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Commissioner Librera Praises Local and County Officials For Launch of Academies @ Englewood

Bergen County Magnet School Ends 30-year-old Desegregation Problem

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today joined a host of educators and government officials in launching the inaugural year of the Academies @ Englewood. The new school, based in the former Dwight Morrow High School, represents a partnership of local and state governments in a pioneering effort to provide a superior education for students from diverse backgrounds.

"Today, you begin the exciting journey of being the first class to benefit from this innovative program that combines very high academic expectations with exemplary career preparation," said Commissioner Librera to the first 127 students selected to attend the Academies @ Englewood.

"You will also have the added distinction of being part of a program that represents an extremely creative solution to a 30-year-old desegregation problem," the Commissioner said. "Your class reflects the diversity that we knew could be achieved if we offered a challenging program and opened it to everyone to apply." Some of the students are from Englewood while others have been attracted from surrounding communities.

"Your new school exists thanks to the leadership and creativity of talented and dedicated people from municipal, county, state and federal governments who worked with educators at the state and local levels," Dr. Librera said.

Specifically, the Commissioner praised Governor James E. McGreevey for his support of the career academy concept of education and his commitment to make career academies available as a choice to students throughout New Jersey.

The Commissioner also praised Dr. John Grieco, superintendent of the Bergen County Vocational School District (Bergen Tech), the Bergen County Special Services School District, and the Englewood Public Schools, for exercising his leadership and expertise in academy programs in developing the Academies @ Englewood. "John Grieco has brought to this initiative all of his expertise with academy programs and worked tirelessly to both develop this academy plan and to see that it happened for this school year," Librera said.

Librera also praised Bergen County Executive William "Pat" Schuber, "who very much deserves to be credited for recognizing that this is an opportunity for all of Bergen County and not just the City of Englewood." The Commissioner also praised Mayor Paul T. Fader and City Manager Robert Benecke for their commitment to "having sound public schools that will challenge all children and will produce results that everyone can be proud of."

Librera said, "What is happening here will ultimately improve the quality of life for all citizens of Englewood and the surrounding communities."

In addition to providing new educational opportunities for students in Englewood and its surrounding communities, the Academies @ Englewood represents the region's response to longstanding problems of desegregation. The 114 ninth graders in the high school program were selected from 252 applicants and are evenly divided among white, African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic students. The school will be staffed by 21 teachers who were chosen from 330 applicants.

The Academies @ Englewood will serve as the "magnet" portion of the overall academic program at Dwight Morrow High School, operating as a school within the school. In grade 9, programs in technology and science will be complemented by rigorous classes in language arts literacy and mathematics. As the students advance through their high school years, students will be exposed to a new and challenging curriculum and the magnet will expand to other grades.

Providing a high quality and attractive magnet program at the high school level has prompted the Englewood

Public Schools to improve teaching and learning in the earlier grades. These local initiatives are known as the Englewood Public School Renewal Project, the Junior Academies @ Englewood (a pre-kindergarten program) and a project to expand and improve technology-based instruction.

The Academies @ Englewood will operate with funding in 2002-03 blended from local, county, state and federal sources.

Commissioner Librera told the Class of 2006 that they have a special role. "You are the students that set the example for those that follow. I challenge you to demonstrate academic excellence throughout your four years so that you receive a world-class education, and you pave the way for others to have the same opportunity."

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