



NJDOE News

State of New Jersey

Office of the Governor
125 WEST STATE STREET
PO Box 001
Trenton NJ 08625-0001

JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

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CONTACT: Micah Rasmussen
PHONE: 609-777-2600

MCGREEVEY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES NINE PILOT SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PILOT PROJECT

(TRENTON) - Governor James E. McGreevey and Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, in a partnership with the Coalition for Responsible Education Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE) and the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, today announced the nine school districts chosen for the New Jersey Performance Assessment Pilot Project. The project will lead to the development of performance-based assessment programs in all areas of the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards — starting with math, language arts and science.

"Through an extraordinary partnership between business, education, and state government, today's announcement launches a new course of student assessment," said Governor McGreevey. "With this pilot project, we now formally recognize that students' abilities cannot fully be measured with a standardized test, but must also be measured by the critical work that occurs in the classroom. The performance assessment programs that will come out of this pilot project will help us measure a student's progress on an ongoing basis, providing teachers with better tools to educate our children."

The districts selected for participation in the pilot project are: Oaklyn/Camden County Vocational (Camden County), Cherry Hill (Camden County), Dumont (Bergen County), Edison (Middlesex County), Galloway/Greater Egg Harbor (Atlantic), Mount Olive (Morris County), New Brunswick (Middlesex County), Ridgewood (Bergen County) and Springfield (Union County).

"We at the Department of Education look forward to seeing this exciting pilot project take off," Commissioner Librera said. "This administration is committed to this type of initiative — one that engages business, education and government. With the help of CREATE and the BCEE, this project will improve the way we measure our students' progress."

The pilot project is cosponsored by the state's major education organizations, represented by CREATE, and the state's preeminent business leaders, represented by the BCEE. This unprecedented alliance has called for the development of a system of valid and reliable performance assessments that will complement the state's traditional standardized tests. The ultimate goal of the project is to develop a balanced state assessment system that provides accountability for the achievement of all students and provides timely and meaningful information to educators to address the individual needs of students.

Examples of performance-based assessment include demonstrations, exhibits, research projects and problem-solving tasks. These assessments will allow for testing of multiple content areas as complements to traditional state tests, and provide teachers with diagnostic information on a more timely basis. Most importantly, these assessments will provide a better measurement of a student's depth of understanding, giving teachers better tools to instruct their students and motivate them to excel.

"This pilot project will build on the great work that is happening now in many of our classrooms," said JoAnn D. Bartoletti, Chairperson of the CREATE/BCEE alliance and Executive Director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. "It empowers educators at the local level. The pilot districts will be true partners with CREATE, BCEE and the NJDOE in pioneering an innovative assessment system that provides a far more balanced view of student achievement."

"We have learned that performance-based assessments, when carefully implemented, provide rich information about students' deep understanding of content matter and their ability to apply knowledge to real world situations," said Dr. Carlo Parravano, Director of the Merck Institute for Science Education and a representative of BCEE. The Merck Institute for Science Education has already worked closely with three New Jersey school districts for several years to develop and implement performance assessments in science.

The five-year pilot project, announced by Governor James E. McGreevey in collaboration with the Commissioner, CREATE and BCEE in November, will begin this summer with training sessions for the nine districts. Nearly 200 educators from these districts will gather to reach a consensus on performance assessments in the language arts, math and science. The educators will attend two additional two-day sessions to revisit the issue.

Year one of the pilot will begin with initial field tests in one elementary school, one middle school and one high school in each district. During year two, the project will expand to include field testing in all schools in the nine pilot districts.

This initial phase - targeting math, language arts and science — will run from 2003 through June 2005. In the first year, teachers from grades three and six, as well as high school, will receive training on how to develop, score and use the data from performance-based assessments. These teachers will then develop performance-based tasks closely aligned with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards in math, language arts and science.

At the end of year five, a system of valid and reliable performance assessments in all areas of the Core Curriculum should be established.

Commissioner Librera also announced Willa Spicer will serve as the pilot project director. Spicer is an assistant superintendent in South Brunswick and a nationally-recognized leader in performance-based assessment. Among her chief responsibilities will be to provide implementation assistance wherever possible and to recommend any possible revisions to CREATE, the BCEE and the DOE.

For more information about CREATE, please contact David Nash at (609) 860-1200, or visit www.njpsa.org. For more information about BCEE, please contact Michael Schneider at (973) 868-1000 or visit www.bcee.org. For more information about the pilot program, view the November press release here: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/news/2002/1115create.htm>.