



Back to School Refresher Course: The Christie Education Record

Governor Christie Continues To Lead The Way In Ensuring A Quality Education For All Students

Over the last six years, the Christie Administration has prided itself on engaging in education reform to make sure our schools are safer, more effective, and a facilitator for success. Governor Christie's commitment to providing and ensuring a high quality education for every student in this state has led to reformed teacher tenure rules, expanded charter schools, the establishment of Renaissance schools under the Urban Hope Act and the opportunity to pass the Fairness Formula to provide equal funding for every child in New Jersey.

Today, Governor Christie will continue his commitment to enhancing the educational experience for New Jersey students by taking action on the following bills:

Bills Signed:

- S-2081/A-3790: Limits expulsions and suspensions for students in preschool through grade 2 with certain exceptions; requires early detection and prevention programs for behavioral issues in preschool through grade 2
- A-2292/S-372: Requires review of Core Curriculum Content Standards to ensure guidance for substance abuse instruction provided to public school students incorporates most recent evidence-based standards and practices
- A-2563/S-1753: Directs institutions of higher education and proprietary degree-granting institutions to provide Higher Education Student Assistance Authority with graduation and transfer rates of State tuition aid grant recipients
- A-2566/S-496: Establishes Response to Intervention initiative in DOE to support and encourage school districts in implementation of Response to Intervention framework
- A-2689/S-754: "Secure Schools for All Children Act"; establishes State aid program for security services, equipment, or technology to ensure safe and secure school environment for nonpublic school students
- A-3405/S-1822: Permits certain public institutions of higher education to make purchases and contract for services as participating contracting units in cooperative pricing systems

and through use of nationally-recognized and accepted cooperative purchasing agreements

Bill Conditionally Vetoed:

- S-86/A-3629: Establishes Class Three special law enforcement officers to provide security in public and nonpublic schools and county colleges

With this new legislation, Governor Christie has once again paved the way for establishing a higher quality education for the students of New Jersey.

Setting A Historic High For State Spending For Education Over Six Years

For the sixth year in a row, the State Budget provides the most funding in New Jersey history for education at more than **\$13.3 billion** in total school aid. Of the total school aid, \$9.1 billion represents direct aid to schools, an increase of \$94.3 million over fiscal 2016. State support for school aid has increased by over 40 percent since Governor Christie took office in 2010.

New Jersey's High School Graduation Rates Continue to Rise

New Jersey's high school graduation rate rose again in 2015, increasing to 89.7 percent in 2015 from 88.6 percent in 2014. This is the fourth straight year that the statewide high school graduation rate has increased, and the third consecutive year in which it grew by at least a full percentage point. Since New Jersey began seeing the results of the federally-mandated methodology for calculating the graduation rate with the graduating class of 2011, the state's high school graduation rate has increased by 6.7 percent.

Expanding Educational Opportunities For Children And Families

Governor Christie has improved the authorizing and application process, encouraged more charter school applicants, created greater flexibility with administration and finances, and allowed districts to convert failing public schools into charters. The Christie Administration has increased the overall number of charter schools in New Jersey to 89, while relentlessly focusing on quality and holding all schools accountable for results by closing 17 charter schools to date.

A new funding category, Host District Support Aid, will ensure the base per pupil funding provided to charter schools in fiscal year 2017 is not less than the 2016 base per pupil funding. In addition, the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program is increasing educational opportunities for students and their families by providing students with the option of attending a public school outside their district of residence without cost to their parents.

The fiscal year 2017 budget supports more than **49,000 charter students and 5,200 choice students.**

Governor Christie continues to support educational options for our children by providing over \$40 million for Charter School Aid in fiscal year 2017. This funding aids in the support of almost 49,000 students projected to be in our charter schools in FY2017. This is in addition to the tens of millions of dollars in State Aid that flow through the districts to charter schools. In certain districts, like Newark and Camden, charter and renaissance schools are educating more than 1 out of every 4 of the public school population.

Easing The Regulatory Burden Facing Charter Schools

In May, Governor Christie announced a series of reforms at the 8th annual New Jersey Charter Schools Conference born from input received through meetings with charter school leaders in the fall of 2015. Among the reforms announced were:

