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NJDOE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN EDUCATION 2002

Commissioner William L. Librera

December 6, 2002

- Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Librera have grouped the state's educational initiatives into five major themes to be addressed:
 - Teacher and administrator quality;
 - Raising student achievement;
 - Diverse and multiple paths for student success;
 - Innovative and outstanding practices/programs; and
 - Public engagement and communication and public accountability.

Teacher and Administrator Quality

The Department of Education has:

- Worked with the Professional Teaching Standards Board to develop "draft" teaching standards that are aligned with national standards and will be adopted after stakeholder input has been incorporated. Once adopted, these standards will guide college teacher preparation programs, as well as mentoring and professional development.
- In conjunction with the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) consortium, recommended the adoption of national professional standards for school leaders and national professional accreditation for preparation programs. Once adopted, these standards will guide college administrator preparation programs, as well as mentoring and professional development.
- Started work on another support option for the alternate route to certification that allows prospective teachers to fulfill the requirements through a Master of Arts in Teaching program.
- Proposed a change to the grade point average (GPA), which was adopted by the State Board on Nov. 6, to lower it to 2.5 for those who graduate from college prior to September 1, 2004 to allow more flexibility in the eligibility requirements for teacher certification. Those who graduate after September 1, 2004, will be required to meet the more rigorous 2.75 grade point average requirement.
- Issued a Request for a Proposal (RFP) for bids to develop a new Teacher Certification Information System, which is a Web-based automated system that will facilitate all aspects of the certification process. The goal of automating the system is to streamline the process and eliminate the backlog by processing applications for teacher and administrator certificates and endorsements. The system is begin operating in 2003.
- Collaborated with corporate partners to replicate successful models of professional development, such as the Merck Summer Professional Development Model for Science Teachers that is currently being adapted for literacy and mathematics.
- Worked vigorously to extend the present 100-hour professional development process to a more rigorous and coherent approach to professional development for all teachers.

- Recommended that teachers pursue national certification, which is a rigorous process that requires teachers to assemble professional portfolios, include samples of student work and lesson plans, and submit videos of their instruction and teaching methods. There are currently only 48 teachers in our state who hold a national certificate. The goal is to have at least 2400, or one per school building.
- Worked with the Governor on the teacher's advisory council and participated with the Governor in the teacher town meetings in every county.
- Presented the \$25,000 Milken awards to six individuals for educational excellence for the first time in New Jersey. The awards/recognition program for the Milken awards was attended by Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Librera on December 5. Another prestigious teacher award program was December 2 in Trenton with the Governor and Commissioner in attendance honoring county teachers of the year, present and past state teachers of the year, and their superintendents and board members.
- Won an award of \$7.9 million in a state grant from the USDOE over a period of three years to enhance teacher quality throughout the state. The grant was awarded to New Jersey for the DOE proposal to redesign teacher education programs; strengthen the alternate route; and provide mentoring support for novice teachers.
- Initiated discussion with county community colleges to assist with programs to upgrade the credentials of teacher aides under No Child Left Behind to meet new more rigorous standards.

Raising Student Achievement

The Department of Education has:

