



## NJDOE News

Contact: Richard Vespucci  
For Release: April 20, 2000

---

### Statewide Conference in May to Showcase Governor Whitman's Character Education Partnership

A new initiative from Governor Christie Whitman designed to promote student character and values and result in safer school climates will be showcased in a statewide conference scheduled for May 17, 2000, at the College of New Jersey, Ewing. The conference is designed to help educators develop character education programs under the New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP).

Governor Whitman first announced the new character education initiative in her State-of-the-State message in January.

"Today marks the one-year anniversary of a tragic event that resulted in the loss of young lives at Columbine High School," Governor Whitman said. "I can think of no better way to get beyond the horror of that day than by announcing our commitment to renew our efforts to teach students core ethical values, such as responsibility, respect, and caring.

"The New Jersey Character Education Partnership will form an alliance of colleges, corporations, and community groups that will help schools include character and values instruction in the courses and programs offered to all students," the Governor said. "Next month's conference will give school communities throughout our state an excellent opportunity to take advantage of this exciting new initiative."

"New Jersey has begun to build a solid foundation to address the prevention of antisocial behavior among our youth in schools," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "The Core Curriculum Content Standards require instruction in ways to defuse violence, promote physical and emotional well-being, and increase communication skills, understanding, and tolerance of diversity.

"Governor Whitman has earmarked \$4.75 million in the state budget to implement the New Jersey Character Education Partnership," the Commissioner continued. "Through this initiative, every public school district in New Jersey will receive state funding to enable it to develop or enhance character education programs in at least one school building during the 2000-01 school year."

Educators who attend the daylong conference will hear a variety of speakers in the morning. Keynote speaker Dr. Karen E. Bohlin, director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University, will discuss the topic, *Developing Hearts and Minds*.

Several workshops are scheduled in the afternoon on topics such as *Enhancing School Climate, Infusing Character Education into the Curriculum, and Building Community Partnerships*.

The New Jersey Character Education Partnership is designed to reinforce the basics of good character in the school curriculum for all students in all grades. The initiative is aimed at reducing school violence, increasing attendance, improving test scores, and lowering dropout rates.

Participating districts will be required to submit short applications to the Department of Education to choose among a limited number of validated *Character Education Programs of Merit*, or districts may choose another program, if the rationale they submit adequately supports their choice.