

New Jersey Department of Education

A Blueprint for Strategic Education Initiatives

2002-2005

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Commissioner**

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Executive Summary

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Blueprint for Strategic Education Initiatives provides an overview of the department's mission, basic functions, essential components, belief statements and a framework for organizational effectiveness. This business focus lays the foundation for the development of the New Jersey Department of Education's mission, structure and education agenda. The plan also provides a review of directions and priorities, as well as the statewide strategic initiatives launched in 2002 and during the first half of 2003; an assessment of where the NJDOE is in meeting stated direction, goals and priorities identified in 2002; and an education agenda for 2003-2005.

The Department of Education recognized that it must be mission-driven if we are to ensure that all children are afforded equal access to educational opportunities in the State of New Jersey, and that we must hold all children to the same high standards, including high expectations and challenging curricula delivered by highly qualified teachers. Equally important is that the education system must make the critical shift from teaching some students well to teaching all students well.

To clearly articulate this change in direction, the department developed its mission statement as follows:

Mission Statement

The New Jersey Department of Education will provide leadership for a superior education by utilizing multiple and diverse paths to success for all children in New Jersey.

In February 2002, the senior management of the department conducted a comprehensive functional analysis of existing operations and personnel. Findings indicated an imbalance in the department's two major functions of oversight and support for teaching and learning, a misuse of resources, and the absence of leadership.

To address this functional imbalance, misuse of resources, and the absence of leadership, senior management defined its mission and restructured the department to lead and design, rather than react and follow.

Basic Functions

Oversight and Support for Teaching and Learning

On June 5, 2002, the department presented to the State Board of Education for its approval, organization code and a table of organization chart which includes all divisions of the Department of Education and all other offices/units for which managerial appointments require State Board of Education approval.

This table of organization reflects the consolidation and coordination of specific functions that were spread throughout the department, as well as management responsibilities necessary for leadership in establishing the desirable balance of oversight and support for teaching and learning.

Additionally, several offices have been renamed to more accurately reflect the scope of work being carried out. In summary, the department is organized around two central themes. The first is central office operations—administrative operations, policy development, program planning and statutory and regulatory compliance governing school laws. The second is field services operations—technical assistance and support to school districts in the area of educational support services, professional development, certification and shared services.

The NJDOE also carefully considered both the emerging trends and changing business demands in education, as well as evolving educational opportunities and expectations.

These considerations and analyses have led the department to adopt a revised business perspective as reflected in the mission statement and essential components designed to improve teaching and learning to ensure the instructional and organizational effectiveness in New Jersey's public school system.

Education is a dynamic field that never runs short of critical issues. Sometimes they change slightly with the decades, but usually they center around some very basic essentials for success in educating our students.

The essential components to be addressed are centered on five major themes. They are:

1. Teacher and administrator quality;

2. Raising student achievement;
3. Diverse and multiple paths for student success;
4. Innovative and outstanding practices and programs; and
5. Public engagement and communication and public accountability.

The design, development and implementation of the state's educational initiatives are guided by these five themes. Equally important is a set of belief statements which serve as our moral compass. These belief statements are outlined below:

Belief Statements

We believe:

- All children can learn when they are taught well.
- High expectations are critical to improve student success.
- Multiple and diverse opportunities to meet standards must be available for all children to achieve successfully.
- Standards and outcomes must be held constant for all students while we apply strategies and techniques in different ways.
- Self-directed learning and responsible behavior are the goals for all of our students.
- Diversity is our strength as it challenges us to avoid simple and one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Research and data analysis must be applied to teaching and learning for outstanding results to occur.
- Investing in people is one of the primary strategies in improving teaching and learning.
- All teachers should be leaders and all leaders should be teachers.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.

Organizational Overview/Framework for Organizational Effectiveness

The NJDOE serves 1.3m students (pre-K-12), on an annual operating budget of \$8.6b in state funds and \$757m in federal funds. With more than 400 employees, the department comprises four operating divisions, three regional services centers, and 21 county offices of education throughout the state.

The NJDOE recognized both the similarities and differences which exist when providing a broad continuum of resources and services to 616 school districts, as well as the challenges and opportunities presented. In order to meet those challenges and opportunities, the department developed and adopted a framework for organizational effectiveness. The framework for organizational effectiveness represents a “change in work” focus in how the department intends to meet its business goals.

This framework includes:

A shift from	To
√Funding based on traditional funding allocation formulas/silos	•Funding to support measurable outcomes
√Issuing directives	•Establishing collaborative partnerships
√Heavy emphasis on compliance and Oversight	•Striking a balance between compliance and technical/assistance/support
√Traditional service delivery systems	•Multiple and diverse service delivery models
√Fragmented information systems	•Integrated systems development
√Redundant data collection and Management	•Universal data collection and management coordinated by a Data Management council
√Sovereign work units/fragmentation	•Cross-functional work teams

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Basic Functions

- ✓ Oversight
- ✓ Support for Teaching and Learning

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Essential Components

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The essential components to be addressed are centered on five major themes. They are:

1. Teacher and administrator quality;
2. Raising student achievement;
3. Diverse and multiple paths for student success;
4. Innovative and outstanding practices and programs; and
5. Public engagement and communication and public accountability.

