



**The Business Coalition  
for Educational Excellence**  
at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

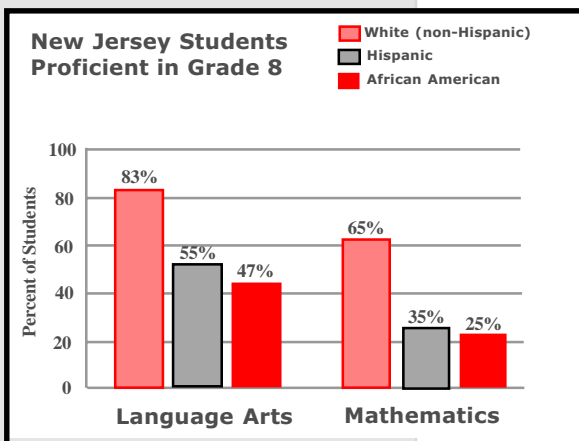
Fall, 2004

# the workforce pipeline

## BCEE Hosts Critical Conference on Workforce Diversity

Examines issues around workforce diversity, successful diversity practices, and the links between the candidate pool and the public school system.

New Jersey assessment data reveals the existence of a pervasive achievement gap in student performance.



Many businesses in New Jersey work hard to build a diverse workforce that reflects the state's population. But we know that many of those companies struggle to find and match candidates to opportunities that may be available because the pool of qualified minority candidates is just too small. That's why the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) focuses on our schools -- our workforce pipeline.

Today's students will be candidates for jobs at our businesses tomorrow. The BCEE supports initiatives that will improve the educational opportunities for all New Jersey students so that we can help ensure

that a high caliber of talent will be available to our companies in the future.

Our schools are succeeding in many ways. More of our high school students take the college entrance examination and advanced placement courses than any other state. Our most accomplished students are achieving at the highest levels. But New Jersey has a long way to go until every student is prepared for the future. Few schools -- and even fewer school districts -- can boast of entire student populations that are proficient in basic literacy and mathematics.

After years of reform efforts, and billions of annual dollars, in New Jersey, by 2003:

- ★ only 83% of white, 55% of Hispanic and 47% of African American eighth graders are reading and writing at grade level, and
- ★ only 65% of white, 35% of Hispanic

and 25% of African American eighth graders are doing mathematics at grade level.

More critically, a persistent and pervasive achievement gap in the academic performance of minority students must be addressed immediately so that we can be sure all students are prepared for tomorrow. It is important that business helps shape the decisions made by state leaders and policymakers in the coming years, because those decisions will have a direct impact on our success and profitability.

The BCEE will examine the issues that influence workforce diversity and student achievement at a conference that will feature keynote speaker U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Other speakers will include a futurist on trends and hiring demographics, a speaker from the Education Trust and panelists from three companies identified as diversity leaders by FORTUNE magazine.

### Diversity Conference Keynote USDOE Secretary Honorable Rod Paige

Sponsored by Pfizer, the event will be held on September 23 at the Hyatt New Brunswick and is targeted to human resources and diversity executives.

"We are not only creating a future for these young people by improving student performance, but we are securing the best possible future for New Jersey business," explained Dana Egreczky, president of the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence.

Call the New Jersey State Chamber at 609-989-7888 to reserve your seat.

**Register for our conference:**

**The Sky's the Limit:  
A New Perspective on  
Creating a Diverse Workforce**

**Keynote Speaker:  
The Honorable Rod Paige  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education**

**September 23rd, 2004  
Hyatt, New Brunswick**

**www.njchamber.com**



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## Help Your Local School Demand More from its Students

**Bring the New Jersey Scholars program, and three other workforce development initiatives, to your local middle or high school. Support the Learn More, Do More, Earn More Credentialing System. Call 609-989-7888 to find out more.**

### Our Mission

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce is committed to ensuring that all students achieve at high levels, become productive citizens, and are well-prepared to succeed in the workplace.

The BCEE serves as the voice of business in the education policy debate, and supports programs that address the business agenda in education reform. The BCEE is guided by its accountability to the business community.

The BCEE is supported by tax-deductible contributions made to the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization.

[www.bcee.org](http://www.bcee.org)

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# Diversity Enriches Our Lives and Businesses

Pfizer is pleased to sponsor the BCEE's first conference on *"The Sky's the Limit: A New Perspective on Creating a Diverse Workforce."*

The conference is of particular importance to Pfizer because we are constantly seeking to strengthen the fabric of our communities through numerous initiatives, including school partnerships and support for local civic and cultural institutions that enrich our lives. Our commitment to our communities extends back to 1849.

We have long been interested in improving our public school system. Our Pfizer Education Initiative (PEI) helps schools refurbish science laboratories, provides science kits, and trains teachers in cutting-edge theory. And thousands of our people volunteer in schools, sharing the wonders of science and innovation.

We believe the "different perspective" of this conference, one which focuses on better

preparing our students, represents our best chance toward achieving our goals of building a diverse workforce.

We have long understood, as does the BCEE and its members, that the talent that we all need in the workforce really begins in the schools.

This conference is a thoughtful examination of many of the forces that influence achievement. Through a real understanding of those issues we put ourselves in the best possible position to make a difference in our children – and our own futures.

It is very exciting for Pfizer to be a part of this important event and we look forward to all that we can learn on that day. We look forward to sharing our concerns, our successes and best practices.



*Guest Columnist*  
Joseph Bonito  
Vice President,  
Global Leadership  
Effectiveness

# Promoting Professional-level Work Ethic for Teen Students

The BCEE's successful *School Counts!* program has advanced in several counties this school year. Atlantic and Cape May residents now have the opportunity to support deserving students by checking a box on their next South Jersey Gas bill, thus donating \$1 per month to support the Atlantic Cape Community College *School Counts!* scholarship endowment program. Funding will allow Atlantic Cape May Community College to provide scholarships to students who earn the *School Counts!* certificate in each of their high school years.

The *School Counts!* initiative of the Business Coalition was designed to prepare students for the workplace and to promote student achievement and work ethic. Students in participating high schools earn a *School Counts!* certificate by meeting several criteria, including maintaining a

95% attendance and punctuality rate and a "C" in every course.

South Jersey Industries has generously offered its billing system as a mechanism to promote this scholarship program. Cumberland County College also offers scholarships to students who meet the *School Counts!* criteria, and the first class of eligible students will be knocking on the institution's doors this school year.

The program is starting to achieve critical mass in Ocean County as well, with almost 300 businesses agreeing to ask students to show their earned annual certificates during job interviews for entry level positions.

For more information on *School Counts!*, contact the program coordinator, Kate Brittain at the New Jersey Chamber at 609-989-7888.