



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

**Tom Rosenthal
Richard Vespucci
Jon Zlock
609-292-1126**

For Release: February 10, 2003

DOE Announces the New Jersey Center for Character Education at Rutgers University

The Department of Education is pleased to announce the establishment of the New Jersey Center for Character Education at Rutgers University. The Center will be funded through a \$2 million four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

New Jersey is one of only five states to receive an award under the Partnerships in Character Education grant program, Title V, Part D of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.

"The creation of the New Jersey Center for Character Education will provide the leadership necessary to take the state's effort to a new level by providing guidance for schools to adopt programs and strategies that have proven to be effective," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera.

The New Jersey Center for Character Education will assist the Department along with the public and nonpublic schools throughout the state to materialize one of the objectives in Governor James E. McGreevey's 21-point education reform plan for New Jersey: *To develop new initiatives to improve character education in our schools to help our children become productive, informed and actively involved citizens.*

New Jersey is already leading the nation in its commitment to providing support for the development of character education in public schools through the New Jersey Character Education Partnership initiative, which has provided \$14 million in state aid funding to school districts over the past three years.

When Governor McGreevey's Character Education Commission held statewide hearings last year, many educators acknowledged the positive impact of character education on school climate and student behavior. Parents also testified regarding the supportive role that character education plays in helping them raise their children. The Commission gathered information on best practices and other efforts currently taking place in New Jersey's public schools and submitted their findings and recommendations to the Governor in September 2002.

The New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE) will be housed at the Center for Applied Psychology in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University, Piscataway.

"We are delighted to be selected to serve as the home for the new Center," said Joseph Seneca, the school's Vice President for Academic Affairs. "There has been intense interest on the part of many units and faculty within the University to contribute to the development of the New Jersey Center for Character Education as a statewide resource and a model for the nation."

"Among our faculty members are some of the world's leading experts in character education and social-emotional learning, and we are already on the forefront of research in this area and its application to school settings," Seneca said. "We look forward to working with the Department of Education to help fulfill the Center's promise."

Dr. Lewis Gantwerk, Director of the Center for Applied Psychology, which will administer the grant, anticipates a quick start to NJCCE activities.

He indicated that under the provisions of the agreement with the Department of Education, Dr. Philip Brown, who previously headed the Department's character education initiative, will join his office to direct the new Center.

"Dr. Brown is well-known and respected for his work in fostering a comprehensive approach to character education in New Jersey schools," Gantwerk said. "We have a unique opportunity to both broaden and deepen the scale of support for this critical work to develop students with sound character and the ability to contribute to the social as well as the economic goals that make our country strong."

For further information, contact Susan Martz, director of the Office of Program Support Services, who provides leadership for the Department of Education's work in character education (609-292-5935), or Dr. Lewis Gantwerk,

director of the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers University (732-445-7795).