1) Teacher and Administrator Quality

The Commissioner's vision of education is to place the Department of Education in a leadership role to further quality teaching and learning in this state. **Successful teaching is the key to student academic achievement, and** we must work together to find ways to improve teacher and administrative quality. Specifically, we need to recruit teachers, develop student interest in a teaching career, and find ways to keep the 40 percent who leave the profession in the first five years from doing so. Research tells us that the most important way to hold teachers in the profession is to give them **adequate support** in the form of mentoring and collegial interaction.

Teachers also need common planning time, and they need time to observe and mentor each other. Local districts need to look for more imaginative and creative ways to give teachers time together in **school-based professional development**, and the students will benefit greatly from teaming efforts, joint planning, and collegial sharing.

There are many things that we can do in our separate roles and also collaboratively. The department will work with our higher education partners to develop and implement **uniform standards** for teacher preparation programs.

The alternate route has been successful in bringing new talent and experience into the classrooms for over twenty years. We will develop another support option for the alternate route that allows prospective

teachers to fulfill the requirements through a **Master of Arts in Teaching** program. We also will adopt **professional standards for administrators** to ensure that they are prepared to assume critical leadership roles and develop alternative preparation programs, such as an “alternate route” for school administrators. Additionally, we will seek assistance from our **corporate partners**. There are very successful models of professional development that could be replicated, such as the Merck Summer Professional Development Model for Science teachers currently being adapted for literacy and mathematics. Finally, the department will work vigorously to extend the present 100-hour professional development process to a more rigorous and coherent approach to **professional development** for all teachers.

To meet our **literacy goal** of having all students learn to read at or above grade level by the end of grade three, we must make sure that our teachers in the early grades know how to teach reading. Therefore, we need to strengthen state requirements to ensure that all elementary teachers know how to teach reading. The rigor of a teacher’s preparation is important to his or her performance in the classroom over the long-term. We need to increase the minimum passing scores for **teacher certification** exams and then require teachers to teach in their areas of certification.

According to a report published by the Education Trust, about 17 percent of high school classes in New Jersey are taught by teachers without at least a college minor in the subject, the seventh lowest in the country. We must collectively work on changing that statistic related to what is known as **out-of-field teaching**. We will encourage teachers to pursue **national certification**, which is a rigorous process that requires teachers to assemble professional portfolios, include samples of student work and lesson plans, and submit videos of their instruction and teaching methods. There are currently only 48 teachers in our state who hold a national certificate. Our goal is to have at least 2400, or one per school building.

Governor McGreevey recognizes the importance of this critical issue, and he has already initiated actions to begin a program to upgrade our state’s teaching staff with their professional input and assistance. He has set up a teacher’s advisory council, and he is currently holding teacher town meetings in every county. We must find more ways to **reward teachers** with much-deserved recognition, such as we did in our recent Milken award events.

One good piece of news recently was the award of a \$7.9 million state grant from the USDOE over three years to enhance **teacher quality** throughout the state. The grant was awarded to New Jersey for our proposal to redesign teacher education programs; strengthen the alternate route; and provide mentoring support for novice teachers. In addition to teachers in the classroom, No Child Left Behind has specified that **teacher aides** must be upgraded by meeting new more rigorous standards. By 2006, there are 60,000 teacher aides in New Jersey who must have an associate's degree, or have two years of higher education, or pass a proficiency test to demonstrate that they are highly qualified.

2) **Raising Student Achievement**

Another area that has taken on a new life under the new federal education act, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), along with the development of highly qualified teachers, is the maintenance of high standards aligned with a federally mandated **state testing** program for grades 3-8.

The goals of the McGreevey administration are certainly in concert with the main thrust of the new federal education act. We simply must do everything in our power to raise student achievement and that requires effort on everyone's part. The largest thrust in our efforts to raise student achievement is research-based. We know without a doubt that **early education** is critical to later achievement. Knowing how to read by the end of grade three is essential for success in any subject area in the subsequent school years. Through extensive brain development research, we also know that brain development occurs in the first five years of life, and that the quality of life during those early years critically affects this development. We simply cannot miss that opportunity to help children who do not have access to people and resources that help with that early development. For its part, the state is working on the quality of the **preschool programs** in the Abbott districts. Participation is way up. New staff that are hired and certified, and those who have been in the program but are not certified are working on obtaining their training and credentials. We have given districts early childhood curriculum guidelines and strategies to assist them in implementing the preschool programs.

