

TRACKING PROGRESS

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Abbott Indicators Summary Report

# Union City

NEW JERSEY



EDUCATION LAW CENTER

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Public education helps today's children prepare for an adulthood when they can take meaningful roles in society, compete in the labor market, and contribute as members of their communities. New Jersey's children and youth have a constitutional right to a "thorough and efficient" free public education.

This represents our state's promise to all children and youth that they will receive an education that at least equips them with knowledge and skills to meet the state's rigorous academic standards. Until all of New Jersey's children receive the same high-quality education, this constitutional promise is not realized.

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## Introduction

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Several years ago, education stakeholders recognized that children did not receive the same education throughout our state. Urban and suburban school districts did not have the same resources to support their schools. Thanks to the efforts of education professionals, parents, advocates, and the legislature, the lowest income cities and the wealthiest suburbs now have the same funding to support general education. The poorest urban school districts are also required to undergo a series of reforms and improvements to ensure that the funds are used to fulfill the constitutional promise.

Who should support these reforms and ensure that the schools continue to improve? Everyone who cares about public education. Schools belong first to the community and everyone in the community has a stake in them. Parents want their children to have the best education possible. Homeowners and businesses support public education through taxes. Community members want to be sure that their collective investment is used wisely and effectively to educate the children.

We wrote this report with Union City's education stakeholders in mind. The report is a tool to help them identify and support what is working and ensure that remaining challenges are overcome. The goal of an equally sound education for all New Jersey students is reachable with their continued support and commitment.

### Union City Abbott Indicators Project and Report

Union City is one of 31 urban school districts in New Jersey known as Abbott districts. The name comes from a series of lawsuits, collectively known as *Abbott v. Burke*, in which the New Jersey Supreme Court directed the state to implement a series of interlocking remedies designed to provide children with a thorough and efficient education.<sup>1</sup>

As an Abbott district, Union City receives funding to equalize its per student general education budget with the most successful suburban school districts in the state. Union City's young people are also entitled to universal, high-quality preschool; reforms to

help them meet the state's rigorous standards for academic achievement in Kindergarten through Grade 12; safe, healthy, and educationally adequate school facilities; and many other programs and services to ensure that they come to school ready to learn. Through a series of indicators, the Union City Abbott Indicators Report presents the status of these reforms and student progress to date.

The Union City Abbott Indicators Report and three others we are releasing this year in Camden, Newark, and Trenton are products of the Abbott Indicators Project at the Education Law Center. The report is written for a wide audience: everyone with a stake in public education in Union City. The project goals are to:

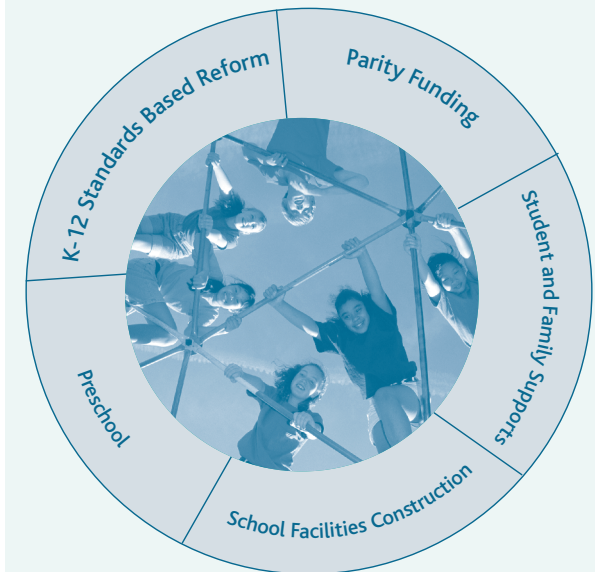
1. *Inform* people in Union City about the status of school improvement efforts and student outcomes.
2. *Engage* stakeholders in exploring and discussing what is working and what still needs to be done.
3. *Develop* and put a plan into action that supports school improvement.
4. *Establish* a system of accountability practices that local education stakeholders can use in years to come.

This is a summary version of the full Union City Abbott Indicators Report. In it, we first list indicators about Union City as a community and the students who are enrolled in the public schools. The remaining findings are organized by Abbott remedy: preschool, K-12 education (including standards-based reform and supports for students and families), and school facilities construction. All of the remedies we have in place in New Jersey are intended to work together to ensure a seamless plan for school improvement. They are presented separately because they have distinctive logics and requirements.

