

Tougher Standards On the Way For High Schoolers

"We don't have a choice," says department of Education commissioner Lucille Davy, "we can give kids a diploma that represents 4th or 5th grade skills (but) when they enter the workforce they're not going to get a good job or if they get one, they're not going to be able to keep it." Davy's talking about a new plan to better prepare students to succeed in a global economy. The efforts are designed to teach the necessary skills to both students who go on to college and those entering the workplace within the first three years out of high school.

Members of the higher education and business communities joining to endorse the American Diploma Project (ADP) benchmarks, which are standards for what high school graduates ought to know as they enter either the workplace or go on to higher education. Although New Jersey leads the nation in high school graduation rates, only 25% of these graduates go on to earn a college diploma. Citing alarming rates of remedial education and training needed after high school for many students, leaders from New Jersey's higher education and business communities endorsed the ADP benchmarks. These benchmarks outline specific content and skills in English and mathematics that graduates must master by the time they leave high school in order to succeed in postsecondary education or high-performance, high-growth jobs.

Governor Jon Corzine says, "Going to college is important and I strongly encourage all New Jersey's students to pursue higher education but, no matter what our high school students plan to do after their graduation, we have a moral obligation and vested economic interest in equipping students with the tools to build successful lives."

"I'd like to thank the higher education and business communities for all of their work to align student's educational experiences with the needs of a rapidly changing world economy," says Davy, "By working together, this diverse group of stakeholders will help ensure that all New Jersey students are prepared with the skills they need to be successful 21st century citizens and workers."

The ADP benchmarks recommend four years of high school English, science and math. Davy says, "It's not going to happen overnight but if we raise the bar for students and we provide the support for teachers and schools to get this work done, this is not something that can't be done."