Many districts have been identified under Title I as needing assistance with raising achievement in reading skills. We know that the use of **reading coaches** is one powerful way to help teachers who are working with non-achieving students and may not know some of the most effective ways to

reach slow readers. Governor McGreevey has committed \$10 million a year for four years to provide the reading coaches to districts most in need of this assistance. We currently have 30 coaches working with teachers in 80 schools.

In the summer of 2002, we received a report from the **Governor's Task Force on Improving the Quality of Early Literacy Education** in New Jersey. The task force was charged with the responsibility of identifying best practices in teaching literacy and making sure we in New Jersey are not leaving any child behind because he or she cannot read. The task force report contains valuable recommendations that we must discuss and implement in every district. As an added boost to assist us with our reading goal, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has received a six-year \$120 million **Reading First grant** to improve literacy from K-3. Districts with low reading scores are eligible for this grant money, specifically for early literacy initiatives.

Governor McGreevey has gone a step beyond all of these initiatives and recommendations by creating his **Governor's Book Club** as one example of a strategy to encourage students to read. We call on all of you with young children/students to have your children/students participate in the book club. We also encourage you to find other innovative ways to promote reading, because in order to read well requires lots of practice. We are competing with the visual technological world when we try to get students to read. As important as technology is to society, we still measure our literacy by how well developed our verbal skills are.

While our major thrust is early reading, all of us have the challenge of improving performance in all areas, especially math and science. Our newly revised **Core Curriculum Content Standards** in math, science and literacy, adopted by the State Board of Education in July 2002, are much more specific than the original ones adopted in 1996. The other four areas of standards are still being reviewed and discussed. We have examined the standards not just from a strictly academic viewpoint, but we have strengthened areas such as character development, self-esteem, and developing good safety habits. Our technology standards are updated and very important in giving districts guidance on preparing students for the workplace, as well as higher education.

When we discuss student achievement, we must address the various **achievement gaps** and develop strategies to eliminate them. The No Child

Left Behind (NCLB) Act says that by 2014 we must eliminate disparities among whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Statistics show that about 48 percent of white students have graduated from college by age 24 while only 7 percent of minority students have. According to research from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, by the end of high school, 17-year-old minority students have the same set of reading skills as white students graduating from middle schools. When asked why, adults blame poverty, uncaring parents, and lack of health care. Children attribute it to teachers who don't know their subjects well, counselors who underestimate the student's potential, and low expectations. According to Kati Haycock of the Education Trust, common elements of success for student achievement are high standards for all students and support for those who need it. Teachers matter more than anyone else. We must work together on this problem. It will take persistence at every level. National issues are being discussed, such as whether all students should be expected to meet high standards. Yet, students themselves tell us that low expectations simply produce lower results, because school is dull and unchallenging. As we sort out and clarify the requirements under NCLB, the department will act as a **resource to districts** rather than a monitor.

The department is in the process of creating a **student-level database**. It is absolutely essential that we be able to track students individually from year to year, especially to determine whether we are making adequate progress in helping underachieving students. These data are necessary for us to identify trends and patterns of achievement and pinpoint the gaps that still exist.

As unpleasant as the subject is, **statewide assessments** are mandated. However, we must make our assessment system fair and equitable so that it becomes our best tool in making progress toward overcoming achievement gaps. We must get back to the concept of making test into teaching tools for districts, as well as students. Where there are deficiencies, we need to work to eliminate them. Our assessments will help to identify the deficiencies. We are embarking on a new series of assessments that will encompass **grades 3-8** as required by NCLB. We will pay attention to the input we have received from districts on the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) especially. The department, with the assistance of the school community, will try to find ways to develop proficiency testing for students to demonstrate skills that are not measurable by pencil and paper assessments. We intend to administer a **new third grade test** this spring to ensure that New Jersey is meeting our third-grade literacy goal. We must

establish a baseline to indicate progress in our efforts to have all students reading by the end of grade three.

3) **Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement**

Reaching our ambitious achievement goals will require hard work, lots of discussion and analysis, deployment of new instructional strategies, upgrading our teaching staff, and keeping excellent teachers in the profession. Accomplishing all of this requires some willingness to unfetter our thinking about how districts construct programs. That leads us to the third critical issue of devising diverse and multiple paths for student success.

As educators, we must take a look at our education system and what it needs to accomplish in the 21st century. We will always have the basic requirements of education, such as literacy in language and mathematics. However, our economy is now global and the workplace is changing very rapidly. As global business practices advance and create jobs that do not even exist today, we must make sure we have a **future workforce educated** to do such jobs that will require knowledge and skills beyond the basic education we are accustomed to offering in public schools.

Although New Jersey is a national leader in innovation, research, and development, we face fierce competition from other states – and countries – for skilled workers. As our economy changes, we have new challenges and new opportunities to work together with our business community to give our young people the skills they need to compete for the best jobs in the global economy. Nationally, approximately 40% of students in college major in **business and business-related areas**, yet we have almost no high school courses that prepare for this career.

