



NJDOE News

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Department of Education Launches New Jersey School Counselor Initiative

The New Jersey Department of Education today hosted a conference to introduce local educators to a major statewide initiative designed to assist their efforts to provide students with opportunities for career awareness and career exploration.

School principals, school counselors and other local educators attended the launch of the new initiative, known as the New Jersey School Counselor Initiative.

"Students face many decisions during their school years that can deeply affect their careers and the quality of their lives as adults," said Governor Christie Whitman. "That's why we want to provide students with opportunities every year to explore careers. Through the initiative we are beginning today, schools will be better equipped to provide students with those vital opportunities."

Commissioner of Education David Hespe said that the department also established the initiative to help local school districts develop strategic school counseling plans. "We began the New Jersey School Counselor Initiative to assist local educators in meeting a state requirement to provide comprehensive guidance and counseling programs for students in all grades," Commissioner Hespe said. "School guidance counselors are in an ideal position to help students learn more about careers. This initiative recognizes that fact and ensures that students will benefit from guidance and counseling programs that are linked to national standards for school counselors."

The New Jersey School Counselor Initiative is a four-phase program that will be implemented over three years. Today's launch will be followed with six regional training workshops and continue with related training opportunities with state and national partners. The second phase involves the selection of pilot schools to implement model programs. The final phases involve establishment of a statewide support network and assessments to make technical adjustments to the support program.

Effective school counseling programs strengthen efforts at the local level to help students make the connection between what they learn in school and their career interests.

Dr. Carol Dahir, lead author of the *National Standards for School Counseling*, delivered the keynote address on the theme, "Vision into Action." Presentations were also made by Dr. Thomas Henry, director of the Office of School-to-Career and College Initiatives, and Janet Carlson Giardina, immediate past president of the New Jersey School Counselor Association and coordinator of the new initiative.

School districts will be invited to apply as a pilot for the new programs during the 2001-02 school year. Five school districts in each region of the state will be selected, for a total of fifteen. The schools selected would be expected to implement model guidance and counseling programs and will each receive a \$5,000 stipend along with professional development and support.