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NEWS RELEASE

PO BOX 004
CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
(609) 777-2600

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Governor Teaches Social Studies Class; Highlights Importance Of New Academic Standards

Gov. Christie Whitman today welcomed students and teachers for the beginning of the school year as she taught a social studies class at the Long Branch Middle School. The Governor's visit highlighted the importance of the state's new academic standards and their role in ensuring that New Jersey students receive a quality education.

"Our state's new academic standards will ensure that all New Jersey students receive a world-class education by preparing them to compete successfully in the academic arena and the high tech world of the 21st century," Whitman said.

"Not only will these standards define what students need to know before they graduate from high school, but they also will help them determine the career path they want to take to become productive citizens of their communities and their state," the Governor said.

According to Whitman, Education Week this year ranked New Jersey fourth among the states in terms of standards and assessments with a grade of "A." She added that New Jersey is the only state with plans to assess in the areas of world languages, comprehensive health and physical education, and the arts. She said New Jersey is pioneering expanded assessment in language arts, including speaking, listening and viewing assessment as well as reading and writing for grades four, eight and eleven.

New Jersey is one of only seven states that have a grade four test in place to assess math, reading, and writing. Of those seven states, New Jersey is one of only two that assess in science. And, she said, New Jersey is one of only six states to implement hands-on performance assessment in science at grades eight and eleven.

The new academic standards define what students should know and be able to do in seven content areas and in five workplace readiness skills. The academic content areas are social studies, world languages, mathematics, science, language arts literacy, visual and performing arts and comprehensive health and physical education.

The manuals to guide districts in teaching the standards will be completed this school year and next. As these manuals are completed, schools can begin using them immediately. For the next four years, students will be given practice tests to assess their knowledge of the standards.

The actual final tests in all subject areas will be administered to all students in grade four by the year 2001. In the year 2002, this testing will be expanded to include eighth grade students. By the year 2005, students in grade eleven will be given the final tests.

"I know that every parent wants the best for their children," Whitman said. "We are going to demand excellence for and from every student."

"Teachers hold the key to making the standards work," the Governor said. "New Jersey's teachers are committed and ready to do their part to ensure that our academic standards work well. They are ready, willing and able to assume important new, and different roles -- such as the ones our academic standards require."

"The bottom line here is excellence," Whitman said. "We won't settle for mediocrity. We want a full curriculum at every grade level, in every school, for every student."

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