The indicators cover a broad range of topics about school practices and a number of student outcomes. We break down school practices into six "elements of effective schooling." Ultimately, maximizing *opportunities for students to learn* is the main focus of school improvement efforts. Other elements of effective schooling<sup>2</sup> are needed to provide students with these opportunities. These are: *student and family supports, teacher qualifications and supports, budget, leadership, and school facilities*.

FIGURE | A

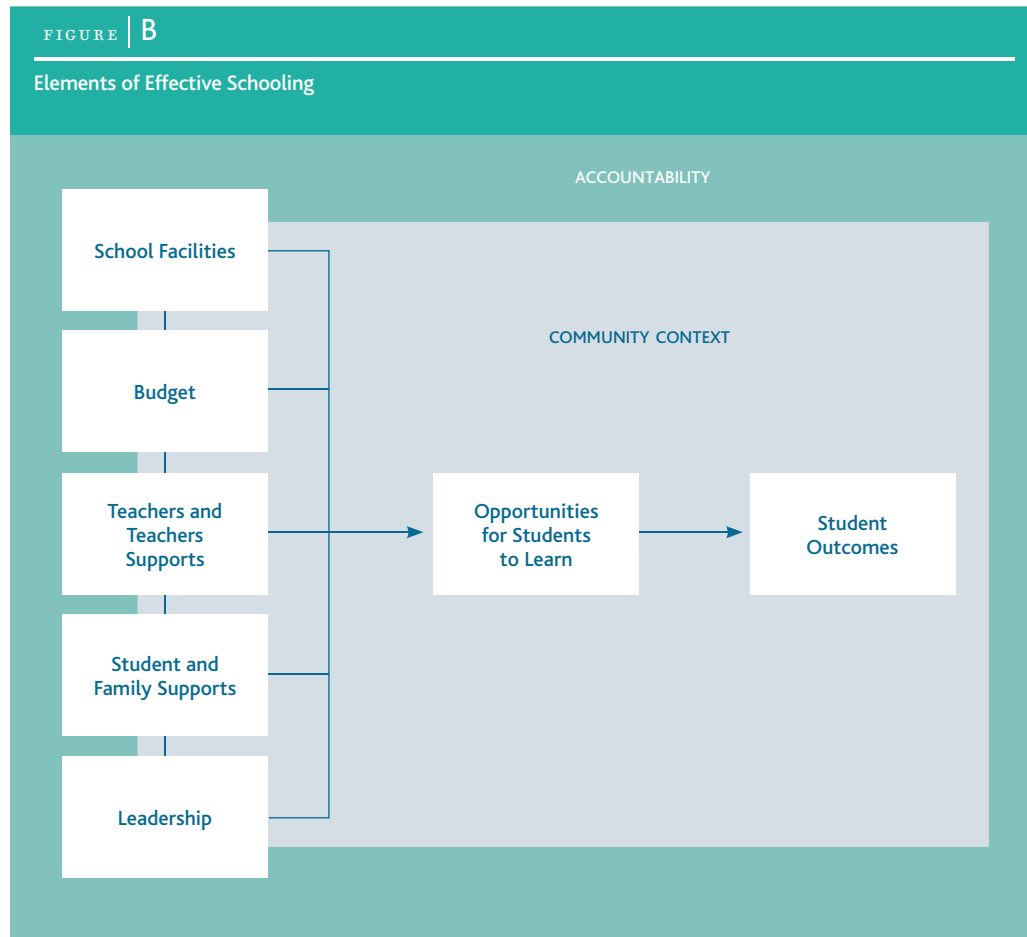
*Abbott v. Burke*: New Jersey's Framework for Urban School Improvement



## Introduction

FIGURE | B

### Elements of Effective Schooling



Academic progress and student well-being are the end products of *all* of the elements of effective schooling. We encourage readers to view student outcomes in light of how well all of the elements of effective schooling have been implemented.

In the full technical report (available at [www.edlawcenter.org](http://www.edlawcenter.org)), the findings from the full set of more than one hundred fifty indicators are presented with figures and more detailed discussion. We refer readers of this report to the technical report appendices for data sources and definitions, data collection and analysis methodology, and a glossary of terms.

