



NJDOE News

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Twenty-two New Jersey Schools Honored as 2004-05 Governor's Schools of Excellence

Twenty-two schools from throughout New Jersey took center stage today in ceremonies honoring them as Governor's Schools of Excellence for 2004-05. The schools were selected for the significant efforts they have made to improve.

Now in its second year, the Governor's Schools of Excellence Awards Program was established to support and recognize schools that have shown significant improvement and promise. Each school receives a \$25,000 award for showing improvement in at least five of nine categories over the course of two academic years.

"The schools we are honoring today are making great strides in educating our young people, the most important resource of our nation," said Acting Governor Richard J. Codey. "Each of these institutions should be proud of the outstanding contributions and scholastic accomplishments that earned them this special recognition. Their hard work and dedication in the community will undoubtedly impact and improve the lives of countless individuals."

"Schools of excellence are schools that each day use all of their resources to provide the best learning environment and experiences possible for each and every student," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera at the ceremony, which was held at the Masonic Temple in Trenton. "These schools all share in this quality and are well-deserving of our praise and recognition."

Schools selected as Governor's Schools of Excellence must meet five of the following criteria:

- Outstanding growth in literacy measures, as demonstrated by improvement in test scores and other measures of achievement;
- Meaningful and demonstrative improvement in parental involvement in school matters;
- Improvement in student attendance, graduation rates, retention rates, and/or dropout reduction;
- Reduction in violence and vandalism as demonstrated in the annual Violence and Vandalism report and other measures;
- Creative and increased involvement with partnerships and/or the community;
- Increased and creative use of technology as a tool for learning in a school's curriculum;
- Demonstrated improvement in the quality of professional development of teachers;
- Demonstrated success in improving learning for special needs and/or specialized populations; and
- Other category: this is an area where a school may submit documentation that shows areas of significant improvement that may not fit one of the criteria above.

Each school will use its \$25,000 award to continue its improvement efforts. Below are highlights for the schools honored today.

Chelsea Heights School Atlantic City: After being labeled as a school needing improvement in 2001, the school administration and staff made a commitment to significantly raise the level of student achievement. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act in the last two years. The educational program emphasizes the acquisition of life skills and encourages all students to perform to the best of their ability while developing self-esteem and mutual respect.

John C. Milanese Elementary School, Buena Regional School District: Teachers, staff, students and parents collaborate to provide a stimulating learning environment. The school has improved academic achievement through diverse, quality programs, such as its supplemental reading intervention program, its partnership with Johns Hopkins University using the Success for All Math Wings program, and expanded in-class support services.

Hoover Elementary School, Bergenfield School District: "Many Faces from Different Places All Learning Together," sets the tone of an atmosphere that instills self-esteem, success and pride for all students who attend Hoover School. Student performance on state tests in language arts literacy and mathematics has been at a high

level for the past three years.

Bret Harte Elementary School, Cherry Hill Public Schools: The school has demonstrated outstanding levels of proficiency in language arts and mathematics across different populations. Systemic, ongoing and focused staff development provides the tools for teaching and learning that support academic achievement. A model of shared decision making includes every member of the community in school improvement efforts.

Cape May City Elementary School, Cape May City School District: The school provides a safe environment in which students feel loved, accepted, supported and challenged. The school makes a concerted effort to involve parents in their children's education. Staff serve as educational leaders, instructors and mentors to a diverse body of students, and their efforts are all aimed at increasing student achievement.

Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Academy, East Orange School District: Teachers, parents and staff at the school work together to create a culture that exudes excellence. Significant academic improvement is the result of setting high expectations and standards, creating demanding content and instruction, and using multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools.

Alexander Street School, Newark Public Schools: The school community creates a safe and nurturing environment that encourages high expectations, respect, creativity, and success for all students. The staff's willingness to take risks and experiment with innovative avenues to increase student performance has resulted in significantly improved test scores.

