

Tougher High School Graduation Requirements Proposed

By Scott Goldstein

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In an effort to better prepare **New Jersey high school graduates** for the workplace or for college, a stricter set of graduation requirements have been proposed for the state's 300-plus high schools.

The recommendations by the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee, call for requiring high school students to take not just three years of math and science classes, but to take specific courses such as algebra I, algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry and a half-year of economics.

The recommendations also call for students to take exams after completing core courses to demonstrate proficiency. Other suggestions include improving teacher preparation and professional development.

"We have an obligation and a vested economic interest to equip our high school students with the tools they need to build successful lives," Gov. Jon S. Corzine said. "These recommendations are a blueprint for this process."

State of New Jersey Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy presented the recommendations on Friday to the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education and State Board of Education.

The work of the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee is getting the support of employers. "Education reform and economic development are in a close, synergistic relationship," said New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner David Socolow. "In fact, New Jersey's excellent workforce has long been a key factor in attracting business to our state."

Prudential Financial Chairman Art Ryan, who is also co-chairman of the high school redesign steering committee, stressed the need for high standards in high school. "Years ago, a strong back and willing heart were enough to allow a person to make a decent living. Today, the ability to use your brain will determine your success."