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The Christie Reform Agenda: Governor Christie's Reforms Build on a Record of Improving Education in New Jersey

September 28, 2010 • Tags: [Education](#)

"Together, we can build better schools that train our students for a brighter future. Yes, we will have to make better use of the resources showered on education. Yes, we will have to hold schools accountable and give people the choice to pursue alternatives to schools that fail. Yes, we will have to reward excellence, and not tolerate failure. But we can do these things—and once again be a home for growth."

-Governor Chris Christie's Inaugural Address, 1/19/2010

Governor Christie Has Made Education Reform A Top Priority In His Administration's First 8 Months

- Approved seven new charter schools representing the greatest single year increase since 2001. These new additions boost the number of charter schools now operating in New Jersey to 73. The new charter schools carry a combined maximum enrollment of 928 students in 2010-11, increasing the statewide charter school enrollment to 25,570.
- Protected already-underfunded charter schools from further cuts in FY 2010-2011 budget.
- Called for one-year salary freeze and 1.5% health benefits contribution, provides path forward for school districts to protect New Jersey school children, prevent layoffs and program cuts.
- Signed (S-920) legislation to encourage public-private partnerships for higher education institutions.
- Unveiled a proposal to cap and reform school administrators' salaries.
- Signed A-355/S-1073 establishing a permanent Interdistrict Public School Choice Program.
- Approved \$270 Million in facilities grants for school districts with more than 175 Regular Operating Districts statewide eligible for partial state funding of 740 projects.
- \$45.3 million in School Improvement Grants Targeted to improve schools and opportunities for thousands of urban children
- Announced nearly \$16 million in state funds for 25 Vocational School District Facilities Projects.
- Offered plan to provide additional state aid to school districts that adopt salary freeze.
- Ordered and directed the creation of the New Jersey Higher Education Task Force.

Governor Christie Continues His Push To Strengthen Schools And Education In New Jersey

The governor supports giving parents and children a choice to attend better schools.

- "We will do many good things for charters schools. In fact, I've held charter schools harmless in this budget because you already pay enough," he told more than 250 charter school educators. "There are going to be more charter schools a year from now than there are today." (MaryAnn Spoto, "N.J. Gov. Chris Christie leaves charter school budget untouched," The Star-Ledger, 3/18/2010)
- "You are the masters of doing more with less because you have been consistently underfunded by the statute that was passed to establish you," Christie said of charter schools. "...This is a fight worth having and I'm doing what I know is right," Christie said. "New Jerseyans are hard workers who speak loudly and care deeply. It's about time you've had some leadership to match." (Kimberly Steinberg, "Christie puts state's support behind charter schools," Atlanticville, 3/25/2010)
- "We want to have a robust public inter-district choice program so that those districts that are succeeding are encouraged and incentivized to allow children from failing districts to come there because the bottom line is we want all types of choice for folks." (Governor Chris Christie at the American Federation of Children National Policy Summit Dinner in Washington, D.C. on Monday, May 3, 2010)
- "Our basic principle is this, and I know this is yours, parents and children deserve a choice. Now this a very, very simple straight forward principle that you would think in the abstract, that no one can disagree with. But let's not stop there, let's add the layer onto it, that parents and children who are being failed by a public school system who's cost are exuberant, and who's results are insulting, deserve a choice." (Governor Chris Christie at the American Federation of Children National Policy Summit Dinner in Washington, D.C. on Monday, May 3, 2010)

Students deserve high-quality and accountable teachers; teachers deserve to be rewarded for excellent achievement in the classroom.