- Upgraded the quality of the preschool programs in the Abbott districts which have 70% of the eligible children enrolled. New staff that is hired is certified, and those who have been in the program but are not certified are working on obtaining their training and credentials. We have given districts early childhood curriculum guidelines and strategies to assist them in implementing the preschool programs.
- Trained and assigned 30 reading coaches to teachers in 80 schools who are working with non-achieving students and may not know some of the most effective ways to reach slow readers. Governor McGreevey has committed \$10 million a year for four years to provide the reading coaches to districts most in need of this assistance.
- Chaired the Governor's Task Force on Improving the Quality of Early Literacy Education in New Jersey. The task force was charged with the responsibility of identifying best practices in teaching literacy and making sure we in New Jersey are not leaving any child behind because he or she cannot read. The June task force report contains valuable recommendations for developing a strong literacy program.
- Won approval for a six-year \$120 million Reading First grant to improve literacy from K-3. Districts with low reading scores are eligible for this grant money, specifically for early literacy initiatives.
- Along with Governor McGreevey, launched the Governor's Book Club to encourage K-3 students to read.
- Revised the Core Curriculum Content Standards in math, science and literacy, which have been adopted by the State Board and are much more specific than the original ones adopted in 1996. The other six areas of standards are still being reviewed and discussed before adoption.
- Is in the planning phase for creating a student-level database so that we will be able to track students individually from year to year, especially to determine whether we are making adequate progress in helping underachieving students. These data are necessary for us to identify trends and patterns of achievement and pinpoint the gaps that still exist.
- Won \$13.2 million dollars in federal grant money to provide English language instruction for the approximately 100,000 5-17-year-olds whose English proficiency is limited. In addition, we won an additional million dollars a year for three years from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to offer subgrants to schools that enroll significant numbers of refugee children.
- Shifted the emphasis in the three state-operated school districts to steady improvement toward achievement goals that are reachable so that the districts can be returned to local control. Commissioner Librera has met several times with the three districts and is working with two of them on superintendent

searches.

- Will soon award a new testing contract to produce statewide tests in language arts literacy and math for grades 3 and 4, starting in the spring of 2003 with grade 4 science to start in spring 2004. This contract will improve our communications on testing and test scores to districts, teachers, parents, and students, with special emphasis on giving teachers information they can use to shape classroom instruction.
- Announced the targeted grant to the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE) and the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) consortium in the amount of \$750,000, to be supplemented by \$100 thousand from BCEE and \$400 thousand of in-kind support from CREATE member organizations. The grant is for a pilot project to create performance-based tests to be used in conjunction with standardized tests.

Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement

The Department of Education has:

- Launched four different career academy programs operating where they did not exist last year. These began with the partnership of Pfizer and Morris School District with a \$500,000 commitment from Pfizer to build a career exploration laboratory for a medical/health program that will ultimately benefit all students at Morristown High School. The second was PSE&G that became a partner with the Trenton School District and Mercer County Community College to develop an engineering program. Two others awaiting launch are partnerships between Verizon and Englewood's Dwight Morrow High School and Commerce Bank with Cherry Hill to develop a finance academy.
- Assisted Englewood School District with its academies at Englewood that include programs in information systems, law and public safety, finance, and pre-engineering with performing arts and teaching to follow. These programs are the solution to a desegregation order to the district that has produced over thirty years of litigation.
- Proposed a pilot project to revise the structure of the senior year for students who have passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). We will examine the many options we could offer students, such as service projects, internships, online courses, college-level courses, career academies, and others. We have approached the community colleges to become an integral part of this alternative path.
- Are prepared to initiate five "renaissance schools" as a pilot program. These will be small schools designed to improve learning, as well as improve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Innovative and Outstanding Practices and Programs

The Department of Education has:

- Established a Governor's Schools of Excellence program to recognize and reward schools for outstanding achievement.
- Won a federal grant of \$11 million over the next three years to support the development of charter schools throughout the state. Charter schools are currently serving nearly 13,000 students in pre-k to grade 12 and have provided an educational choice for parents and students since 1995.
- Worked with the Governor's Character Education Commission created in February 2002 to define best practices and made recommendations to the Governor in September. The DOE has won a new \$1.9 million federal Partnerships in Character Education grant over the next four years to measure the impact on students of best practices in curriculum infusion and science-based programs. New Jersey is one of only five states to receive a Partnership in Character Education award because of the progress we have already made in establishing character education services and programs for students.

Public Communication, Engagement and Accountability

The Department of Education has:

- Shifted away from emphasis on compliance and oversight to one of support and technical assistance to local districts by reorganizing the department into two functional sectors - central operations and field operations. A large part of the field operations will be delivered by three regional offices that have incorporated the county offices into the regional delivery structure. Another part of the department with extensive field operations is the new Abbott division that works directly with the thirty Abbott districts.