



Department of Education announces formation of College and Career Readiness Task Force

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ -The Department of Education today announced the formation of the College and Career Readiness Task Force, a group of K-12 and higher education practitioners and business community representatives that will have two main responsibilities: clearly articulating the knowledge and skills that students should master to be "college and career ready," and ensuring that New Jersey has the appropriate graduation requirements and high school assessments in place to evaluate the mastery of these readiness standards. The task force will submit its recommendations to the Department of Education by December 31, 2011.

"Our number one priority is to ensure that students across the state of New Jersey are not only graduating from high school, but that when they do, they are truly ready for college and a career. When you have over 90 percent of students who matriculate to Bergen and Essex County Community Colleges requiring remediation before they can begin college-level work, we clearly are not hitting that mark," said Acting Commissioner Christopher D. Cerf. "In order to ensure that we are aligned with our colleagues in higher education, we are bringing together practitioners from both fields to clearly define the knowledge and skills that students need to be ready for college and a career."

Last year, New Jersey adopted the Common Core State Standards, as a first step to ensuring that all students are on track to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. The Common Core State Standards are robust and relevant standards for K-12 math and English language arts developed by a consortium of states led by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. To date, 44 states and the District of Columbia have signed onto the standards, and the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the standards for New Jersey in June 2010.

New Jersey has also joined 23 other states and the District of Columbia in developing new K-12 math and ELA assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards, that will truly measure college and career readiness in the state of New Jersey. As part of a consortium called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), New Jersey is on track to implement these new web-based assessments in the 2014-15 school year. The PARCC assessments will not only measure student progress, but will provide valuable data to teachers to know how their students are performing, and where they need to customize instruction for individual students.

"Standards and assessments go hand in hand, and we need to ensure that the tools we use to determine whether students graduate from high school also measure whether students are ready for college and a career. This task force is the next step as we think about our next generation high school assessments and graduation requirements," said Acting Commissioner Cerf.

The Department of Education is currently evaluating the state's high school assessments. The task force will discuss the degree to which the HSPA and AHSA exams are appropriately gauging college and career readiness, and make recommendation on how New Jersey should measure college and career readiness in the future.

The task force will meet twice a month, and will solicit input from a variety of stakeholders, including testing experts, academics, and the general public.

College and Career Readiness Task Force members include:

Casey Crabill, President
Raritan Valley Community College

Bob Goodman, Teacher
Bergen County Vocational and Technical School District
Executive Director of the New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning

Dana Egreczky, Vice President, Workforce Development
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Bari Erlichson, Chief Performance Officer
New Jersey Department of Education

Jeff Hauger, Director, Office of Assessments
New Jersey Department of Education

Rochelle Hendricks, Secretary of Higher Education
Glenn Lang - Designee

Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner, Programs and Operations
New Jersey Department of Education

Michael Gorman, Superintendent
Pemberton Township Schools

Darryl Greer, Executive Director
New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities

Dave Hespe, Chief of Staff
New Jersey Department of Education

Harvey Kesselman, Provost/Executive VPAA
Richard Stockton College

Steve Koffler, NJDOE Technical Advisory Committee/
Adjunct Faculty at The College of New Jersey

Mary Jane Kurabinski, Director, Office of Literacy
New Jersey Department of Education

Penny MacCormack, Interim Chief Academic Officer
New Jersey Department of Education

Courtney McAnuff, Vice President of Enrollment
Rutgers University

Larry Nespoli, Executive Director
Council of Community Colleges

Michael Pennella, Superintendent
Essex County Vocational Schools

Peter Renwick, Principal
Westfield High School

Kathleen Waldron, President
William Paterson University

Ray Yannuzzi, President
Camden County College

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS TASK FORCE CHARGE

The Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all children graduate high school ready for college and careers. Attaining this goal begins with developing a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge a student should master to be "college and career ready." That inquiry must be informed by the expectations of higher education institutions and employers as well as internationally benchmarked standards. The next, and equally critical, step is to assure that appropriate assessments are in place to evaluate the degree to which students have achieved mastery of these readiness standards.

In order to address these critical questions, the Task Force on College and Career Readiness has been established by the Department of Education. It is charged with answering the following questions:

1. What does college and career readiness mean?
2. What is the appropriate way to assess this level of student achievement?
3. What graduation requirements should be required including comprehensive examinations and end of course assessments?
4. What process, benchmarks and timelines should be established to guide transition from the current system to the new system?

The Task Force shall accomplish this charge by:

- Evaluating the degree to which the New Jersey HSPA and ASHA are appropriately gauging college and career readiness
- Reviewing how other state are defining and evaluating college and career readiness;
- Recommending specific educational standards, course offerings, learning outcomes, graduation requirements, college entrance and placement requirements, and workforce readiness.
- Identifying the means of measuring success for schools and districts including assessment tools to measure school completion and college entrance readiness that can be relied on by P-12, higher education and employers as a valid indicator of student readiness. The review shall include recommendations concerning a new comprehensive exam and end of course assessments.
- Identifying data needs related to NJ demographics, school learning outcomes, completion and assessment, college entrance, retention and graduation, and demonstrated national best practice aligning school and college completion.
- Establishing a state level transition plan and timelines for moving from the existing system to the new system including:
 - establishing a structure and process to support implementation of the school/college completion agenda
 - engagement of appropriate constituencies, including teachers; faculty; school, college, business leaders and others
 - identifying the need for professional development
 - field testing of the new assessments.

The Task Force will provide a report setting forth its recommendations by December 31, 2011.