Branch Brook School, Newark Public Schools: The staff provides the students, parents and community the opportunity to collaborate in a structure that supports ongoing improvement that emphasizes learning across curriculum lines and the use of multiple intelligences. The school's staff persistently challenges the students to learn through real life discovery experiences, thereby enhancing their sense of personal competence and self-esteem.

Logan Elementary School, Logan Township School District: The school has consistently strong scores on state tests. Student achievement is bolstered by a strong commitment to integrated technology that is used to support rigorous instruction. A two-year development initiative in differentiated instruction and a commitment to arts integration provide additional opportunities for students to achieve at high levels.

Birches Elementary School, Washington Township: Creative and innovative teaching practices, outstanding curriculum, exemplary professional development, extended school learning community, and significant improvement in literacy and mathematics underscore the school's commitment to excellence. The school's documented increase in student performance is a direct result of these factors.

Wedgwood Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools: The school has a supportive, involved community and its teachers have taken advantage of a locally offered Summer Professional Development Institute. School administrators and staff want students to experience success from meeting high expectations. They also want to foster a positive feeling about the school.

Whitman Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools: The school has experienced significant growth in standardized test scores over the past three years. The school's language arts and mathematics programs incorporate a balanced literacy model, flexible grouping, differentiated instruction and Everyday Math instructional strategies. The school works closely with Rowan University and The College of New Jersey to develop new curricula.

Mary J. Donohoe School, Bayonne Public Schools: Students have demonstrated significantly improved performance on state tests since 1999. The school has been recognized for its successes by the New Jersey Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, the Reading is Fundamental program, and through the Department of Education's Best Practices program.

Cadwalader Elementary School, Trenton Public School District: The school has willingness to try different ways to help all students succeed. The school has shown steady growth on its standardized tests for the past 13 years. It has a caring and dedicated staff, as well as involved parents and community members.

Conackamack Middle School, Piscataway Township Schools: The school has demonstrated the importance of strategic planning in delivering rigorous and effective instruction to all students. By successfully implementing these plans, the school saw substantial gains in student performance on standardized tests. Highlights of the plans include professional development, use of community resources, and data analysis.

Martin Luther King Intermediate School, Piscataway Township Schools: The school has demonstrated an increase in test scores and a decrease in incidences of violence and vandalism. The school has a Reading Buddies program that pairs senior citizens with special needs students, and a "Soaring High: a student recognition program.

Kennedy Park School #24, Woodbridge Township Schools: The school serves the needs of a highly diverse and increasingly mobile population by creating a sense of community and pride through citizenship and character-education programs, through award and incentive programs, and through parent outreach programs. The school focuses its energies on delivering highly effective instruction from caring and compassionate teachers.

Matthew Jago School #28, Woodbridge Township Schools: The school's faculty and staff have engaged the entire community to provide a learning environment that matches the school's mission, *Putting Children First*. A district-wide Extended School Year Program is also conducted at the school for eligible classified students (the school's population includes 40 percent special education students).

Henry Hudson Regional School, Henry Hudson Regional School District: The small school provides a comprehensive curriculum aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards and fosters high academic achievement. The school nurtures a willingness on the part of each pupil to accept his or her responsibilities as a citizen.

Wolf Hill Elementary School, Oceanport: The school has demonstrated significant improvement on language arts literacy tests. The school had previously administered reading and writing tasks that helped guide its efforts to improve its curriculum and methods of instruction. The school has also developed a professional growth / support system to provide training for staff in areas critical to achieving the district's goals.

Mahala F. Atchison School, Tinton Falls School District: The school community collaborates to develop an educational plan tailored for its students. Multi-age, looping and traditional classrooms, and a Montessori kindergarten class are just a few of the programs offered to the students. Staff development was conducted in the areas of multiple intelligence and brain-based learning.

Quinton Township School, Quinton Township School District: The school uses available resources to overcome obstacles related to poverty. Staff members are involved in continuous improvement efforts. A school-based structure of shared leadership and responsibility has helped the school achieve academic excellence in all areas. The school features a homework center, tutoring program, counseling, and in-class support are some of the ways the school helps every student experience success.