



NJDOE News

Contact: Richard Vespucci
For Release: May 4, 2000

Commissioner Hespe Signs Agreement with Cisco Systems To Create Career Path for High-Paying Technology Jobs for High School Students

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today signed an agreement with Cisco Systems, Inc. creating a new career path for students that will lead to high-paying jobs in the field of technology. The agreement signed today forges a partnership between the department and Cisco Systems to create in-school programs called Cisco Networking Academies that will serve students in New Jersey.

The agreement was signed today as part of Governor Christie Whitman's Cabinet on the Road day in Ocean County.

This partnership with Cisco Systems recognizes the importance of high technology to the future of the state's economy, Governor Whitman said. For our economy to remain successful and competitive, we must place a premium on skills and education.

We are willing to combine resources with partners who are prepared to invest in the future by helping our young people find successful careers, the Governor said.

Programs such as the Cisco Networking Academy Program provide a career focus for students and helps keep them engaged while they're in school. Cisco Academies will reinforce the need for high technology skills yet provide the necessary training for students who want to attain such skills, stated Commissioner Hespe.

The agreement signed today will permit qualifying schools to establish a Cisco Networking Academy in their local regions. The academy will provide instruction in information technology for high school students that can lead to a certificate as a Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA).

The Cisco Networking Academy Program is a 280-hour, four-semester program that teaches students basic network design and OSI (Open System Interconnection) models. It gives them hands-on experience with networking hardware taught at regional and local academies.

Local academies are recruited, trained and supported by regional academies which, in turn, are trained and supported by a Cisco Academy Training Center. To date there are five regional and 25 local academies in schools in New Jersey.

The Department of Education, through its Office of School-to-Career and College Initiatives, will support the partnership through promotion of the Cisco Networking Academy program to schools across the state. Representatives from the Department of Education will provide resources and information to any school wishing to establish an academy.

The Office of School-to-Career and College Initiatives has been working to develop similar agreements with other businesses that are actively involved in preparing students for careers. For example, the office has been actively involved with the development of the TECH 2000 and carpenter apprenticeship programs.

TECH 2000 is a New Jersey Bell Atlantic-sponsored, school-based program for telecommunications training designed for high school juniors and seniors, postsecondary students and adults returning to school. Its goal is to create a telecommunications-literate workforce and a "school-to-career" transition for New Jersey's telecommunications industry. The partnership started in 1993 with one location and has grown to 11 additional sites in cooperation with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and vocational schools throughout the state.

TECH 2000 boasts a 100 percent placement rate for its graduates and was selected by the US Department of Education as one of the 10 best school-to-career programs in the nation in 1996. The Mercer County Workforce Investment Board is now working to replicate the program for the growing hospitality industry in the state's capitol region.

The International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners union has offered curriculum-level input for secondary carpentry vocational programs to area vocational schools and high schools that offer carpentry programs. The

union has also provided districts with curriculum materials that include major tasks and competencies, hand tools, equipment, and health and safety, which can be used alone or in conjunction with the established curriculum. Districts that employ these curriculum materials will ensure that students who successfully complete the program will be competitive in meeting the entrance requirements of the New Jersey unions that are affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.