



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Hespe Praises Richard DiPatri for Service to Jersey City

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today expressed sadness and offered words of praise for State District Superintendent Richard DiPatri, who announced he will be leaving the Jersey City Public Schools to become superintendent of the Brevard County, Florida public schools. DiPatri's resignation is effective September 15, 2000.

"The children of Jersey City are losing a powerful friend and advocate in Richard DiPatri," Commissioner Hespe said. "Rich's no-nonsense brand of leadership has resulted in many positive gains for students and for the district as a whole.

"I will miss his problem-solving abilities and his deep and unwavering commitment to academic success," the Commissioner said. "Rich is a true reformer, and it is quite difficult to be a reform leader without attracting some criticism."

DiPatri, in his letter of resignation to Commissioner Hespe, wrote, "I appreciate all of the cooperation and assistance provided to me during your tenure as Commissioner...You have worked very hard to bring about a smooth and effective transition to local control in Jersey City...I am proud of the work that has been accomplished during my time in Jersey City and it is clear that steady progress is being made on all fronts."

Since his arrival in Jersey City in 1997, the district has met many of its goals. Having met more than 90 percent of state monitoring requirements, the state-operated district has been described as near consideration for a return of local control.

In DiPatri's three years as state district superintendent:

- Test scores have improved
- The schools are focused on student achievement
- Attendance has improved
- Dropout rates have decreased
- Learning opportunities have been extended in the form of Saturday, summer and after-school programs
- Staff development and has been emphasized and staff have been held accountable for student achievement.
- State-of-the-art technology has been used to enhance learning
- Schools have begun to implement whole school reform models, with a special emphasis on smaller class sizes and early childhood education

DiPatri is a 30-year career educator who has served in many capacities at the local and state levels. He served the New Jersey Department of Education in two separate periods, from 1984 to 1990 as a member of the department's senior staff, and from 1994 to 1997 as Deputy Commissioner of Education. Active leadership has marked his career at the state level in many key reforms.

DiPatri first joined the department in 1984 as special assistant to former Commissioner Saul Cooperman. Within a year, he was appointed assistant commissioner for the former Division of Educational Programs. From 1985-90, his division was responsible for many of the statewide initiatives to recognize, reward and recruit talented teachers. His division was responsible for the first New Jersey School Report Card in 1989, as well as other initiatives designed to improve ways for local schools to achieve reforms.

In 1990, he left the department to become vice president of Educate America, Inc., a nonprofit education organization founded by Dr. Cooperman. He returned to the Department of Education in March 1994, when former Commissioner Leo Klagholz appointed him Deputy Commissioner. As deputy, DiPatri served as the department's chief operating officer during a period that included adoption of a new school funding law and state academic standards known as the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

DiPatri began his career in 1970 as a science teacher in Voorhees. From there, he went to Rumson, where he was a teacher, principal and superintendent until 1984, when he came to the Department of Education.

Commissioner Hesper said he will develop the process that will lead to DiPatri's replacement before he leaves the district.