

# Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004  
TRENTON, NJ 08625

## NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor  
Julie Plocinik  
609-777-2600

RELEASE: March 18, 1998

### **Governor Announces Program to Foster Charter School Innovation, Touts Success of Schools**

Gov. Christie Whitman today committed \$150,000 to the creation of the New Jersey Charter School Innovation Network and touted the innovation and success of the charter school program during a visit to the North Star Academy Charter School of Newark.

The Charter School Innovation Network is a special project that will facilitate the sharing of innovation and technology among charter schools and public schools and will foster the continued success and development of the charter school program throughout New Jersey.

"If public education is an investment in our young people, charter schools are an investment in innovation and excellence. They foster new ideas and new methods of teaching," said Gov. Whitman. "Each charter school can make a real difference for the students it serves."

"Our ultimate goal in creating charter schools is to ensure that their success extends far beyond their own walls. The charter schools of today provide the innovation and inspiration to improve all of our public schools tomorrow," said the Governor.

Gov. Whitman announced that \$150,000 from the Governor's discretionary fund will be used to establish the Charter School Innovation Network in the Department of Education. The project will focus on three main efforts:

- Convening the administrators of New Jersey charter schools periodically to share information on the innovations they are finding most successful;
- Supporting independent expert validation of the success of these ideas -- so the ideas can be implemented in other charter schools and also in other public schools; and
- Distributing this information to parents and schools throughout the state and beyond through an annual report and a New Jersey Charter School web site.

The Governor visited classrooms and talked with students, teachers and parents at North Star Academy prior to making the announcement. North Star, which opened its doors in September of 1997, provides education and opportunity to 72 fifth and sixth graders during an 11-month school year. The school boasts small size classes - 18 students per class - and a 10:1 student to teacher ratio. The school focuses on rigorous instruction in math, science, English and history, with special emphasis on technology. The school also stresses the importance of involving parents and community in education.

"As North Star shows, these laboratories of learning can be exciting," said Gov. Whitman. "Some charter schools, like North Star, succeed from the outset. Some schools may struggle along the way. But in challenging the status quo, they benefit all of the students of our state."

Gov. Whitman enacted legislation creating the charter school program in 1996. Charter schools are publicly funded, independently run educational institutions that offer parents and students greater choices and opportunity in education. Currently New Jersey has 13 charter schools in operation from Camden to Hoboken. Beginning in the fall of 1998, 35 charter schools will be providing innovation and opportunity to more than 5500 students throughout New Jersey.