.

The pilot project is co-sponsored by the state's major education organizations, represented by the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE), and the state's preeminent business leaders, represented by the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (BCEE).

"Our administration is committed to this type of business/education/government initiative, which will advance an important education goal—improving the way we measure our students' progress toward New Jersey's academic standards," said Governor McGreevey. He noted that the pilot project resulted from a "Call to Action for Assessment Reform," issued last April by CREATE and BCEE.

"New Jersey must ensure that its students achieve rigorous standards that prepare them for higher education and employment," McGreevey continued. "To do that, we need a method that accurately measures the progress of each and every student in our public schools."

"Through the pilot program," explained Commissioner of Education Librera, "the state intends to develop a balanced assessment system that places equal emphasis on state-administered standardized tests and state-approved, locally-administered and locally-scored performance-based assessments."

First-year funding for the pilot program will include \$750,000 from the state, \$100,000 from BCEE and more than \$400,000 of in-kind support from CREATE.

"We thank Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Librera for their commitment to developing an assessment system that will help educators address the individualized educational needs of all students," said JoAnn D. Bartoletti, executive director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and chairperson of CREATE. "Performance-based assessments will allow students to demonstrate a true understanding of the knowledge and skills embodied in our Core Curriculum Content Standards."

"High-quality assessments will help drive educational improvement in all of our schools," said Mary O'Malley, chairwoman of BCEE and vice president for Local Initiatives of Prudential Financial, Inc., who announced BCEE's financial commitment to the pilot project. "New Jersey's business community is a full partner in this effort to reform assessment as a way to enhance teaching and learning."

Project components: The initial phase of the pilot project - targeting math, language arts and science - will run

from January 2003 through June 2005. In the first year, teachers from grades three and six, as well as high school, will receive training on how to develop, score and use the data from performance-based assessments. These teachers will then develop performance-based tasks closely aligned with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards in math, language arts and science.

The resulting assessment tasks will be field tested by teachers in the pilot districts, with a team of experts (an "external validation team") reviewing a random sample of results to ensure their validity and reliability. This process will be repeated during the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years, with the pilot districts ultimately developing three to four performance-based assessments each in math, language arts and science in grades 3-8. (Performance assessments in other subject areas will be phased in from 2006 through 2008).

The pilot program was unveiled during a Public Education Institute conference, "Testing Reform: Creating a New Vision for Assessment," held today at Rutgers. The conference was co-sponsored by CREATE and BCEE.

Besides the announcement of the pilot project, the forum included a keynote address by Dr. Willa Spicer, assistant superintendent, South Brunswick Township Public Schools—a school system that has established a process of performance assessment. In addition, John Mooney, education writer for *The Star-Ledger*, moderated a discussion of standardized testing, performance assessment and teacher training. Panelists included Commissioner Librera; Dr. Spicer; Carlo Parravano, director, Merck Institute for Science Education; Joyce Powell, vice president, NJEA; Christine Kane, assistant superintendent, Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District; Mary Fowles, assessment specialist, Educational Testing Service; and Ada Beth Cutler, dean, School of Education, Montclair State University.

CREATE is an alliance of the New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey School Boards Association and the Public Education Institute. CREATE was formed in 1999 in response to a concern that New Jersey had lost its focus on the most important reason for assessing students—to provide educators with the information necessary to help all children realize their full potential as students. Over the past three years, CREATE has studied research on effective assessment practices and sponsored two statewide conferences.

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce is an association of New Jersey business leaders, educators and policymakers who support a strong, continuously improving standards-based public school system. The BCEE Executive Committee includes representatives of Prudential Financial, Inc., Verizon, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Infineum USA, Fleet Bank and the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. The BCEE promotes policies and implements programs that support the business community's goals for pre-K through 12 and higher education. It has had a strong impact on the course of education reform in the state. To date, more than 900 New Jersey businesses have been engaged in one or more of the BCEE programs or policy efforts. Focal points of BCEE efforts include developing a quality educational system of standards, assessments and accountability; quality teacher development; infusion of technology into education; and workforce readiness. [For more information on the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, please visit www.bcee.org.]