#### Endnotes

1. More information about *Abbott v. Burke* is available at [www.edlawcenter.org](http://www.edlawcenter.org).

2. We thank Fred Frelow of the Rockefeller Foundation for suggesting this approach.



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Research shows that living in concentrated poverty negatively affects the well-being and academic performance of children and youth. If our schools are to help all students meet the state's academic standards and grow up to take meaningful roles in their communities, these effects will need to be countered.

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1

## 1

## The Community and Students

FIGURE | 1.1

## Conditions of Living and Learning in Union City

Municipal Characteristics	Union City	New Jersey
Population	67,088	8,414,350
Female Head of Household Families With Children 17 and Under	30%	18%
<b>Highest Educational Attainment of Adults 25 and Over</b>		
Less Than High School Diploma	46%	18%
Diploma or GED	25%	29%
Some College	17%	23%
Bachelor's Degree	7%	19%
Graduate or Professional Degree	5%	11%
Labor Force Participation	57%	64%
Unemployment Rate	12%	6%
Median Household Income	\$30,642	\$55,146
Population Below Poverty Level	21%	8%
Population 17 and Under Below Poverty Level	28%	11%
Foreign-born	59%	18%
Rent-income Ratio	28%	26%
Renter-occupied Housing	82%	34%
Vacant Housing	4%	7%
Violent Crime Rate (Per 1,000)	4.6	3.8

SOURCE | Uniform Crime Report, 2002; 2000 US Census

Here, we present indicators of community distress that inform the elements of effective schooling:

- Union City is the most densely populated city in New Jersey, with a land area just over one square mile and a population of about 67,000.
- At 12 percent in 2000, the unemployment rate is almost twice as high in Union City as it was statewide.
- In 2000, more than one in five Union City residents lived below the poverty level compared to eight percent of residents statewide. That same year, more than one in four children in Union City lived in families earning below the poverty level compared to 11 percent throughout New Jersey.
- In 2002, the violent crime rate was slightly higher in Union City than it was throughout the state.

The students who attend the public schools reflect the families who live in Union City. Their unique characteristics must inform the educational content, the staff needed to teach and support teaching, the space and facilities in which teaching and learning occur, and the leadership that guides the whole educational process. Programs that meet the needs of Union City's children and youth—such as

bilingual programs and nutrition programs—also entail different budget needs.

- In 2003–04, more than 90 percent of Union City’s public school students were eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch compared to about one in four students statewide.
- Fifteen percent of the student enrollment recently immigrated to the United States and almost half did not speak or write English fluently.
- Union City students move a great deal more than New Jersey students on average—nearly one in five entered or left school at least once during the 2002–03 school year. High student mobility disrupts educational progress and has negative effects on student learning.

FIGURE | 1.2

## Characteristics of Students in Union City

	Union City	All Other Abbott Districts	I and J Districts	New Jersey
Total Enrollment	11,606			
Eligible for Free-/Reduced-price Lunch	92.1%	67.7%	3.3%	26.2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Black	0.9%	43.1%	4.4%	17.1%
Latino/a	94.5%	40.5%	3.6%	17.1%
White	3.5%	13.2%	80.3%	58.5%
Asian	1.1%	2.9%	11.5%	7.1%
Native American	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	46.7%	10.8%	1.5%	4.8%
Students with Disabilities (IEP)	11.5%	12.6%	12.0%	13.1%
Immigrant	12.6%	–	–	–
Homeless	.2%	–	–	–
Student Mobility Rate	19.5%	22.9%	5.2%	12.2%

SOURCE | Fall Survey, 2003–04; School Report Card, 2002–03; Union City Public Schools, 2003–04



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The Abbott preschool remedy is based on research showing that intensive, high-quality preschool programs can help children perform better in school and participate more productively in the life of their communities as adults. Abbott preschool began in 1999–00; by 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to serve 90 percent of the eligible population.

