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State Board of Education Launches Initiative Supporting International Education; Department of Education Prepares Newly Formed Leadership Team for National Institute

Declaring that participation in international studies and development of an awareness and respect for citizens of other countries is essential for all New Jersey students, the State Board of Education has launched an initiative supporting international education. The board today adopted a resolution recognizing November 17-21 as International Education Week. In addition, Commissioner of Education William L. Librera announced the creation of an International Education Leadership Team that has been invited to Washington DC to participate this month in a three-day institute on the topic.

These and other activities correspond to Governor James E. McGreevey's call for students to read about cultures and traditions from their own heritage as well as those in other nations, to use technology, to learn about world affairs, and to learn one or more world languages.

"I fully support the State Board of Education and Commissioner Librera in their efforts to ensure that our students learn from a global perspective," Governor McGreevey said. "No quality education system can be complete without learning about the people, languages and cultures of our international community.

"New Jersey is the right state in the right location with the right blend of diversity for international learning to flourish," the Governor continued. "Now, as International Education Week approaches, is the right time to focus our attention and efforts on this vital topic."

"The State Board is committed to the goals of international education for New Jersey's students," said State Board of Education President Arnold Hyndman. Dr. Hyndman, who will serve with state board member Maud Dahme on an ad hoc committee chaired by board member Kathy Dietz to study the topic, said he expected the committee in the coming months to draft a preliminary plan for phasing in and implementing a New Jersey international education initiative that will be presented to the full board for its consideration.

As the board's ad hoc committee begins to gather information, Commissioner Librera has appointed a New Jersey State Leadership Team to participate in the States Institute on International Education in the Schools, to be held from November 17-19 in Washington, DC.

New Jersey is one of 22 states invited to participate in the institute, co-sponsored by the National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Coalition on Asia and International Studies in the Schools. National and state leaders in education, policy, business and philanthropy will convene to address strategies to ensure that students are prepared for a globally interconnected world.

New Jersey's State Leadership Team is composed of: Lucille Davy, special counsel to the Governor for Education; Kathy Dietz, member of the State Board of Education; Dwight Pfennig, Deputy Commissioner of Education; Richard Ten Eyck, assistant commissioner for the Division of Educational Programs and Assessment; and Janis Jensen, world languages coordinator.

"Most Americans have lacked knowledge of other world languages, regions and cultures," said Commissioner Librera. "However, we are now beginning to recognize the necessity of building international themes into all of our content areas. I am confident that through the information obtained at the states institute, and the technical assistance offered by other organizations, New Jersey will develop and implement a coherent state plan to incorporate international teaching and learning into our schools."

The Commissioner noted that educators and citizens throughout New Jersey recognized the need to improve student understanding of other languages and cultures in 1996 when the State Board of Education adopted academic standards known as the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Those standards required students to

learn at least one language and culture other than English, beginning in elementary school.

State Commerce Secretary William D. Watley expressed his support for the upcoming event. "International Education Week is the perfect opportunity for students to recognize New Jersey's own cultural diversity," he said. "As globalization continues to expand, students can begin their own worldwide tour by exploring the Garden State's rich "melting pot" of ethnic culture, language and heritage, a multicultural legacy that is woven throughout our diverse communities. In addition, students will learn about different economic aspects of international relationships, including monetary systems and foreign trade, two important facets that impact states like New Jersey."

The current initiative is expected to result in an action plan to incorporate international skills into the teaching of all core content areas, deepening global and intercultural links at every grade level and within every subject taught.

At today's meeting, the state board also heard from two special guests who spoke about international education. Sang Hong, a student at Edison High School, spoke about her experiences as a learner of three languages and the need for more international content in school programs. Vivien Stewart, the vice president of the Asia Society and executive director of the National Coalition on Asia and International Studies, spoke about the perspectives of state, national and international leaders in education, policy, and business, underscoring the need to fill the international-knowledge gap in American schools.

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Dr. Hyndman highlighted some previously established activities and programs in New Jersey schools:

- Six New Jersey school districts are receiving federal grants totaling \$1,357,000 for their efforts to expand their elementary world languages programs and for professional development of teachers. The districts are: Hackettstown, Newark, and East Brunswick, in collaboration with Edison, West Windsor-Plainsboro and West Orange.
- The Department of Education has identified model world languages resource centers to provide technical assistance and other resources to school districts.
- A number of districts are beginning language instruction in less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, at the elementary level.
- New Jersey currently has memoranda of understanding with France, Spain and Italy to promote educational and cultural relationships that will benefit students and teachers in New Jersey and in these countries. As a result of these agreements, some New Jersey schools are developing partnerships with schools in these countries.
- In October, 10 New Jersey social studies teachers spent two weeks in Germany as part of a study group to learn firsthand about the political, social and economic aspects of life in modern Germany. The program is sponsored by Fairleigh Dickinson University and the German Foundation, Atlantick Brucke.
- Several commissions have been created to help educators identify the key contributions of specific ethnic and cultural groups and state-level educators will continue to incorporate their work into New Jersey classrooms.
- Many New Jersey colleges and universities focus on international education and international issues as evidenced by a wide array of courses offered.
- Some New Jersey high schools and middle schools are enhancing their curricula by offering courses in international studies linked to an international baccalaureate program. Students who choose to participate in such programs and complete them successfully are qualified for further studies and postsecondary education virtually anywhere in the world.