



NJDOE News

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Librera Announces Intensive Study Summer Pilot Program to Help Students Pass HSPA

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced the DOE's plan for a summer pilot program offering selected students who have not passed the High School Proficiency Assessment Test (HSPA) during their junior year the opportunity to receive five weeks of intensive instruction and then take the HSPA again in late August.

"The purpose of the pilot program is to try to cut down on the number of students who fail the HSPA twice and end up graduating from high school via the Special Review Assessment (SRA), the current alternative means for garnering a diploma," Commissioner Librera said.

The SRA Institutes will be open for 50 students in each of the following districts: Englewood, Hillside, Jersey City, Franklin and Vineland.

"While the SRA was a good idea at its inception and helped many people who had difficulty with standardized test graduate from high school, the number of students using the alternate route process has gotten completely out of hand," he said. "Currently, in our Abbott districts, approximately 50 percent of the high school graduates use the SRA, and that is completely unacceptable. It cheapens the value of a high school diploma in this state, and by lowering the standards and expectations, it cheats students out of a high school education.

"We believe that every child can learn, and we think we can prove it through these summer institutes," the Commissioner said. "These 250 students will receive five weeks of intensive instruction during the summer from some of the best teachers in the state. At the end of the course, the students will take HSPA again, and we are confident that many of them will achieve better results."

The Administrators and teachers will select students based on their prior test scores and commitment to fully participate in the program. The Institutes will start on July 15 and run through August 19. The cost of the five programs will be approximately \$700,000, which will be authorized by legislative approval and paid by the DOE.

"Englewood, Hillside, Jersey City, Franklin and Vineland are well-run, diverse districts with large pools of students to choose from," Commissioner Librera said. "We want students who are ready and willing to participate. We believe we have that in the five districts selected, and we think the results of this pilot program will provide valuable insights that will help us reshape graduation requirements in the future."

"When we hosted our first Education Summit two years ago, both Governor James E. McGreevey and I shared the goal of creating more effective programs for students, particularly in the summertime for students who can take the opportunities provided to them and succeed," Commissioner Librera said. "This is one of those programs that benefit not only the students who are participating directly, but also those whose future will be influenced by the changes made based on these results."

Commissioner Librera said he hoped to have results of the pilot program by the fall in order to select the next course of action. Last summer, the DOE released a draft White Paper on the SRA process, which is found online here:

http://www.state.nj.us/njded/assessment/hs/sra/sra_white_paper.htm

The White Paper recommends abolishing the SRA process. However, since its release, the DOE has further studied how to amend Special Review Assessments. An announcement on the process is expected in the fall.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.