Christie Administration Awarded $5 Million in Federal Grants to Expand New Jersey's K-12 Data System to Track Students into College and the Workforce

Development over the next three years will be led by the Department of Education, Secretary of Higher Education, and Department of Labor and Workforce Development

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Trenton, NJ – New Jersey was awarded $5 million in federal grants this month to expand the state's current data system, NJSMART, to track students from pre-school through higher education institutions and into the workforce. This expansion will provide valuable information to practitioners in both K-12 schools and higher education institutions to better help measure the effectiveness of programs and to drive improvement efforts.

"For the first time in New Jersey, we will soon be able to track students from pre-k all the way through their entry into the workforce," said Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "This data system will be critical to assess the effectiveness of K-12 and career and technical education programs as we strive to ensure that all students graduate from high school truly ready for college and career."

Last week, the Department of Education received a $4 million award over three years to expand the state's current data system from K-12 into one that tracks students from pre-k through entry into the workforce. Earlier this month, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development received approximately $1 million to link employment and education data. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will be the lead developer of this expansion, with the support of the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The expansion of the state's data system will have three major goals:

- To provide more in-depth information to our high schools about the success of their students in post-secondary institutions, including information about when students need remedial course work;
- To track movement amongst New Jersey higher education institutions, including the successful completion of four year degrees after community college attendance;
- To gain more insight into the effectiveness of programs like career and technical education based on student's successful transition to the workforce.

"The grant will facilitate the state's capacity to measure the success of the education-workforce pipeline, promoting collaboration among the three state agencies," said Rochelle Hendricks, Secretary of Higher Education. "The additional resources afford the opportunity to use data to improve educational outcomes for our students, business, industry and taxpayers."

"Having a properly skilled workforce is crucial to the individual success of our workers, the growth of New Jersey's major industry sectors and the health of the state's economy. Through this cooperative effort, we will make sure our workforce development programs are as effective as they need to be," said Harold J. Wirths, Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

This is the fifth major education-related federal grant that New Jersey has won in the past year, totaling more than $136 million. Four others include:

- $55 million in School Improvement Grants (SIG) to aggressively intervene in 9 low-performing schools.
- $38 million in Race to the Top 3 awards, half of which will go directly to districts and charter schools to support components of the state's reform strategy, and half of which will be used by the Department of Education in this effort.
- $14.5 million in Charter School Program (CSP) funds to continually increase the quality of and accountability for charter schools across the state.
- $24 million in federal funds over six years to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for its Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative, helping students transition successfully from high school to college.

Additional information can be found at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/