There are tremendous advantages to career-focused programs. While they incorporate all of the requirements of the Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the workplace readiness standards, these programs help students prepare in high school for a specific career that they think they might like to follow. We have been encouraging districts to work with the business and corporate world and higher education to create partnerships that develop programs oriented toward specific careers. These **career-oriented programs** have two important functions. If a student has a strong interest in a career and has the opportunity to begin preparation at an early stage in high school, he or she will have a tremendous advantage in picking a college and gaining admission. If a student tries career-oriented courses

and finds that it is not what he or she expected, that is a very valuable lesson to learn early also.

To form a successful school/business partnership, it requires vision and commitment on the part of the school administration and school board, the business community, and higher education. Such vision is rare, but we encourage educators and parents to examine this path to offering our students programs that are challenging and useful for life.

The job market will continue to place a premium on education and skills as more positions are created in the technical, professional, and management occupations. Several major industries have realized that it is essential to build a pipeline into their professions. Some have been aggressive like Cisco, but it is catching on with other companies in areas of construction, utilities, and pharmaceuticals that they need to partner with schools to build the pipeline. Some are creating industry standards and building **career programs** around them. We now have four **career academy programs** operating where they did not exist last year. Each one is different. These four do not count the many successful career academies and programs that have been in place in some of our technical schools such as Bergen, Monmouth, and Union to name a few. All of these programs provide multiple paths to student success and all are important. We will continue to explore and encourage additional partnerships that will benefit students all over the state.

Our standards are clear and consistent, but we must be willing to look at new ways to help students reach the standards and at the same time be prepared for a future characterized by change and challenge.

Governor McGreevey and the department hope that students who take advantage of these exciting programs will ultimately consider residing in New Jersey and pursuing business here. Wherever students choose to work, it is our hope that career programs will be challenging enough to prepare them to be clear thinkers, ambitious professionals, and model citizens. The realm of career-oriented programs is one major avenue to student success. There are many other program approaches that we can develop to help students be successful. For example, we need to examine the structure of the **senior year**, because for many students, it is a waste of time. Once students have passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), we must examine the many options we could offer them as they complete high

school, such as service projects, internships, online courses, college-level courses, career academies, and there are others.

We also need to look at **facilities** as assisting us in providing multiple paths to student success. The design of our buildings has a lot to do with how innovative or restricted our programs can be. New construction should be an integral part of the community and incorporate the resources of that neighborhood and community into school life. We intend to initiate five “renaissance schools” as a pilot program. These will be small schools designed to improve learning, as well as improve the surrounding neighborhoods. Not only should school buildings be an integral part of the community, but we must view education as integrated from pre-k to the end of college and beyond. It is critical that we create a seamless articulation of programming that keeps building toward complex skills and knowledge for students as they progress through all of the grades and college years.

Not only should it be personally rewarding to learn, but it is economically rewarding, as well. Average annual earnings with no high school diploma are \$21,314 and over 40 years nets \$853,000. With a high school diploma -- \$30,560 and \$1.3 million over 40 years. With a two-year vocational degree -- \$36,833 and \$1.47 million. With a two-year college degree -- \$38,118 and \$1.52 million. With a Bachelor’s Degree -- \$49,344 and \$1.97 million. With a Master’s Degree -- \$57,676 and \$2.30 million. And with a professional degree or doctorate -- \$71,573 and \$2.86 million (from the Employment Policy Foundation as reported in Education Daily on March 6, 2002). We can say with certainty that education pays.

4) Innovative and Outstanding Practices and Programs

If we are to improve instructional delivery, we must identify, reward, and replicate successful approaches and outstanding programs, performances and efforts. The state will do its part in offering and encouraging others to offer **summer institutes and workshops** to give teachers new ways to teach and upgrade their skills. We encourage all districts to give serious thought to ways it can develop its own innovative ideas to increase the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities. Districts should do more networking and sharing. This is much easier to do with the technology resources at our disposal. You can identify your successful programs and trade ideas with neighboring districts. Some districts have formed consortia for these purposes.

On the state's part, we will take whatever opportunities we can to improve our own approaches to **educational improvement**. One area we are currently working on is the return of our three state-operated districts to local control. We must do this without preconceived ideas and without the benefit of guidance in the law. We will work with the three districts until we solve how to accomplish the return in the best interest of the state and the communities.

5) **Public Communication, Engagement and Accountability**

Whether we are spending federal dollars, state aid, or local share, we cannot escape accountability for the performance in schools. In the department, we have set a very different course for ourselves in regard to public communication, engagement and accountability. We have completely reorganized the department to be more responsive to local districts' needs. We are shifting away from emphasis on compliance and oversight to one of support and technical assistance. The department has undergone a thorough **reorganization** into two functional sectors – central operations and field operations.

