



NJDOE News

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New Jersey Selected for Grant to Attract and Retain High Quality School Leaders

New Jersey is one of 15 states selected to receive funds for a multi-year project to upgrade and improve the training, development and retention of school superintendents, principals and other school leaders. Deputy Commissioner Dwight Pfennig today announced that New Jersey is receiving the funds under the State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP). SAELP is a consortium of national education organizations led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and consists of the Education Commission of the States, the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors Association.

The grant, underwritten by the Wallace Foundation, would fund the project for a maximum of \$600,000 over the next three years.

"This grant will allow us to build upon the rigorous requirements for local school leaders that were adopted by the State Board of Education in December 2003," said Deputy Commissioner Pfennig. "Our activities over the next three years will emphasize the need for superintendents and other administrators to promote and enhance opportunities for teaching and learning, thereby raising the level of student achievement."

By receiving this grant, New Jersey will be able to expand activities it had begun in 2001 in the first SAELP project, which supported the creation of state level policies to strengthen school leaders and focus their work on instructional leadership and school improvement.

The new grant embraces the theme *Leadership for Learning: Breaking Through to Student Achievement*. Two breakthrough ideas will be featured. The first will ensure that New Jersey implements standards-based licensure for school leaders and ensures that they have the necessary knowledge and skills needed for continuous school improvement and improved student achievement. The second will create improved conditions of leadership practice in order to recruit and retain talented professionals for school and district leadership positions.

"Our previous SAELP grant helped complete a missing element in our standards-based reform agenda," said Richard C. Ten Eyck, assistant commissioner for the Department of Education's Division of Educational Programs and Assessment. "We need to develop strong standards-based reform related to the preparation, licensure and professional development of school leaders, to complement standards-based reform we had already accomplished in student performance and teacher quality."

"We also have to refocus our efforts to align with the growing recognition that significant improvement in student achievement can result from effective school leadership that is focused on teaching and learning," Ten Eyck continued. "Strong instructional leadership fosters a culture of professionalism that is committed to high levels of academic achievement for all students."

The Wallace Foundation recently announced its award of \$3.6 million to New Jersey and to 14 additional states for the first year. States will be able to renew their grants for up to two additional years based on results from the first year.

"We hope to see these states offer innovative approaches to the rest of the country to result in better learning for all children, especially those with the greatest needs," said M. Christine DeVita, president of The Wallace Foundation, an independent private foundation established by DeWitt and Lila Acheson Wallace, the founders of The Reader's Digest Foundation. Its mission is to enable institutions to expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people.

The 15 original SAELP states are: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia. These additional funds will allow three to five states to be added to the SAELP project.