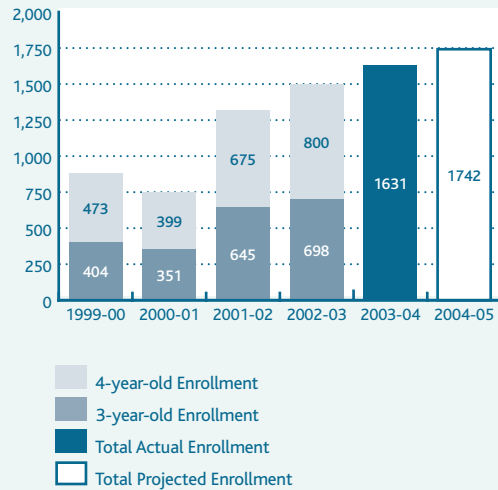
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## 2

## The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.1

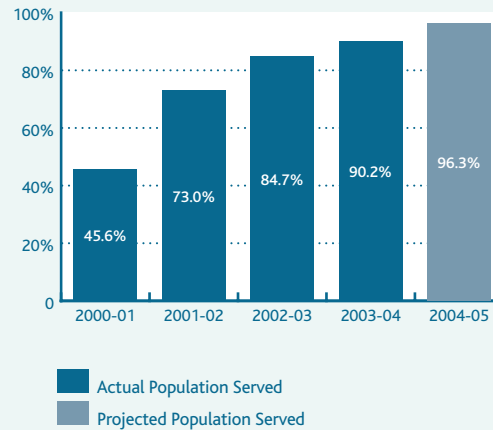
Preschool Enrollment: Union City, 1999–00 to 2004–05



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education: Office of School Funding, 1999–2003

FIGURE | 2.2

Preschool Population Served: Union City, 2000–01 to 2004–05



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education: Office of School Funding, 1999–2003

The major features of Abbott preschool are:

- Six-hour school day, 180 days a year;
- Provisions for full-day, full-year wrap-around child care services;<sup>3</sup>
- Certified teacher and an assistant for each class;
- Maximum class size of 15 students;
- Adequate facilities;
- Transportation, health and other related services, as needed;
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum that meets the state's Early Childhood Education Program Expectations Standards of Quality and is linked with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS);
- Adequate state funding for all programs; and
- All three- and four-year-old children residing in the school district are eligible, with enrollment on demand.<sup>4</sup>

### Opportunities for Students to Learn

**Program Enrollment.** By 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to enroll 90 percent of their eligible populations of three- and four-year-olds.

- Union City met the enrollment requirement two years before the state deadline. In 2003–04, it served 90 percent of the city's eligible children in its preschool program.

- To date, the district has used extensive and creative strategies to identify and recruit children into its preschool program.
- The Union City Board of Education contracted with 29 other private providers to offer Abbott preschool in 36 locations (including two Head Start programs). The district runs six preschool programs in its own buildings. Since the Abbott preschool program began in 1999–00, the district has placed more children in community-run programs than in district-run programs. Between 1999–00 and 2002–03, the percent of enrolled children served in community programs rose from 68 to 93 percent.

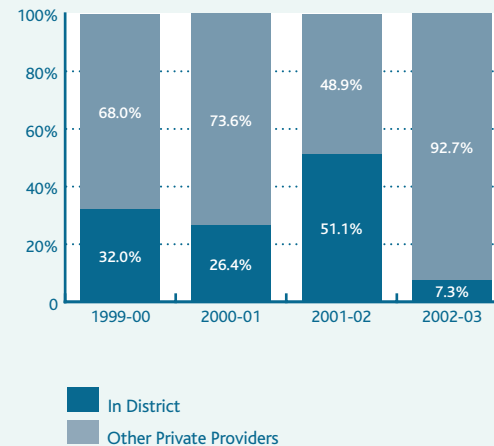
#### Programs for Children with Disabilities.

The law requires that school districts provide children with disabilities with educational experiences and services tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be in an environment with general education students and not in self-contained settings.

- Most of Union City's 43 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms or received "itinerant services," special education services outside of the preschool setting for up to three hours per day.<sup>5</sup>

FIGURE | 2.3

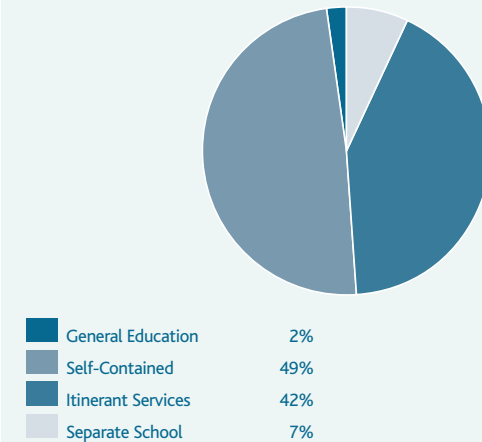
Preschool Enrollment by Provider Type:  
Union City, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education: Office of School Funding, 1999–2003

FIGURE | 2.4

Educational Environment of Preschoolers with Disabilities:  
Union City, 2003–04 (N=43)



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 1999–2003

## 2

## The Preschool Program

The Kindergarten curriculum was recently made more challenging to adapt to the improved skills of children entering from Union City preschool program.