A large part of the field operations will be delivered by our three regional offices that have incorporated the county offices into the regional delivery structure. Another part of the department with extensive field operations is the new Abbott division. The staff of this division works directly with the thirty Abbott districts. By having **regional offices** in the north, center and south of the state, we will be better able to deliver direct services and technical support to all districts. Some of the services that will soon be available in your regional office are statewide planning; creation of a seamless system of education pre-k to 14, 16, or 20; shared services; county AVA commissions, Educational Technology Training Centers (ETTCs), and Educational Services Commissions; certification examiners; replication of effective programs; and technical assistance for problem areas.

The department will use technology to reach as many in the public as possible to keep everyone informed about what is happening in education in the state. Our Web site not only contains state-level information, it connects to local districts, as well.

We have plans for many initiatives in these five critical areas for which we will enlist your support. Together we can make a difference.

The design, development and implementation of the state's educational initiative as guided by the five themes are grounded a set of belief statements which serve as our moral compass. These belief statements are outlined below.

Belief Statements

We believe:

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Framework for Organizational Effectiveness

Based on the department’s assessment a framework for organizational effectiveness reflecting a change in work practices in the department was developed.

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√Funding based on traditional funding allocation formulas/silos	•Funding to support measurable outcomes
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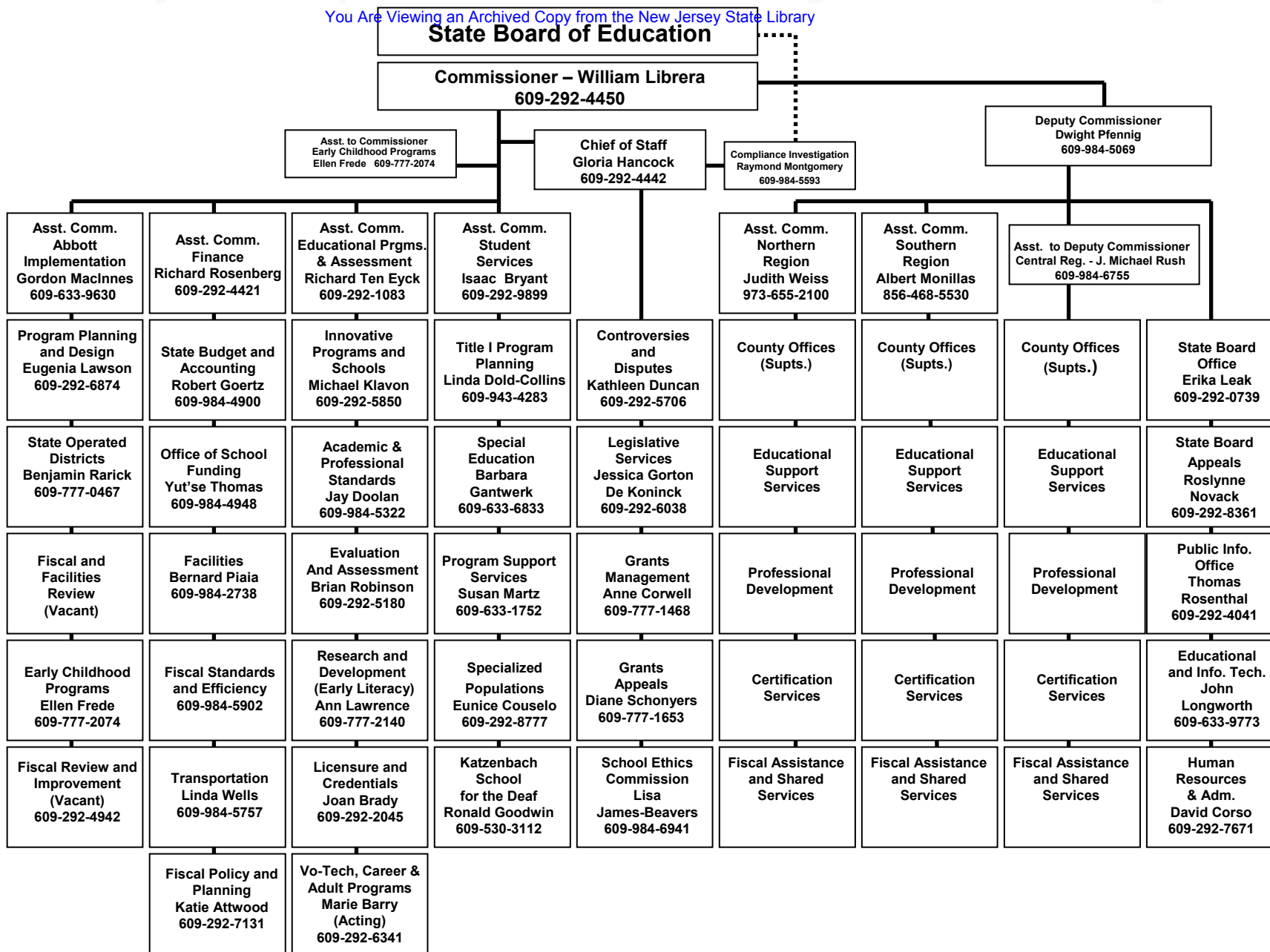
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The New Jersey Department of Education continues to focus attention on the significant impact that broad public input and strict federal programs and funding requirements have on the department's planning, decision-making and priorities.

