

THE INNOVATIVE STATE Technology: NJ's Economic Catalyst

Recommendations To Transform New Jersey High School Education Unveiled

A framework for preparing every New Jersey student for college and the workplace is unveiled. The policy paper, titled "NJ STEPS: Re-Designing Education in New Jersey for the 21st Century," provides recommendations of the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee that focus on five areas, including standards and high school graduation requirements, assessment alignment, teachers and school leaders, learning communities and personalized education, and P-16 (preschool through post secondary school) alignment.

The proposal was presented at a joint board meeting of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education and State Board of Education at William Paterson University that included Governor Jon S. Corzine, along with the two co-chairs of the steering committee.

"The Task Force has admirably addressed every aspect of high school education and the potential for its seamless integration into higher education in New Jersey," said Governor Corzine in accepting the report. "We have an obligation and a vested economic interest to equip our high school students with the tools they need to build successful lives. These recommendations are a blueprint for this process."

A major goal of the steering committee is to help align New Jersey high school standards and graduation requirements to college and workforce entry requirements. According to reviews by Achieve Inc., New Jersey's high school standards and graduation requirements in language arts literacy and mathematics did not specifically reflect the knowledge and skills necessary for success in credit-bearing coursework in higher education or entry-level, well-paying jobs. Currently, New Jersey does not require all students to complete a college and work-ready curriculum to graduate from high school, and local graduation requirements also vary widely.

As a result, the steering committee presented its proposed NJ STEPS Graduation Requirements, which include requiring all students to learn Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, and a half a year of Economics, along with current state requirements to earn a high school diploma.

The steering committee also proposed a new approach for testing students on the content they would learn through the proposed NJ STEPS Graduation Requirements. A new Language Arts Proficiency Assessment, along with End of Course exams in math (Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry), and science (Biology and Chemistry) would replace the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

The committee proposed a partnership with key stakeholders to research, identify and implement appropriate recruitment initiatives for teachers and education leaders. Additional suggestions include evaluating and improving teacher preparation programs in the state, and evaluating and implementing proven models of professional development for New Jersey educators.

The committee also recommends redesigning high schools as "learning communities" that utilize personalized learning approaches to pre-



Governor Jon Corzine and New Jersey Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy unveil school education reforms at William Paterson University.

pare and support students in meeting the new standards and high school graduation requirements. Specific recommendations include providing increased technical assistance to local education and university leaders and implementing data-based decision-making programs.

The creation of a P-16 Council that would work to ensure a seamless and aligned system of public education from preschool through four years of college was also recommended. This diverse group should include key leaders from P-16 education, business, industry, trade unions, government, parents and the overall community.

"The Steering Committee has a clear vision for public education in New Jersey, which is to educate all students to prepare them to lead productive, fulfilling lives," said New Jersey Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy. "The recommendations set forth in this policy paper are the result of extensive research, in-depth consultation with many organizations and individuals throughout the state, and careful consideration of the issues."

Members of the High School Redesign Steering Committee include the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Commission of Higher Education, New Jersey United for Higher School Standards (NJU), New Jersey Presidents' Council, and Montclair State University. The co-chairs of the Steering Committee are New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, Prudential Chairman Art Ryan, and Montclair State University President Dr. Susan Cole. ♪

