



NJDOE News

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DOE to Welcome Jonathan Kozol for May Workshop on Closing the Achievement Gap

Jonathan Kozol, a highly-regarded expert on racial and education issues, will be the keynote speaker on Tuesday, May 24 for the final professional development workshop installment of the Great Expectations series hosted by the Department of Education's Northern Region and Passaic County Community College.

The workshop, titled "Closing the Achievement Gap," will be held at the Shea Center at William Paterson University, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Seats are available. To register or for more information, please contact Meredith Coticchio in the Northern Region Office at (973) 655-2115 or go to <http://www.nj.gov/njded/events/gap/>.

Kozol has authored *New York Times* best-selling books, among them "Amazing Grace" and "Savage Inequalities". He began his career in education as a fourth-grade teacher in the Boston Public Schools during the American Civil Rights movement. Kozol's first book, "Death at an Early Age," chronicles his experiences as a first-year teacher. It garnered the 1968 National Book Award in Science, Philosophy and Religion and is now regarded as a classic for educators.

Since then, Kozol has devoted his educational career to chronicling the plight of the achievement gap, both across racial, student, and teacher lines. The *Chicago Sun-Times* once called him, "Today's most eloquent spokesman for the disenfranchised."

He is scheduled to speak on the 24th about how to overcome obstacles to high levels of achievement for all students. Kozol states that in his talk,

"I will address the spiritual and cultural strengths in children as areas we need to draw upon in working to close the achievement gap. Under the test pressures we all feel, we sometimes strip the education of minorities of rich cultural texture, including the arts and the mere pleasure of reading wonderful books that can stir the soul. When this happens, I believe it ends up by widening the gap and leaving low-income kids unprepared for university education. We need our kids to pass those tests but we also want them to enjoy the rewards of learning, and the act of learning, so that they grow up with the fullest possible experience of their own humanity. "

"Closing the Achievement Gap" is the final workshop in a series of six professional development sessions sponsored by the DOE's Northern Region. They began in January (see link to press release at <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/news/2005/0119pd.htm>).