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Directions and Priorities 2002

During the period February 2002 to December 2002, the department focused its efforts on building an internal infrastructure that would support its mission and contribute substantially to the design, development and implementation of strategic initiatives.

These efforts include but are not limited to:

- The reduction in oversight to absolute minimum to school districts.
- The engagement of public providers such as: Higher Education, school districts, and/or consortium of retired educators to support our efforts.
- **DOE reorganization**
 - Consolidation and coordination of specific department functions (Finance, Facilities, Abbott, Grants Management and Procurement).
 - Effectively communicating the reorganization plan to DOE staff, State Board and other state contingency groups.
- **Design, development and implementation of strategic initiatives.**
 - Early Literacy
 - Achievement Gap
 - Innovative Schools
 - Character Education
 - Teacher and Administrators Standards
 - Assessment and Testing
- **Establishing/Staffing Regional Service Centers.**

Status Update of Directions and Priorities 2002

On February 12, 2003, the department undertook a review of the past 12 months to assess where the DOE is in meeting stated directions and priorities and to establish the education agenda for 2003. Overall, we determined that significant improvements have been made in some areas and in other areas, the work is on-going. A status update follows:

- Reduction in oversight to absolute minimum to school districts.

Status: Improvements made, work is on-going

- Engagement of public education providers.

Status: Significant improvements made, work continues

- DOE reorganization

Status: Consolidation of specific department functions, more work to be done in coordination and communication

- Design, development and implementation of strategic initiatives: Early Literacy, Achievement Gap, Innovative Schools, Character Education, Teacher and Administrators Standards, and Assessment and Testing.

Status: Design and development phase completed, implementation efforts are underway

- Establishing/Staffing Regional Service Centers.

Status: Three regional service centers are operational

Strategic Initiatives

The design, development and implementation of the Department of Education's Strategic Educational Initiatives are grounded in five major themes. They are: Teacher and Administrator Quality; Raising Student Achievement; Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Success; Innovative and Outstanding Practices/Programs; and, Public Engagement and Communication and Public Accountability.

- ❖ As a first step in addressing the state's critical issues inherent in the five aforementioned themes, the department organized around the principles of accountability, systems development, and partnerships.
- ❖ Second, our collective efforts are and will continue to be guided by an exhaustive search for powerful methods that affect, in desirable ways, large numbers of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to achieve specific goals.
- ❖ Third, none of these goals will be achieved without partners, as educating young people has never been achieved solely within the narrow confines of the school day or school year.
- ❖ Fourth, in all efforts, we will continue to look for effective practices, previous studies/reports and powerful research findings.

Finally, the overall goal will be to produce a number of approaches and resources so school communities will build their plan to serve children well. When a school community is unable to produce desired results with their choices---the department will provide technical assistance first and make the choices for them.

Strategic Initiatives – 2002

During 2002, the following strategic initiatives were launched:

- **Early Literacy Initiative**
 - ✓ Established baseline population;
 - ✓ Assigned 40 reading coaches; and
 - ✓ Establish literacy goals for districts.

- **Career Academies**
 - ✓ Four new career academy programs established.

- **Fiscal and Educational Intervention Teams**
 - ✓ Early warning system that seeks to balance oversight/compliance and technical assistance in four areas: Governance, School Operations, Personnel, and Finance.
 - ✓ Initially in four districts—three completed, one on-going.

- **Cross Functional Work Teams**
 - ✓ Structured, coordinated approach to examine cross cutting policy issues for No Child Left Behind.

- **Partnerships with colleges/universities**
 - ✓ Changed service delivery structures for alternate route and working with 12th grade pilot districts.

- **Network of Schools**
 - ✓ Promote positive educational experiences, in programs and practices in addressing academic achievement gaps, special education, and small schools under way in selected school districts.

