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Whitman Tours Charter Schools in Trenton and Sparta Lauding Program as Model of Innovation

Gov. Christie Whitman today visited the Trenton Community Charter School and the Sussex County Charter School of Technology, praising the schools for using creativity and technology in teaching to ensure that students meet the state's tough, new academic standards.

The Governor toured the charter school facilities and talked with students, teachers and parents.

"These two schools show how charter schools empower parents, giving them a greater say in the education their children receive. And they are proof that when parents and educators partner in inventive and intelligent planning, New Jersey students reap the benefits," said Whitman. "These schools are an important part of what my administration has been doing to help every New Jersey child prepare for the 21st century."

The Trenton Community Charter School provides students in kindergarten through third grade with comprehensive community-based learning experiences. The school offers students a family-centered learning atmosphere by encouraging parents to become more involved in students' learning and development. Parents serve on the board of trustees of the school and on program committees. The school also works with local organizations and institutions to ensure that students are exposed to a wide variety of career role models and to the rich history of the city of Trenton.

The Sussex County Charter School for Technology, which includes students in the seventh and eighth grades, is designed to enhance academic learning opportunities through the integrated use of advanced technologies for its students. Its program is structured around small class size and an integrated curriculum which has been aligned with tough academic standards. The infusion of advanced technology into the curriculum is intended to stimulate student enthusiasm and interest in the learning process. During her visit to the Sussex County Charter School for Technology, Gov. Whitman demonstrated the school's high tech ability by taking part in a distance learning exercise with students from Boonton Middle School.

In 1996, at the conclusion of her State of the State address, Gov. Whitman enacted legislation to allow for the creation of charter schools, giving parents and educators the opportunity to create innovative learning situations that meet the needs of their communities. In September, a total 13 of charter schools opened their doors in communities across New Jersey. Three additional charter schools have already been approved to open in the 1998-99 school year and 37 more applications have been received for the 1998-1999 school year.

"The Trenton Community Charter School is teaching children the importance of community and is getting parents more involved in their children's education," said Commissioner of Education Leo Klagholz. "It is our hope that the successful practices established by our charter schools will be emulated by other districts around the state. Charter schools present a great opportunity for the development of new ways of educating our children that will ultimately be for everyone's benefit."

"The Sussex County Charter School for Technology presents a great opportunity for its students to work with technology that will enable them to reach our academic standards," said Gov. Whitman. "Charter schools and educational technology are an important part of what my administration has done to help every child enter the 21st century fully prepared to participate in the American dream," said Whitman, noting that she has committed to spending \$250 million to bring technology to every classroom in the state by the start of the 2001-2002 school year.

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