



# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Contact:**

**TRENTON, N.J. 08625**  
**Release:**

Emma Byrne  
Nancy Kearney  
609/292-8956

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### FLORIO VOWS ACCOUNTABILITY OF SCHOOL DOLLARS Swears In Ellis As Education Commissioner

Promising to uphold his "contract" with New Jersey children, Governor Jim Florio today swore in Education Commissioner John Ellis and vowed accountability through tougher monitoring and other measures to insure education dollars are spent wisely.

"Without the right tools, the right safeguards, indeed, the right attitudes, additional money alone may not improve our schools," Florio said. "We have to make sure our children, their parents, and their teachers keep their end of the bargain. This money is not a handout. It's a contract"

During the ceremony, Florio also took the opportunity to sign the Quality Education Act into law, which provides \$1 billion more in school funding and gives every child the opportunity for a quality education regardless of where they live.

"The public and taxpayers are concerned, as they should be, that the extra money go to good use. It's a legitimate concern," Florio said. "Let me make it clear what this money is not for: It's not for favoring one district over another; not for empire building by administrators; not for anyone to build up flabby, lethargic bureaucracies. It's for one thing and one thing only: our children."

"Education today is more than the three 'R's'. It also needs a 'Big A': accountability," Florio said. "Our school systems must reflect the need to reward educational achievement. But they also must demand business-like efficiency, always assessing the results."

"I'm a pit bull on waste; whether it's unnecessary cars for state officials, or limousines for school officials," said the Governor. "So John Ellis and I are seeing

to it that we have a tough, relevant, and measurable monitoring system to insure accountability."

Florio promised that the state would be "partners offering assistance and leadership" to the 30 school districts cited by the state Supreme Court as needing additional funding to provide a quality education. He pointed out a mock budget drawn up as a reasonable spending plan for those districts to provide full day kindergartens, elementary school computer labs and other programs to put them on par with other districts around the state.

In addition to more aid, the Florio education plan would also require more of students by establishing monitoring standards for math, science, history and geography-- in addition to the basic skills now evaluated to enable them to compete in the international education arena.

Florio also called for the adoption of an ethics code for members and administrators of local school boards. Another part of the Florio education package would require the state Department of Education to develop performance evaluations which reflect higher expectations for students. School districts that pass the monitoring criteria will be certified for a longer period of time allowing them to concentrate on continuing their performance and not be caught up in paperwork. School districts that don't measure up will be reviewed more often to make sure they get the help they need before its too late.

"Dr. Ellis and I share a common philosophy of education. We both agree that good education requires a spirit of community in our schools," Florio said. "We're going to give more to our children. But we're going to ask more of them. And more of everyone whose business it is to nurture and expand young minds."

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