New Jersey Accomplishments in Education 2002

1) Teacher and Administrator Quality

The Department of Education has done the following:

- ✓ Worked with the Professional Teaching Standards Board to develop “draft” teaching standards that are aligned with national standards and will be adopted after stakeholder input has been incorporated. Once adopted, these standards will guide college teacher preparation programs, as well as mentoring and professional development.
- ✓ In conjunction with the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) consortium, recommended the adoption of national professional standards for school leaders and national professional accreditation for preparation programs. Once adopted, these standards will guide college administrator preparation programs, as well as mentoring and professional development.
- ✓ Started work on another support option for the alternate route to certification that allows prospective teachers to fulfill the requirements through a variation to the current Master of Arts in Teaching program.
- ✓ Proposed a change to the grade point average, which was adopted by the State Board, to lower it to 2.5 for those who graduate from college prior to September 1, 2004 to allow more flexibility in the eligibility requirements for teacher certification. Those who graduate after September 1, 2004 will be required to meet the more rigorous 2.75 grade point average requirement.
- ✓ Have issued an RFP for development of a new Teacher Certification Information System, which is a Web-based system that will facilitate all aspects of the certification process. The new system will begin operating in 2003. The bids were opened in January 2003.
- ✓ Collaborated with corporate partners to replicate successful models of professional development, such as the Merck Summer Professional Development Model for Science Teachers that is currently being adapted for literacy and mathematics.

- ✓ Worked vigorously to extend the present 100-hour professional development process to a more rigorous and coherent approach to professional development for all teachers.
- ✓ Recommended that teachers pursue national certification, which is a rigorous process that requires teachers to assemble professional portfolios, include samples of student work and lesson plans, and submit videos of their instruction and teaching methods. There are currently only 48 teachers in our state who hold a national certificate. The goal is to have at least 2400, or one per school building by 2005.
- ✓ Worked with the Governor on the teacher's advisory council and participated with the Governor in the teacher town meetings in every county.
- ✓ Presented the \$25,000 Milken awards to six individuals for educational excellence for the first time in New Jersey. The awards/recognition program for the Milken awards to be attended by Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Librera will be held on December 5. Another prestigious teacher award program will be held December 2 in Trenton with the Governor and Commissioner in attendance honoring county teachers of the year, present and past state teachers of the year, and their superintendents and board members.
- ✓ Won an award of \$7.9 million in a state grant from the USDOE over a period of three years to enhance teacher quality throughout the state. The grant was awarded to New Jersey for the DOE proposal to redesign teacher education programs; strengthen the alternate route; and provide mentoring support for novice teachers.
- ✓ Initiated discussion with county community colleges to assist with programs to upgrade the credentials of teacher aides under No Child Left Behind to meet new more rigorous standards.

2) Raising Student Achievement

The New Jersey Department of Education has done the following:

- ✓ Upgraded the quality of the preschool programs in the Abbott districts which have 70% of the eligible children enrolled. New staff hired are certified, and those who have been in the program but are not certified

are working on obtaining their training and credentials. We have given districts early childhood curriculum guidelines and strategies to assist them in implementing the preschool programs.

- ✓ Trained and assigned 30 reading coaches to teachers in 80 schools who are working with non-achieving students and may not know some of the most effective ways to reach slow readers. Governor McGreevey has committed \$10 million a year for four years to provide the reading coaches to districts most in need of this assistance.
- ✓ Chaired the Governor's Task Force on Improving the Quality of Early Literacy Education in New Jersey. The task force was charged with the responsibility of identifying best practices in teaching literacy and making sure we in New Jersey are not leaving any child behind because he or she cannot read. The June task force report contains valuable recommendations for developing a strong literacy program.
- ✓ Won approval for a six-year \$120 million Reading First grant to improve literacy from K-3. Districts with low reading scores are eligible for this grant money, specifically for early literacy initiatives.
- ✓ Along with Governor McGreevey, launched the Governor's Book Club to encourage students to read.
- ✓ Revised the Core Curriculum Content Standards in math, science and literacy, which have been adopted by the State Board and are much more specific than the original ones adopted in 1996. The other six areas of standards are being reviewed and discussed before adoption.
- ✓ Is in the planning phase for creating a student-level database so that we will be able to track students individually from year to year, especially to determine whether we are making adequate progress in helping underachieving students. These data are necessary for us to identify trends and patterns of achievement and pinpoint the gaps that still exist.
- ✓ Won \$13.2 million dollars in federal grant money to provide English language instruction for the approximately 100,000 5-17-year-olds whose English proficiency is limited. In addition, we won an additional million dollars a year for three years from the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services to offer subgrants to schools that enroll significant numbers of refugee children.

- ✓ Shifted the emphasis in the three state-operated school districts to steady improvement toward achievement goals that are reachable so that the districts can be returned to local control. Commissioner Librera has met several times with the three districts and is working with two of them on superintendent searches.
- ✓ Awarded a new testing contract to produce statewide tests in language arts literacy and math for grades 3 and 4, starting in the spring of 2003 with grade 4 science to start in spring 2004. This contract will improve our communications on testing and test scores to districts, teachers, parents, and students, with special emphasis on giving teachers information they can use to shape classroom instruction. We are also discussing moving up the test administration dates, so that districts will be able to assess student progress prior to the start of a new school year.
- ✓ Announced the targeted grant to the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE) and the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) consortium in the amount of \$750,000, to be supplemented by \$100 thousand from BCEE and \$400 thousand of in-kind support from CREATE member organizations. The grant is for a pilot project to create performance-based tests to be used in conjunction with standardized tests.

3) Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement

The Department of Education has done the following:

- ✓ Launched four different career academy programs operating where they did not exist last year. These began with the partnership of Pfizer and Morris School District with a \$500,000 commitment from Pfizer to build a career exploration laboratory for a medical/health program that will ultimately benefit all students at Morristown High School. The second was PSE&G that became a partner with the Trenton School District and Mercer County Community College to develop an engineering program. Two others awaiting launch are partnerships between Verizon and Englewood's Dwight Morrow High School and Commerce Bank with Cherry Hill to develop a finance academy.

- ✓ Assisted Englewood School District with its academies that include programs in information systems, law and public safety, finance, and pre-engineering with performing arts and teaching to follow. These programs are the solution to a desegregation order to the district that has produced over thirty years of litigation.
- ✓ Proposed a pilot project to revise the structure of the senior year in order to provide options for students who have passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). We will examine the many options we could offer students, such as service projects, internships, online courses, college-level courses, career academies, and others. We have approached the community colleges to become an integral part of this alternative path.
- ✓ Are prepared to initiate five “renaissance schools” as a pilot program. These will be small schools designed to improve learning, as well as improve the surrounding neighborhoods.

4) Innovative and Outstanding Practices and Programs

The Department of Education has done the following:

- ✓ Established a Governor’s Schools of Excellence program to recognize and reward schools for outstanding improvement, etc.
- ✓ Won a federal grant of \$11 million over the next three years to support the development of charter schools throughout the state. Charter schools are currently serving nearly 13,000 students in pre-k to grade 12 and have provided an educational choice for parents and students since 1995.
- ✓ Worked with the Governor’s Character Education Commission created in February 2002 to define best practices and made recommendations to the Governor in September. The DOE has won a new \$1.9 million federal Partnerships in Character Education grant over the next four years to measure the impact on students of best practices in curriculum infusion and science-based programs. New Jersey is one of only five states to receive a Partnership in Character Education award because of the progress we have already made in establishing character education services and programs for students.

5) **Public Communication, Engagement and Accountability**

The Department of Education has done the following:

- ✓ Shifted away from emphasis on compliance and oversight to one of support and technical assistance to local districts by reorganizing the department into two functional sectors – central operations and field operations. A large part of the field operations will be delivered by three regional offices that have incorporated the county offices into the regional delivery structure. Another part of the department with extensive field operations is the new Abbott division that works directly with the thirty Abbott districts.
- ✓ The Commissioner and several Assistant Commissioners met regularly with educators and visit schools to seek information which will assist the department in its mission.

Strategic Initiatives – 2003

During the first half of 2003, the following strategic initiatives were launched:

- **12th Grade Pilot**
 - ✓ 85 schools participating in a pilot to provide students who have completed graduation requirements with meaningful options such as, internships, college courses, community services, for their senior year.
- **Renaissance School Zone**
 - ✓ School serves as the engine to transform the neighborhood by connecting school and community e.g. Trenton Roebling School
- **Schools of Excellence**
 - ✓ 25 awards per year to schools who have demonstrated Education excellence in student achievement.

- ✓ Competitive seed grants to support higher education and public school partnerships to promote educational quality.

- **P-20**
 - ✓ Creation of a seamless education system from PreK-post graduate to reduce the academic achievement gaps—pilot site: So. Jersey P-20 coalition.

- **NJ Character Education Center**
 - ✓ Collaborative partnership with Rutgers University and 10 school district demonstration sites to evaluate the effectiveness of the state's Character Education program and develop promising practices.

- **Testing/Assessment:**
 - ✓ New 3rd grade assessment – NJASK3
 - ✓ Revised 4th grade assessment – NJASK4

- **Special Education:**
 - ✓ Recognizing that one in two students enrolled in special education programs are misclassified due to academic difficulties and behavioral problems.
 - ✓ Establish criteria for exit rates and standards for classification.
 - ✓ Address the issue of overrepresentation of minority males enrolled in special education programs.

Education Agenda—2003-2005

- Teacher and Administrator Quality

 - Governance

 - Alternate Route

 - Professional Development, Evaluation, Mentoring, 100 hours

 - Accelerate Removal

 - Standards Preparation

 - Certification

- Raising Student Achievement

 - Standards

 - Database

 - Assessment

 - High End Achievement

 - Early Childhood

 - Abbott

 - Literacy

- Innovations, Models, Best Practices

 - Englewood

 - Star Schools

 - Katzenbach

 - Web

 - Schools of Excellence

 - Best Practice

 - Networks (Achievement Imperative, Special Education, Small Schools)

- Accountability System (The Sequence of Monitoring)

 - Financial Audit

 - Educational Audit

 - Takeover

 - NCLB

 - Intervention

 - Abbott