

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GOVERNOR LAUNCHES "SCHOOL COUNTS!" PILOT CAMPAIGN LINKING STUDENT PERFORMANCE WITH JOB SUCCESS**

Gov. Christie Whitman today announced the launching of a new pilot campaign, which will emphasize the linkage between a student's academic performance and his or her success in the workplace. The campaign, called School Counts!, will be open initially to businesses and high schools in Monmouth, Ocean and Salem counties.

"New Jersey is a great place to live, work and raise a family. We want our schools to prepare students for the many work opportunities this state has to offer them," said Gov. Whitman.

"School counts. The math a student learns, the science a student learns, the language skills a student learns - these things really do matter. When a student takes a job, the student should be ready to apply all that he or she learned in school," the Governor said.

"And the value of school goes far beyond the facts a student learns from books. School can teach students that it's important to be on time, to work hard, and to persevere. School should be the place where students learn good habits that will last them a lifetime," she said.

"No matter what kind of future students are planning, the preparation they receive in school is vitally important. Employers know that. They want to hire men and women who show up for work on time every day, who treat themselves and others with respect, and who go beyond the job requirements to give their best effort. The School Counts! program is a good way to drive home that message," Gov. Whitman said.

"The program is all about motivation. Motivating employers to demand excellence and accountability. Motivating students to treat school as a first step toward a rewarding and successful career," the Governor said.

Following her remarks at Manasquan High School, the Governor presented New Jersey Chamber of Commerce President Joan Verplanck with a proclamation designating today as "School Counts! Day" in New Jersey.

The School Counts! campaign, a project of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, is based on the National Alliance of Business model, "Making Academics Count." The two main goals of the program are to encourage businesses to use school records when making hiring decisions, and impress upon students that doing well in school is important for their future success.

Employers around the state have been asked to request proof of academic performance from all high school students or recent graduates upon application for employment. The School Counts! program will include in-class presentations by local business leaders to ninth grade students. Through slide presentations and discussions, students will learn the salaries of various jobs, skills sought by employers, and the relationship between academic performance and success in the job.

Businesses and high schools in the pilot counties will be invited to participate in the program, which will be conducted from four to five months. Any employer can designate himself or herself as a School Counts! participant. After the program is evaluated it may be offered statewide.

Students achieving specific goals will be designated as School Counts! students and presented a certificate of achievement, which will be issued on an annual basis to students in 9th through 12th grades. The certificate is intended for use by prospective employers in making hiring decisions.

The majority of the funding for the campaign will come from the corporate community and proceeds from the purchase of School Counts! kits by schools which will provide materials high schools need to implement the program, including posters, parent and student brochures and a supply of School Counts! achievement certificates. The Department of Education is providing \$30,000 to help participating schools purchase School Counts! kits.

