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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR ADDRESS PARENTS CONFERENCE; SAYS GOAL OF SCHOOL REFORM IS QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

Gov. Christie Whitman today highlighted her commitment to Whole School Reform when she addressed the Jersey City public schools' Parents as Partners Conference at New Jersey City University. Some 800 parents and community members attended the day-long seminar on Whole School Reform, which involves the restructuring of urban schools to improve the academic achievement of students.

"Making sure that every child in New Jersey has a top quality education is the goal of our Whole School Reform program," the Governor said. "Whole School Reform combines into one program all of the strategies that have been shown to be the most effective in helping students achieve."

"Experts from around the country have developed different models for implementing Whole School Reform," she said. "While these models may differ in their details, they all include common basic elements which help students achieve our core curriculum standards."

"Something else that Whole School Reform models have in common is the recognition that parents must be involved in the school as much as possible," Gov. Whitman said. "That's why as part of this year's 'Parents as Partners Conference,' parents will be able to attend workshops conducted by experts on each Whole School Reform model."

"One thing is clear -- getting parents more involved in our schools helps schools better meet the needs of students," the Governor said.

Gov. Whitman said strides have already been made in improving Jersey City public schools, which have been under state control since 1989. She said recognition of this improvement has come from New Jersey Monthly Magazine, which selected the Dr. Ronald McNair Academic High School in Jersey as the number one public high school in the state.

"I believe this recognition makes a wonderful point -- by implementing sensible reforms we can make our urban schools among the best in the nation," she said. "Through our Whole School Reform program, we've already made a great start."

Last May, the State Supreme Court approved the recommendation of the Commissioner of the Department of Education to begin implementation of Whole School Reform in every Abbott district elementary school over the next two-and-a-half years. The purpose of whole school reform is to enable students to meet the state's academic standards, which cover seven academic subjects that students need to learn before graduating from high school

Whole School Reform requires the support and participation of those who must carry it out and are affected by it. Therefore, the decision to implement whole school reform and the selection of a particular plan must be made voluntary by the principal and faculty of a school. Implementation of a plan is overseen by a committee of a school's principal, teachers, parents and other community members.

Seventy-two Abbott district elementary and secondary schools have volunteered to implement whole school reform in the 1998-1999 school year.

