

Getting students out of failing public schools is Gov. Christie's top priority, he says

Published: Thursday, May 03, 2012, 1:03 PM Updated: Thursday, May 03, 2012, 1:03 PM



Jessica Calefati/The Star-Ledger

By



Andre Malok/The Star-Ledger

Gov. Christie wants to give private school school scholarships to students in failing public schools.

JERSEY CITY — Gov. Chris Christie said his top legislative priority over the next two months is passing a bill that would give private and parochial school scholarships to students attending some of the worst schools in the state.

The bill, known as the Opportunity Scholarship Act, would be financed with tax deductible donations from businesses and is considered budget-neutral. Though the legislature came close to advancing the bill last year, Democrats balked at the size of program and progress stalled.

"A lot of fights will come up over the next 59 days, but my number one fight will be passing the Opportunity Scholarship Act," Christie said.

The governor's remarks came during a keynote address to the American Federation for Children, a group funded privately by supporters of voucher programs and charter school expansion.

The Opportunity Scholarship Act is one of four education reforms the governor has been pressing the legislature to act on before lawmakers break for a recess in June. Christie also expects the legislature to pass legislation that would reform tenure, expand access to charter schools and end teachers' seniority rights during layoffs.

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