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NEWS RELEASE

Governor Whitman Helps Give Students A Healthy Start, Highlights Importance of Reading and Breakfast

Gov. Christie Whitman today started her day off to a healthy start by having breakfast with and reading to students at the Woodrow Wilson School in New Brunswick to celebrate "Read Across America Day" and "National School Breakfast Week."

"Nothing could be more important than sending our children off to school ready to learn," Gov. Whitman said. "But simply put, a child who is hungry is not prepared to learn."

Governor Whitman announced in her Fiscal Year 2000 budget an addition \$1.7 million in funding for the School Breakfast Program. The money is expected to give an additional 22,000 more needy students a school breakfast.

Administered by the state Department of Agriculture, the School Breakfast Program is a federally-funded nutrition program to provide a free or low-cost breakfast to low-income students. Children whose parents earn below 130 percent of the poverty level receive meals for free, while children from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of poverty receive meals at a reduced price. All other children attending participating schools are able to purchase breakfast.

The breakfast must contain a serving of fluid milk, a serving of fruit or vegetable (or juice equivalent), and two servings of bread or meat. The program serves about 78,665 children in 910 schools (703 public and 207 private).

In the New Brunswick school district approximately 85 percent of students in the New qualify for free or reduced price meals. At Woodrow Wilson, 57 percent of the 298-member student body receive free or reduced-price meals.

"Studies have shown that there is a definite link between nutrition and a child's performance in school. Children who eat breakfast are more prepared to learn and are more alert than children who come to school without breakfast," the Governor said.

"Just as important as eating right and taking care of our bodies, is strengthening our minds. All adults should help by reading with children - not just on Read Across America Day, but every day," the Governor said.

Joined by the Cat in the Hat, Gov. Whitman read Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* to children in grades 1-4 at Woodrow Wilson School. Sponsored by the National Education Association, Read Across America Day falls on the late Dr. Seuss' 95th birthday.

In New Jersey, the statewide Read Across America campaign will include TV and radio PSAs. Organizations which are helping to sponsor the campaign in New Jersey are the New Jersey Education Association, New Jersey Library Association, Saturn Dealers of New Jersey, League of Municipalities, Trenton Thunder, State PTA, NJ PBA, the NJ Fraternal Order of Police, NJ Council of Mayors, and the NJ State Probation Officers Association.