

**Strategic Plan for Improvement in Public Education
in the State of New Jersey**

New Jersey State Board of Education

A five-year plan 2003 - 2008

INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey State Board, in 1995, adapted its first strategic plan as a framework to guide state-led initiatives to improve education in New Jersey and as a blueprint for the reform of educational policies. The original strategic plan (*Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in Jersey*) was revised in 1996 and again in 2000. The plan served to direct the major reforms and initiatives in the public education system of the New Jersey State Board of Education. Among the changes stimulated by the Strategic Plan were the adoption of the Core Curriculum Content Standards for all New Jersey public school students, an assessment system aligned to those standards, Comprehensive Review of Code, the development of the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA), the development of charter schools, a major state-wide effort to improve school facilities, and a greater emphasis on early childhood education.

In 2001 and 2002, the State Board of Education reviewed its Strategic Plan and decided that the majority of its stated goals have been accomplished. The State Board, in cooperation with the Department of Education, has now identified new major policy areas that require attention as we continue to build on the successes of the past. Although this document is not intended to cover all of the important educational issues that face New Jersey, the State Board believes that the four areas emphasized here are crucial to fulfilling our overall objective of high quality academic opportunity for every New Jersey student. The State Board of Education will annually review this plan and revise its contents as is appropriate.

This revised plan, based on the four areas of assessment, exemplary educational practices, literacy and teacher preparation and development, will serve as a guiding document for the State Board in its development of policies that will create an educational environment designed to optimize academic excellence and prepare New Jersey's students to be successful contributors to our state, the nation and the world.

Mission Statement

The New Jersey State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Education, establishes policy and provides leadership in the development of exceptional learning opportunities for New Jersey's public school students for the purpose of enabling them to obtain a superior education.

Assessment

Goal

To ensure that student assessment is integral to the teaching and learning of subject matter as presented in the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS).

Strategic Objectives

1. The demonstration of competence in the CCCS shall be the objective of all assessment.
2. Assessment will occur in all areas of CCCS.
 - a. Some areas of the CCCS will be assessed by the State; others will be the responsibility of local districts and/or individual schools. The Department of Education shall clearly identify those areas of State-wide assessment.
 - b. Multiple kinds of assessment may be used to measure student performance.
 - c. Data from assessment will be utilized to improve all student mastery of the CCCS through the development of a coordinated system among schools, local districts and the State. Assessment data must be linked to students, even if students relocate to other school districts and regardless of whether the assessment was the responsibility of the State, the local district or the individual school. The Department of Education will develop a system for tracking students from the 3rd grade to graduation so that the assessment of individual students will follow them even if intra-district or inter-district relocation occurs.
3. Assessment will be part of the learning and teaching process.
 - a. Measurements of student performance shall be made available in a timely manner to all those involved in the making of informed decisions about the teaching and learning process.
 - b. All assessments will be linked to student records.
4. The principle of assessment being linked to teaching/learning and the CCCS will be protected as New Jersey meets the requirements of HR1 (No Child Left Behind).
5. The Special Review Assessment and the Alternate Proficiency Assessment will be based on the Core Curriculum Content Standards and linked to the teaching/learning process.

Exemplary Educational Practices

Goal

To ensure that student performance at all levels is enhanced through the participation in exceptional educational programs or activities.

“Exemplary Educational Practices” are those programs or activities which have demonstrated, through well developed assessment, superiority in improving student learning and performance. Among the criteria that the State Board of Education believes marks exemplary educational practices are: consistent improvement, the effective use of technology in the learning process, contextual learning, interdisciplinary approaches and work place readiness. The State Board of Education and the Department of Education shall develop methods for determining whether a program or activity qualifies for the designation “Exemplary Educational Practices.”

Strategic Objectives

1. Districts will be provided with incentives/rewards for developing and sharing programs that enhance student learning and performance.
 - a. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, will actively solicit resources and funding from private and governmental sources for incentives/rewards for program development and dissemination.
 - b. Traditional schools and non-traditional educational settings (charter schools, choice schools, academies and others) will be encouraged to participate in developing, disseminating and utilizing exceptional programs.
 - c. Resources such as small grant programs should be identified to encourage individual teachers to develop new and effective educational programs to be shared with educators throughout the state. Partnerships between the State and the private sector and local schools and the private sector shall be encouraged in this process.
2. Regional centers will develop a system to facilitate the collection and dissemination of exemplary educational practices.
3. Cable, internet access and other forms of communication technology will be used to exchange information concerning exemplary educational programs.

Literacy

Goal

To provide effective literacy instruction to all public school students with the objective that all students meet grade appropriate language arts and mathematics standards as defined in the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Strategic Objectives

1. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, will establish an information resource directory of effective reading and mathematics literacy programs and will make it available to all educators.
2. Professional expertise on literacy instruction will be available to all schools. This includes access to reading and mathematics literacy experts, reading coaches and quality professional development in language and mathematics literacy.
3. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, will encourage the integration of writing instruction, reading instruction, technology utilization and assessment throughout the curriculum.
4. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, will encourage the integration of mathematics in multiple areas of instruction, technology utilization and assessment.
5. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, will in partnership with colleges and universities ensure that teacher education programs are preparing teachers who will utilize creative and modern techniques to motivate learners and concludes training in reading and mathematics as a central component of teacher preparation programs.
6. In cooperation with the Department of Education, the State Board will enhance its communication with parents about the importance of parental involvement in the development of children's reading, writing and math skills.

Teacher Preparation & Professional Development

Goal

Expand and improve the pool of qualified teachers and administrators.
Prepare teachers to effectively teach both the child and the subject.

Strategic Objectives

1. Revise the “100 hour” professional development code to include topical priorities.
 - a. Topical priorities should include instruction in reading and mathematics literacy, classroom management and special education training for all teachers.
 - b. Professional development should be designed to emphasize training in priority areas or assisting teachers in expanding the range of their teaching endorsements.
2. Create a comprehensive and yet flexible Alternate Route Program which will permit qualified individuals to quickly enter the profession, provide effective pedagogical training and ongoing mentoring opportunities.
3. Develop an Alternate Route Program for administrators.
4. With the aid of the Department of Education, examine critically the issue of teacher retention.
 - a. Collect data on the factors which contribute to teachers leaving the profession prematurely.
 - b. Identify and implement methods to expand and strengthen support mechanisms necessary to encourage and retain new teachers.
5. Expand the number of teachers and administrators in the areas of critical need.
 - a. Work with institutions of higher education to communicate areas of critical need to potential teachers.
 - b. Provide additional support for teachers entering areas of critical need.
6. Enhance mentoring opportunities for new teachers and administrators.
7. Create incentive/recognition programs for outstanding first year teachers.