



NJDOE News

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For Release: August 6, 2003

Passaic County's Manchester Regional High School District To Join Interdistrict Public School Choice Program

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that the Manchester Regional School District, located in the town of Haledon in Passaic County, has been selected to participate in the Interdistrict Public School Choice program, and will be accepting applications from potential choice program students for the 2004-2005 school year.

Two applicants were being considered in this round for acceptance into the program. Dennis Township in Cape May County has withdrawn its application from the current round.

Manchester Regional High School District will offer a Technology Program to incoming choice program students. The program will offer training in the areas of Computer Assisted Design (CAD) as well as Networking Technology and Oracle Internet training. The school district plans to offer in the 2004-2005 school year three seats each in grades nine and ten to choice students, increasing that number by one seat per grade in each of the following two years of the program.

The Interdistrict Public School Choice Program at Manchester Regional High School will be open to public school students within a twenty mile radius of the district. The district anticipates receiving applications from students in the communities of Hawthorne, Clifton, Wayne, Paterson, Passaic, Pompton Lakes and Lakeland Regional.

A small pilot program entering its fourth year, the school choice program provides students with the option of attending a public school outside their district of residence without cost to their parents. The program is consistently benefiting students, schools and communities where it has been implemented, confirmed by three consecutive positive annual reports on the program.

The Legislature adopted the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program Act of 1999 as a pilot program to see how effective public school choice would be in enhancing the educational experiences of students.

The pilot was launched in 2000-01 by 10 districts. Thirteen districts enrolled 461 choice students in 2002-03, up from 291 students participating in 2001-02. The pilot program will expire in June 2005, pending reauthorization from the Legislature.

"The school choice program has proven effective in diversifying educational opportunities for students and parents in the communities surrounding choice districts," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "Overall, the program has been successful and there is increasing interest statewide in involving the districts which have not yet implemented a public school choice program in their district.

"While the school choice program has given some students and parents a public school choice, there are many more that would like to have a similar choice," Commissioner Librera said. "We are pleased to welcome the participation of the Passaic County Manchester Regional School District and encourage interested students from the communities surrounding area to consider application to the program."

The numbers of participating students have climbed steeply and steadily since the program's inception. Student participants doubled and then tripled by the third year of the Interdistrict Public School Choice Pilot Program, up from 94 students in the first year.

School districts participating in the school choice program report that participation in the program has helped them to improve or increase program offerings, reduce class size, lower the lower property tax burden, hire teachers and purchase technology equipment.