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### **Applications Available for 2003-2004 Best Practices / Star Schools Program**

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera is inviting educators across the state to participate in the 2003-2004 Best Practices / Star Schools Program. The program was established more than 10 years ago to showcase and honor locally developed programs and schools that serve as models of excellence.

Applications for the programs were made available on the department's Web site on October 15 and are due at the Department of Education by December 15. Regional information sessions about these programs will be held on October 30.

Since its inception in 1993, 496 Best Practices and 98 Star Schools have been recognized through the Best Practices/Star Schools Program. The program is an important part of the Department of Education's efforts to assist school districts, teachers and parents by providing them with information about models of exemplary and well-organized practices.

#### **Star Schools**

Star Schools represent New Jersey's "cutting edge" schools. They demonstrate the successful integration of strategies that result in higher levels of student achievement in achieving the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Other hallmarks of Star Schools are effective leadership and high levels of professional development and research, all of which contribute to efficient operations and exemplary teaching.

All New Jersey school districts and charter schools are invited to participate. Only one application per school may be submitted. Schools identified as "schools in need of improvement" based on the federal No Child Left Behind Act are not eligible for the program. Previously recognized Star Schools are eligible to reapply after five years and must demonstrate how they have expanded or shared their winning practices.

Each Star Schools application is subjected to a rigorous review by the respective county superintendents of schools and by panels of New Jersey educators composed of educators and in some instances, representatives of other professions. Finalists for selection receive site visits to supplement and confirm the information written in the applications. A maximum of 10 Star Schools are chosen in April or May.

#### **Best Practices**

Best Practices represent exemplary and effective educational practices developed locally by educators in New Jersey public schools. These effective practices, which sometimes are innovative, are characterized by clearly defined objectives related to identified student needs, documentation that the program has met its objectives, and the ability to be replicated by other schools.

Selected Best Practices serve as models that can be used by schools throughout the state to help students perform at higher levels and meet the learning expectations in the Core Curriculum Content Standards. A Best Practice can only be selected once; commercial programs from vendors are not eligible for consideration. In addition, schools not meeting adequate yearly progress in language arts literacy and mathematics under the federal No Child Left Behind Act may not submit applications for those two program areas. Schools designated as "schools in need of improvement" under the act are not eligible for Star Schools.

Best Practices applications must be submitted by December 15 and will have the same type of review as will applicants for Star Schools recognition.

For the first time this year, applications for Best Practices / Star Schools must be submitted online. The Department of Education will not accept hard copies of applications. Application forms and instructions are available on the Department of Education's Web site:

[www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education)  
**(Click on Innovative Programs and Practices)**

Three regional information sessions on Best Practices / Star Schools have been scheduled for Thursday, October 30, 2003. Some seats may still be available for the sessions, which will be held at the following times and locations:

- Northern Region: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Montclair State University, Dickson Hall, Cohen Lounge. Contact: Graylin Diggs, 973-655-2103.
- Central Region: 9 a.m. to noon at the Monmouth County Office of Education, Freehold. Contact: LaCoyya Weathington, 609-984-6755.
- Southern Region: 9 a.m. to noon at the Gloucester County Office of Education, Sewell. Contact: Jennifer Beaumont, 856-468-5530, ext. 6078.