

Headline: N.J. Plans to Strengthen High School Standards Front Page * About * Search
Archives * Home

N.J. Plans to Strengthen High School Standards Capitol Watch Entering Negotiations?
Turn to NJSEA N.J. Plans to Strengthen High School Standards Feds Review N.J.
Request for Change 71% of Schools Make Adequate Progress N.J. Increases Highly
Qualified Teachers NJSBA News Workshop 2006 Measure Would Outlaw Activity Fees Calendar
Click here for a pdf version of this issue of School Board Notes Gov. Jon S. Corzine,
state education and business leaders kicked off an initiative to transform New Jersey's
high schools and to raise academic expectations for its students.

Whether high schoolers chose to continue their education through college or enter the working world, officials said that they need to graduate with the same skills to succeed in an economy increasingly driven by technology and high-skilled jobs.

Spurred by a 12-month study conducted by the

New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee, a coalition of business and education leaders, the governor's announcement is geared to spark public awareness and support for more rigorous high school courses in math, science and English. "Every child deserves to be prepared for a successful transition to citizenship, college and work," said Edwina M. Lee, NJSBA executive director and a member of the steering committee. "**New Jersey high schools** are doing an excellent job for many students. But we have to ensure that we do not lose ground against schools in other states and throughout the world."

While **New Jersey's high school** graduation rates and student achievement rank among the top in the nation, officials are pushing for tougher standards in response to educators' concerns about students needing remedial assistance at the college level.

Remedial Courses Kenneth Ender, president of Cumberland County College, said 80 percent of his new full-time students have to take at least one remedial class. According to the steering committee, four-year institutions nationwide report that about 40 percent to 50 percent of students need some remedial assistance.

Corzine said it is the state's "moral obligation" to equip its high schoolers with the tools they need to build successful lives that, in turn, will help businesses and give the state economy a much-needed boost.

State Department of Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy said high school graduates need a solid understanding of the basics--and beyond.

"We're raising the minimum bar," Davy said. "This is a big change, but it is a change that must take place."

The state's high school reform effort will be modeled after the American Diploma Project, a network of 22 states, including New Jersey, that are working to align kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum and other benchmarks.

Working with Educators Beginning in October, the steering committee will hold meetings with educators throughout New Jersey to develop new strategies to be enacted over the next few years. Any changes made in assessments, curriculum standards, or the high school exit exam--which Davy said is not up to par in preparing students for what it takes to land an entry-level job today--would have to be approved by the state board of education.

"We don't have any other options here," said Davy.

New Jersey also is working on developing a statewide student database to track academic performance and students when they switch schools--an initiative advocated by NJSEA.

Arthur Ryan, chairman and chief executive officer of Prudential Financial, Inc., who is part of the steering committee said: "We want our kids to win, not just get on the playing field."

Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy addresses the importance of high school reform. From left are Gov. Jon. S. Corzine, Cumberland County College President Kenneth Ender, and Prudential Financial, Inc. chairman and CEO Arthur Ryan.