

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Focuses on School Safety

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor reaffirms her commitment to school safety. New Jersey's new school bus inspection program and the Governor's anti-violence initiative are both programs that ensure the safety of our schoolchildren. The Governor describes the many improvements in the bus inspection system. Now, more than 60 inspectors conduct inspections twice a year in bus terminals. The anti violence initiative brings together several state departments as well as the New Jersey School Board Association, and the Violence Institute at UNDMJ to work as a team. Each of the programs in the initiative has the same goal: to identify and treat troubled students before violence occurs.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend

Governor's Weekly Radio Message
September 11, 1998
School Safety

It's that time of year again. We're watching the summer slip away and the school doors open once again. In households across the state moms and dads and kids are busy sharpening pencils, covering books, and packing lunchboxes.

And, of course, there are a lot of the usual discussions about teachers and classmates and all the activities that lie ahead in the '98-'99 school year.

I'd like to add one more item to that list of things to think about as school starts this year-school safety.

Let me begin with school buses. Parents sending their young ones off to school should be able to rest easy in the knowledge that their school bus is safe. And our new school bus inspection program, which is now run by the Department of Motor Vehicles, will go a long way in doing just that.

We've made some vast improvements over the old inspection system. We have more than 60 full time inspectors conducting inspections twice a year, right in the bus terminal, where they can take their time and do the job right.

Making sure New Jersey children have a safe and dependable ride to school is, in the words of Sherlock Holmes, "elementary." It's something we owe to every family.

We also owe it to families to ensure that their children are safe when they get to school. While the recent tragedies in schools across the country are rare, they do call attention to the fact that sometimes schools can be unsafe. We must keep firearms, other dangerous weapons, and illegal drugs out of our schools and away from our children.

In New Jersey, we're addressing this issue through our Anti- Violence Initiative. This program is bringing together several state departments, the New Jersey School Boards Association, and the Violence Institute at UMDNJ to help parents, teachers, students, and school administrators prevent school violence.

The Anti-Violence Initiative encourages a collaborative approach to safe schools. That's the only way we can solve this problem. We have to work together as a team

to ensure that our schools are safe places for our children to grow and learn. It's simply unacceptable if even one child stays home from school out of fear of violence.

As part of the Anti-Violence Initiative, the Attorney General's office has reactivated the Commission to Deter Criminal Activity and is asking the commission to work to develop a peer- based violence prevention campaign.

The Attorney General is also encouraging school officials to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that our schools are safe places for our children to learn.

The Department of Education is contributing to the Anti- Violence Initiative through the Intervention and Referral Services Project, which is designed to help schools identify and assist students with behavioral problems.

This project includes a four-part video series that will help schools develop more effective intervention programs. Every New Jersey school is required to provide intervention and referral services, and this program will ensure that these services meet the needs of our students.

All of these programs share a common philosophy: every time we identify and treat troubled students before violence occurs, we help to break the chain of violence and keep our children safe.

And you, as parents and children, can do your part. If you have a concern about school safety, speak up. Let your school officials know that you're concerned.

We all want what's best for our children. We want to see them learn in quality schools, with dedicated teachers and a sound curriculum. Most important, we want them to be safe, whether it's on the bus to school, on the playground, or in the classroom.

As a new school year begins, we are renewing our commitment to our young people: to give them a sound, and safe, education. Let's continue to work together to make the '98-'99 school year the most successful, and safest, year ever.