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Governor Chris Christie Names Christopher Cerf to Lead New Jersey Department of Education

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Trenton, NJ – Today, Governor Chris Christie announced the selection of Christopher Cerf, an innovative, reform-minded and experienced education professional, as his nominee for New Jersey Education Commissioner. Mr. Cerf, having previously served as President and COO of a nationally recognized charter school operator and most recently as Deputy Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, is a seasoned education professional with more than 30 years of experience. He is a widely-respected leader in comprehensive school system reform and respected for his hands on approach. Mr. Cerf's experience on education reform issues will be crucial to executing Governor Christie's bold agenda as part of the 2011 "Year of Education Reform."

"For far too long, the education establishment and political leadership in our state and across the country have accepted low expectations and failure – particularly in our urban school districts. We can no longer fail to act or continue to defend the status quo at the expense of our children," said Governor Christie. "I am thankful that Chris Cerf is bringing to New Jersey his passion for education and experienced leadership to help enact the bold and innovative education measures we need to finally bring a quality education to every child in our state. Mr. Cerf's innovative leadership will be invaluable as we address the civil rights issue of our time."

"I also want to thank Rochelle Hendricks for her tireless efforts and work as Acting Commissioner. Since August, Rochelle has done a terrific job of leading the department through a number of critical issues, including the crafting of our education reform plans in September, the creation and appointment of the Educator Effectiveness Task Force, the partnership with Newark schools and superintendent pay cap implementation. I am pleased that she will continue to serve as a leader in the Education Department and play a key role in my Administration. The State of New Jersey desperately needs her knowledge, perspective and expertise in advancing education reform."

Christopher Cerf is a nationally recognized expert in comprehensive school system reform. He most recently served as Deputy Chancellor of the New York City public schools, where he was responsible for a broad portfolio, including organizational strategy, innovation, human capital and external relations in the nation's largest schools district, serving 1.1 million students in 1,450 schools. He previously served as the Chancellor's Chief Advisor on Transformation. Prior to his work in the New York City public schools, Mr. Cerf worked as General Counsel and Executive Vice President, and then President and COO for Edison Schools, Inc., a nationally-recognized private-sector manager of public schools. Under Cerf's tenure, Edison, Inc. was the largest such operator in the nation.

"Governor Christie has made it clear that 2011 is the year for education reform in New Jersey. He has put forward a bold plan and vision for remaking the system and taking on the challenges of inequity that currently exist," said Christopher Cerf. "With the Governor's commitment to a high-quality education for every child, it's clear that we can go far in increasing student achievement, and providing every child the quality education they deserve regardless of zip code. I look forward to being a part of this fundamental and transformational change."

Mr. Cerf began his career as a history teacher at Cincinnati Country Day School in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he taught for four years prior to pursuing his juris doctor at Columbia University School of Law. Mr. Cerf went on to serve as a clerk in the U.S. Appellate (D.C. Circuit) and U.S. Supreme Courts, followed by private law practice. Mr. Cerf served as Associate Counsel to the President in the Clinton Administration from 1994-1996.

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