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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman announces plan to enhance continuing education standards, opportunities for teachers

Governor Christie Whitman today announced that her administration has reached agreement with New Jersey's largest teacher's association on a plan to guarantee the continuing professional education standards and opportunities for New Jersey's teachers.

"This plan will benefit children, first and foremost, by giving teachers the knowledge and skills they'll need to help students achieve the high academic standards we have set." said Whitman.

The Governor was joined at the announcement by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and by the deans of the schools of education at the College of New Jersey, Rowan College and Montclair State University.

The professional development plan is aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of continuing education opportunities for teachers by establishing state standards for approval. It will also promote competition among qualified providers of that training. The proposal was developed by the Department of Education with input from members of the education community and the public.

Under the plan, which will now be considered by State Board of Education, all public school teachers in New Jersey will, for the first time, be required to continue their professional development with at least 100 hours training every five years. It also establishes a Professional Teaching Standards Board to promote the highest standards of teaching practice and conduct. Because of the widespread support for the plan, and the State Board's involvement in its development, its approval by the State Board is expected.

Public input to the State Board of Education has enhanced the original proposal by increasing the required number of hours of training every five years from 90 to 100; and by providing a greater commitment to intervention when teachers do not move forward in professional development.

A key aspect of the plan calls for establishing Professional Development Committees in school districts to provide input by classroom teachers into the decision-making process.

"I believe that the heart of a superior education lies in the heart, and mind, of a dedicated teacher," Whitman said. "That's why it's so important that teachers have access to meaningful, first-rate training."

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