



CHRISTIE REFORM AGENDA

RETHINK, REFORM, REBUILD NEW JERSEY

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The Christie Reform Agenda: Putting New Jersey's Children First By Challenging the System *Demanding Accountability, Rewarding Highly-Effective Teachers and Empowering Parents*

"I'm a public school product and I love the public school teachers that helped to lay the foundation in my life for being able to get to this point in my career. And I believe in a strong public education system, and a well funded one. But you know, at some point there has to be parity. There has to be parity between what's happening in the real world and what's happening in the public sector world."

- Governor Chris Christie's speech to the League of Municipalities, 2/24/2010

Governor Christie has outlined a package of reforms to improve New Jersey public schools by challenging the status quo and transforming a system that has fallen behind. The Governor's reforms will fundamentally alter New Jersey's education system to make teacher effectiveness and student achievement the driving forces behind every policy and practice.

Governor Christie's Reform Agenda will move public education in New Jersey away from an antiquated, ineffective model that props up failing schools and toward a system that demands accountability, rewards highly effective teachers, utilizes performance measures and ensures each and every child receives the quality education they deserve.

Improving Public Schools By Rewarding Effective, High-Quality Teachers and Demanding Accountability in the Classroom

Rewarding Innovative, Effective and High-Quality Teachers. New Jersey needs to attract and retain effective teachers, especially in the state's most challenging schools and districts.

Today, teacher compensation is determined by years of service or degree and credit accumulation, neither of which accurately measures a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Further, many current collective bargaining contracts stand in the way of efforts to reward teachers who are getting results, pushing limitations or working in challenging environments.

Governor Christie's Reform Agenda turns the current system inside out and finally puts effective, quality teaching ahead of seniority and lackluster results:

- Prohibiting salary schedules or compensation policies that reward seniority alone;

The State of Education in New Jersey

New Jersey spends \$25 billion on education per year.

Statewide per pupil spending was the highest in the nation for 2007-2008 at \$17,620.

In 2009, New Jersey's Achievement Gap Persists...

The achievement gap between wealthy and low-income students for 8th graders in math is nearly the same as it was 19 years ago.

The gap in New Jersey 4th grade math between at-risk students and those not at risk did not change significantly in 13 years.

Over 6 years, the gap in New Jersey 8th grade reading between black or hispanic and white students did not change significantly. Nor did the gap in 4th grade reading between at-risk and those not at risk.

Sources: NJ Department of Education, New America Federal Budget Project

- Prohibiting the use of graduate degree accumulation as a basis, in and of itself, for salary increases, except in areas where graduate degrees have proven to be effective markers of improved teacher performance such as math and science;
- Granting schools and districts the flexibility to reward excellence in the classroom and to attract high-quality teachers to low-performing schools or hard-to-fill positions.

Expanding Opportunities for Great Teachers to Succeed. Governor Christie’s Reform Agenda expands opportunities available to teachers. Presently, the primary way for a teacher to achieve higher compensation outside of the seniority-based salary guide is to receive graduate credits or to follow a lengthy, cumbersome path to becoming a principal or administrator. Teachers who are innovating and getting results, but wish to stay in the classroom, are given few opportunities to advance professionally. Governor Christie’s Reform Agenda changes that.

- **Establishing New Credentials and Career Ladders.** With the designations of “Master Teacher” and “Master Principal,” these new credentials will provide the opportunity for highly effective teachers to utilize their skills and experience in a variety of additional ways, including mentoring, professional development of peers, or founding a charter school.
- **Expanding Opportunities to Receive Updated Certification.** This plan will increase the number of alternate route programs for principals and update certification requirements to align with the attainment of skills needed to be an effective leader.

Demanding Accountability and Results for New Jersey’s Children. The Christie Reform plan puts an end to policies that reward teachers who fail over teachers who succeed by measuring performance and paying higher salaries for it.

- **Improving Teacher and Leader Effectiveness with Data-Supported Evaluations.** Through executive order, Governor Christie will convene the Task Force on Teacher Effectiveness to define and evaluate teacher and leader effectiveness based on key guiding principles. The Task Force will be charged with recommending a system that elevates the role of student learning in evaluations and fairly and transparently assesses teacher and principal performance.
 - The Task Force will develop a system of evaluations and definition of educator effectiveness based on multiple measurements of student learning that will comprise at least 50% of the evaluation.
 - Evaluations will be developed with broad stakeholder input so the unique needs and circumstances of schools and districts are recognized. Evaluations will provide for locally selected, state-reviewed measurements of progress that are widely-recognized as relating directly to improvements in school climate, teacher effectiveness and student learning.
 - The Task Force will be given flexibility to consider additional local input of other measurements of effectiveness for use in the evaluations.

Ensuring Our Children Have Well-Prepared Teachers. Teacher preparation remains a national problem, but is especially serious in New Jersey’s teacher preparation programs. A 2009 study by the well-respected National Council on Teacher Quality gave New Jersey a grade of D for teacher preparation. Elementary teachers who do not possess a minimum knowledge of the subject matter continue to receive teaching certificates.

- Mandating that K-5 and P-3 grade teacher preparation programs administer tests in the science of reading and math knowledge, in addition to the Praxis test, as a requirement for teacher certification.

Empowering Parents with Access to Quality Data and Additional Outreach Efforts

Governor Christie recognizes that through empowerment, parents can become better advocates for quality education for their children and increase accountability in our schools. Governor Christie's Reform Agenda will empower parents to make more informed decisions about their children's education by providing greater transparency and accountability.

- **Engaging Families in Their Children's Education with Improved Access to Information.** Governor Christie's Reform Agenda will create greater accountability in New Jersey schools by empowering parents with access to data, including student achievement in the classroom and teacher evaluations via the NJ SMART data system.
- **Improving Outreach and Communications Efforts to Parents and Families.** Governor Christie's Reform Agenda will increase parental involvement through greater outreach and communications efforts, including parent-focused tools such as a help-desk, website, mailings and forums. These tools will be used to educate parents about their rights, responsibilities, opportunities, options and school performance.

Empowering Parents With Better Access To Information

How many teachers in your local schools are effective? Governor Christie believes school districts should provide that information to parents.

Governor Christie believes parents should have the ability to cross-reference teacher effectiveness data with school test scores, information that is critical to informing decisions about their children's education.

The state Department of Education plans to redesign its web site this year to help families easily find the information they need to advocate for their children.