

## **N.J. high schools don't do job, Corzine says**

TRENTON — New Jersey students heading off to college for the first time, take note: As many as 50 percent of you will find yourself in remedial courses.

Despite a graduation rate that ranks highest in the nation — 84.5 percent, compared to a national average of 70 percent — Garden State high schools do not adequately prepare children for college, Gov. Jon S. Corzine said Wednesday.

“Sometimes statistics can cover up other weaknesses,” Corzine said. “Just graduating is not enough.”

Proof that high schools are failing is the number of first-year college students who take remedial classes, Education Commissioner Lucille Davy said. In two-year colleges, 80 percent need remedial math or English classes; in four-year colleges, 40 percent to 50 percent need them.

“These numbers are staggering ... and they require our immediate attention,” Davy said.

That attention, she said, is coming from the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee — a group of representatives from the education, higher-education and business communities who since last year have been examining how high schools in the state can better prepare students for college or work.

One change the committee is advocating is statewide graduation requirements.

Currently the state mandates that high school students take a specific number of credits in eight core areas — such as four years of language arts and three years of math — but each school district gets to decide which courses to require in each subject area. Critics have long said that course requirements in some districts are not rigorous enough.

The committee therefore is looking at implementing one set of requirements for all school districts. It also wants to reform the statewide system for assessing student achievement.

The committee plans to hold meetings in early October for teachers and administrators, followed in December by meetings for members of the public. More information about the meetings can be found at: [www.njhighschoolsummit.org](http://www.njhighschoolsummit.org)

Improving the state's high schools, even with the committee's help, will take years, Corzine cautioned.

“It won't be an immediate revolution,” Corzine said, “but it will make a difference.”