- The state will allow single-gender charter schools that meet appropriate criteria and single-purpose charter schools for educationally disadvantaged students, such as a school serving over-age, under-credited students who, because of life circumstances, are unable to graduate in four years.
- Applicants of the Charter School Certificate of Eligibility for Business Administrator will be allowed to hold a CPA license in lieu of a master's degree and course credit requirements. This permits qualified financial experts and business managers who have CPA licenses to be considered in the hiring process.
- Charter schools would be able to apply to the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) to develop their own certification standards for applicants who are excellent teaching candidates but who might not meet all of the certification criteria.
- Charter renewal will be expedited for high-performing, Tier 1, schools that are not on probation for fiscal or organizational reasons. Charter schools that do not meet fiscal management/compliance standards or present concerns regarding their fiscal viability will remain subject to deeper review.
- Weighted lotteries will be expanded by adding language explicitly allowing weighted lotteries for educationally disadvantaged students. Redundancies will be reduced by removing the requirement that charters send corrective action plans to the Executive County Superintendent as they already are submitted to the DOE Charter Office.
- The funding monitoring requirement will be relaxed since it has become unnecessary because of the new charter performance system. DOE will continue to monitor if charter schools are adequately allocating funds to impact what is happening in the classroom. And, cash fund procedures, which are difficult to navigate, will be updated and simplified.
- Districts will be required to report to DOE, on a rolling basis, any closed, unused or unoccupied school facility available for lease that would be posted online in order to facilitate cooperation between districts and charter schools and State-operated districts will offer leases to charter schools for any available, unused facilities in the district.
- Satellite campus regulations will be redefined to allow charter schools in all districts to take advantage of available facilities that might be situated further from their main school, now only currently allowed in former Abbott districts (now known as SDA districts). The requirement that charter leases cannot exceed the length of the charter -- a barrier to obtaining financing -- will be removed.
- New regulations will clarify renovations, expansion and reconstruction exemptions from the Charter School Act's restriction on construction with State of local funds.

Historic Bipartisan Changes To The Nation's Oldest Tenure Law

Marking the first extensive reform of New Jersey's tenure law in over 100 years, Governor Christie signed into law the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey

(TEACHNJ) Act, a sweeping, bipartisan overhaul of the oldest tenure law in the nation. The legislation:

- Transforms the existing tenure system to provide powerful tools to identify effective and ineffective teachers;
- Strengthens the supports available to help all teachers improve their craft;
- For the first time, ties the acquisition, maintenance, and loss of tenure to a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom;
- Dramatically reduces the time and cost it takes to remove educators who are repeatedly ineffective in improving student outcomes.

As part of TEACHNJ, the State Board of Education approved AchieveNJ as the improved educator evaluation and support system for educators. The AchieveNJ evaluation system first went into effect during the 2013-14 school year and has been used over the last three years to help districts better identify their best educators and those who need more support.

Taking The Lead to Turn Around Failing Camden Schools

In March 2013, continuing to act on his firm commitment to ensure that every New Jersey child has access to a high-quality education, Governor Christie took decisive, bipartisan action in Camden schools to fix a broken system and end the persistent failure to deliver results for the city's children. With the support of leadership in the City of Camden, education advocates across New Jersey, and members of both parties, the Christie Administration took over the management of the Camden School District.

The Christie Administration has assigned some of the most successful statewide and national administrators to work in the Camden School District, including:

- Three former New Jersey Superintendents;
- One former New Jersey Assistant Superintendent;
- The former Chief Financial Officer of the New York City Public Schools;
- A former partner at KPMG Consulting; and
- The hands-on support of the state's Assistant Commissioner for Talent to implement new evaluation systems aligned to the TEACHNJ Act.

Since 2013, New Jersey has begun implementing school-by-school improvement plans to enhance student outcomes in district schools. Beyond investment in district-run schools, the Christie Administration is committed to ensuring that every child in Camden has access to a high-quality education, regardless of whether that student is in a district, charter, vocational, or Renaissance school.

In August 2013, Governor Christie named Paymon Rouhanifard as the first State Superintendent of the Camden School District.

Legislative Accomplishments

The Urban Hope Act is designed to expand the education options available for children and parents who are trapped in some of New Jersey's school districts with the largest achievement gaps.

The bill authorizes the conversion of failing schools into renaissance schools in three of our highest needs districts: Camden, Trenton, and Newark.

- Districts are able to partner with one or more nonprofits to construct as many as four “renaissance schools” in each district.
- Each nonprofit must have a proven track record of operating quality schools in low-achieving districts and commit to both building the new school’s facilities as well as offering a rigorous academic program designed to prepare every student for college, career, and beyond.
- Renaissance schools are subject to the same standards as any other public school and will be evaluated annually by the Department of Education to determine whether they are meeting their goals and improving student achievement.

Three renaissance schools have since opened in Camden, run by non-profit organizations that have experience operating schools in low-achieving districts. These operators have committed to both building new schools and offering rigorous academic programs designed to prepare every student for college, career, and beyond.

The Inter-District School Choice Program was permanently signed into law by Governor Christie in September 2010 and implemented beginning with the 2011-12 school year. The program is designed to increase educational opportunities for students and their families by providing students with the option of attending a public school outside their district of residence without cost to their parents.

- Transportation of up to 20 miles is provided to a student going to a choice school if the student meets the eligibility requirements of state law and the transportation will cost no more than \$884.
- If the cost of the transportation exceeds that amount, the parent is given the opportunity to pay the additional amount, or may choose to receive \$884 as aid in lieu of transportation.

Enrollment has increased more than five-fold since the law went into effect in fiscal year 2011. More than 5,200 students will participate in the program in 129 school districts during the 2016-17 schoolyear.

Ensuring Quality Education For All Students

The Education Funding Task Force was established by Executive Order No. 89 in March 2012 to examine those parts of the state’s School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) funding formula that may be susceptible to fraud or subject to outside manipulation in regard to participation in the Federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program as a proxy for “at-risk” status and the municipal tax abatement programs.