- "Merit pay, tenure reform, greater teacher accountability – they are all part of Gov. Chris Christie's promises for improving public education in New Jersey." (John Mooney, "School reforms can't proceed without data," The Star-Ledger, 5/11/2010)
- "I believe that merit pay has to go to individual teachers. I believe that if there are layoffs, that those layoffs should be

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based upon merit and not based upon seniority..." (Teacher union fumes as Governor Christie ties performance pay to bid for \$400 million grant, Associated Press, 6/2/2010)

- On education, he said he wants to change the tenure system and reiterated his support for teacher pay based on student performance. (Matt Friedman, "Gov. Christie pushes reform agenda for N.J. ethics rules, pension and health benefits," NJ.com, 9/8/2010)
- Among the ideas the governor is pushing is paying for teachers based on their performance. ("Christie Slams N.J. Teacher Union, Calls For Ed. Reform," CBS-2 New York, 9/7/2010)
- As an example of the need for education reform, he pointed at Newark, spending \$24,000 per student – mostly state funded per the Abbott ruling – yet has a 50 percent dropout rate. He pitched a new teacher merit pay system, among other things. (Timothy J. Carroll, "Christie reform: 'cleaning up the empties,'" PolitickerNJ, 9/7/2010)
- ...He called for paying teachers partly based on how well their students perform. The idea is to hold educators accountable... (Geoff Mulvihill, "NJ governor says he'll start laying out reforms," Associated Press, 9/7/2010)

Reforming higher education is vital to creating jobs and spurring economic growth.

- "New Jersey's higher education institutions must be given the necessary tools to plan their growth through creative and responsible arrangements that do not leave the funding burden solely on institution budgets," said Governor Christie. "Public-private partnerships are a key mechanism to provide that flexibility and accommodate growth in our state and county colleges, while creating jobs and spurring economic growth. The legislation signed today provides needed tools that will be critical to maintaining our colleges' status as world-class learning centers. (Governor Christie Signs Legislation to Encourage Public-Private Partnerships for Higher Education Institutions, 5/5/2010)
- "To compete and be prosperous in this 21st century economy, we must have a system of higher education that keeps up with the demands of today's changing marketplace," Governor Christie said. "New Jersey's institutions of higher learning are critically important to the economic growth of our state and must be afforded the necessary tools to stay competitive." (Governor Christie Takes First Steps Toward Long-Term Higher Education Reform by Creating New Jersey Higher Education Task Force, 5/7/2010)

The governor's bold reforms have garnered considerable attention of opinion makers in New Jersey and around the country.

- "Christie vows to proceed with the changes he wants anyway. That could be good since some of his ideas are more in line with the reforms that the Obama administration wants to make to improve public education, including linking teachers' pay to student performance and making it easier to fire bad teachers. The plan would also eliminate seniority and use teacher effectiveness to make job cuts. Those are much-needed steps to improve failing schools and hold educators accountable for student achievement. It means rewarding the best teachers and principals." ("Editorial: There's a better way," Inquirer, 6/5/2010)
- "What he is doing is what government should be doing - freeing the citizenry to decide for themselves and forcing marginal or poor schools to heed their "customer base" or "go out of business". The message is market based but aimed at government run education - "the free ride is over". Christie points out that in Newark, NJ, taxpayers pay \$24,000 per pupil per year. So in a class of 20 you have almost a half a million dollars spent. I'd like to say "invested" but it's hard to do with a system Christie characterized as an "absolutely disgraceful public education system." So cheers to Christie." (Bruce McQuain, "Speaking truth to power – New Jersey style," Washington Examiner, 6/4/2010)
- "...Areas in which Christie insists he has no intention of compromising — like merit pay and abolishing seniority-based layoffs...The governor said he was so committed to the items on his reform agenda that "they should not be compromised to achieve a contrived consensus among the various affected special-interest groups." Good for him... But it's refreshing to see a politician who not only understands the need for serious education reform but is wholly committed to it — in action as well as words. Well done, governor." ("Grade-A governor," New York Post, 6/6/2010)
- "We need children to thrive in every one of our neighborhood public schools. That tough job will be done by teachers, not bureaucrats. Leadership is a tricky thing, and diagnosing problems and hypothesizing about big-picture improvements are a lot easier than actually improving education. The governor has made good headway on superintendent pay, with new caps and bonuses based on merit. Perhaps that can serve as a way forward on merit pay for teachers." ("Race is on," The Record, 8/1/2010)

Press Contact



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