



NJDOE News

Contact: John Crosbie
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Two-Year Mentoring Program Proposed to Support New Teachers

As part of the effort to improve teacher quality and provide educators with the support and guidance they need to remain in the classroom, the State Board of Education is considering a plan to require two-year mentoring for all novice teachers beginning in September 2001.

Governor Christie Whitman had proposed the initiative in her latest State-of-the-State address in January. The Governor has urged the Department of Education to work closely with the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the state's largest teacher's union, in development of proposed regulations for the State Board's consideration.

Concurrent with the Board's consideration of the proposed plan, the two-year mentoring initiative will be piloted this fall in 15 districts that have already been identified as having highly regarded mentoring programs for first-year teachers.

"With national statistics showing that as many as one out of every three new teachers leave their positions after three years of teaching, we must provide more direct support to novice teachers entering the classroom," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "This high level of attrition cannot be sustained in New Jersey if we are to meet the ever-increasing demand for new teachers in the years to come.

"Research shows that sound mentoring programs go a long way toward helping teachers establish roots in their profession, which in turn encourages them to remain in the profession," added Hespe.

Currently, new teachers serve their first year of teaching under provisional certification. The department emphasized that the new program will not change the evaluations performed during that provisional year, and teachers would still be eligible for standard certification at the end of their first year in the classroom.

A \$2 million appropriation in the FY 2001 state budget signed last week by Governor Whitman will include funding for the 15 pilot programs scheduled to commence this September. The funding will be used to cover the costs associated with mentor training, stipends for teachers serving as mentors, and costs associated with release time for the mentor teachers.

The 15 school districts participating in the pilot program are:

BERGEN COUNTY: Dumont School District; Englewood City School District.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY: Millville School District; Vineland School District.

ESSEX COUNTY: Montclair School District.

HUNTERDON COUNTY: Flemington-Raritan Regional School District; Hunterdon Central Regional School District.

MERCER COUNTY: Hopewell Valley Regional School District.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY: South Brunswick Township School District; Woodbridge Township School District.

OCEAN COUNTY: Brick Township School District; Jackson Township School District; Toms River Regional School District.

PASSAIC COUNTY: Passaic City School District.

SALEM COUNTY: Pennsville School District.

The proposal unveiled today is the latest in several initiatives begun by the Department of Education to ensure that New Jersey continues to attract and retain quality teachers. Earlier this year, the department announced the creation of a Virtual Academy, which will feature high quality, cost-effective technical assistance and professional development for all teachers using interactive television, teleconferencing and the Internet. In another initiative, the department established a recruitment unit in order to attract talented teacher candidates from other states to teaching positions in New Jersey.

These initiatives supplement a new continuing education program for all teachers in New Jersey, which the state board adopted last year, and which will take effect in September 2000. As part of the continuing education requirement, all teachers must demonstrate that they have completed 100 hours of professional development instruction every five years.

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