



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Librera Continues Pilot Program Tour *Program Targets Increased High School Graduation Success*

As part of a continued emphasis on creating better alternatives for graduation requirements should students not pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today visited Franklin High School in Somerset County for the second of five visits to the Intensive Learning Summer Institutes.

"These five institutes will enable the DOE to study how students who do not pass the HSPA after two tries can find a better alternative than the current system we have, which is the Special Review Assessment (SRA)," Commissioner Librera said. "The purpose of the pilot program is to try to cut down on the number of students who fail the HSPA twice and end up graduating from high school via the SRA, the current alternative means for garnering a diploma."

In mid-June, the Department of Education (DOE) announced the summer institutes, which are open for 50 students in each of the following districts: Englewood, Hillside, Jersey City, Franklin and Vineland. Commissioner Librera visited James J. Ferris High School in Jersey City on Tuesday and will also visit Englewood on July 26, Vineland on July 27 and Hillside on July 29.

There is \$1 million budgeted in Jersey City, Englewood, Franklin, Hillside and Vineland to demonstrate the Administration's commitment to the belief that all children can learn if provided with the right opportunity. A fifth visit to Englewood is in the works.

"While the SRA was a good idea at its inception and helped many people who had difficulty with standardized test graduate from high school, the number of students using the alternate route process has gotten completely out of hand," the Commissioner said in June.

"We believe that every child can learn, and we think we can prove it through these summer institutes," the Commissioner said. "These 250 students will receive five weeks of intensive instruction during the summer from some of the best teachers in the state. At the end of the course, the students will take HSPA again, and we are confident that many of them will achieve better results."

"When we hosted our first Education Summit two years ago, both Governor James E. McGreevey and I shared the goal of creating more effective programs for students, particularly in the summertime for students who can take the opportunities provided to them and succeed," Commissioner Librera said. "This is one of those programs that benefit not only the students who are participating directly, but also those whose future will be influenced by the changes made based on these results."

Commissioner Librera said he hoped to have results of the pilot program by the fall in order to select the next course of action. Last summer, the DOE released a draft White Paper on the SRA process, which is found online here:

http://www.state.nj.us/njded/assessment/hs/sra/sra_white_paper.htm

The White Paper recommends abolishing the SRA process. However, since its release, the DOE has further studied how to amend Special Review Assessments. An announcement on the process is expected in the fall.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.