



NJDOE News

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Initial Response Strong in State's Drive to Recruit [Reading Coaches](#)

Prospective candidates to lead Governor James E. McGreevey's efforts to strengthen the literacy skills of young students are responding to the [Department of Education's recruitment drive for reading coaches](#).

Applications are already arriving at the Department of Education, just four days after the department advertised for 100 reading coach positions. Department staff also report receiving many inquiries from teachers from New Jersey and other states who are interested in learning more about the positions and about the state's new Third Grade Reading Initiative.

"The response to our call for reading coaches has been impressive in such a short period of time," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "We want to hear from as many qualified candidates as possible in the weeks to come.

"If we are able to draw from a large pool of highly successful teachers, we will increase our ability to succeed in our challenge to have all students reading at grade level by the time they begin third grade."

"We are very encouraged by the initial level of interest shown by teachers," said Richard Ten Eyck, assistant commissioner for Educational Programs and Assessment. "We fully expect to build a team of skilled professionals who will serve in the front lines of increasing the literacy rates of our neediest students when they return to school in September."

The Department of Education's recruitment drive is the direct result of Governor McGreevey's commitment to improve the reading ability of young students. "The ability to read is the foundation upon which all further learning and opportunities are based," McGreevey said. "If we want to give our children the opportunity to compete in the new economy, we must first succeed in teaching them to read."

Earlier this month, the Governor convened a forum on early literacy education that included participation by a panel of nationally recognized literacy experts. He has also established an Early Childhood Task Force and charged it with identifying best practices and research based programs that can be assembled into a statewide plan by next month.

Governor McGreevey has set aside \$10 million in the 2002-03 budget for the Early Literacy Initiative. The multi-year effort will be funded with an additional \$40 million over the next four years.

In the first phase of the initiative, reading coaches will assist schools that have more than 15 percent of their students reading at the "partially proficient" level, based on their performance on state tests. The coaches will help teachers and administrators plan to raise the reading performance in these schools.

The reading coaches hired will be drawn from highly successful teachers who are willing to work with the department. They can:

- Seek a one-year sabbatical leave from their districts, with all costs for the sabbatical paid by the department. Districts releasing teachers for sabbaticals will also have access to them as reading coaches during the year regardless of the performance level of the districts' students. Or
- Apply to be "Department Fellows." In this instance, the coaches will serve the department in a two-year appointment which may be renewed for an additional two years. Department Fellows may apply for local leaves of absence from their home districts.

The Department of Education has put its recruitment drive on a fast track and has set a goal of mid-June to hire the reading coaches. School districts will be notified in July of their eligibility to host coaches, who will be assigned to train local educators in practices to teach reading that have a proven record of success.