**Curriculum.** The New Jersey Department of Education's *Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality* set standards for learning outcomes and outlines how teachers should conduct specific activities. Since they were released in 2002–03, the *Expectations* have become the benchmark for determining how effectively the classroom curriculum is being implemented.

- Union City's district and community provider programs use High/Scope, a high-quality, research-based curriculum. Spanish-speaking preschoolers with limited English proficiency receive the same high-quality curriculum, with an additional bilingual component.
- The Kindergarten curriculum was recently made more challenging to adapt to the improved skills of children entering from the Union City preschool program.

**Program Quality.** One good way to understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by Abbott preschool programs is to have a consistent and reliable method of measuring program quality that is used regularly in all public preschool programs, including the Abbott districts.

- State-supported university-based researchers assess preschool classroom quality in several Abbott preschool programs. Unfortunately, there were too few classrooms assessed in Union City to use this information. More data on program quality—such as the results of reliable measures like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)—are needed in all Abbott districts so that we can understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by their preschool programs.

### Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

#### Educational Attainment of Preschool

**Teachers.** Abbott preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree. This standard applies immediately to all teachers working in district-run programs. Teachers in community programs who need fewer than 30 credits may be eligible for an extension until September 2006. Head Start teachers have four years from the date when their program first contracted with an Abbott district to complete this requirement.



➤ In 2004-05, nearly all 116 teachers in district, Head Start, and other private provider programs had earned at least a four-year college degree as required. The district reported that by September 2005, only one teacher would still be working toward a college degree.

**Preschool Teacher Certification.** In addition to a bachelor's degree, Abbott preschool teachers must also be certified.<sup>6</sup> Preschool through Grade 3 (P-3) is the standard certification for all new teachers entering Abbott preschool programs. One route teachers can use to earn the P-3 is to first obtain a provisional "certificate of eligibility" (CE) or a certificate of eligibility with advanced standing (CEAS). While teaching in a preschool program, teachers then complete a series of mentoring and evaluation sessions. CE candidates must also take part in early childhood instructional training. Teachers with a standard certificate to teach students in nursery school through Grade 8 (N-8) and at least two years of full-time teaching experience in an early childhood setting also fulfill the certification requirement under a "grandfather clause" in the regulations. Teachers with

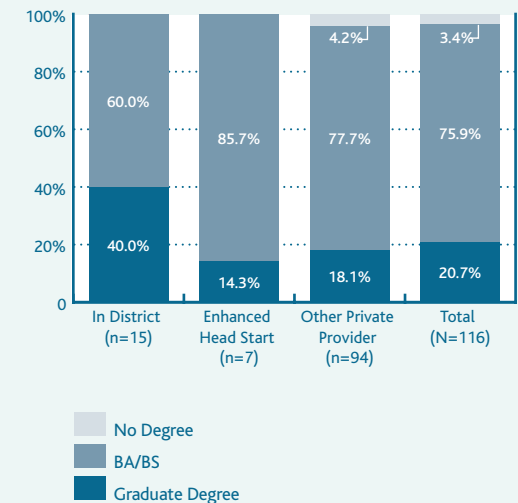
special education certification may only teach self-contained early childhood classrooms or serve as a second teacher in an inclusion classroom.

➤ Union City's preschool teachers were on their way to meeting the Abbott certification requirement. In 2004-05, all teachers in district-run and Head Start programs had at least provisional certification. About four percent of teachers in other private providers still needed certification.

**Preschool Teacher Salary.** All other things being equal, school districts that pay teachers well are more likely to attract a broader pool of applicants for teaching positions. Improving preschool teacher pay may also help to improve preschool program quality by reducing teacher turnover and boosting teacher morale. The State Supreme Court recognized this in 2002 when it ordered the New Jersey Department of Education to provide funds to help Head Start and other private provider programs raise their teacher salaries to levels equal to those of teachers in district-run programs.

FIGURE | 2.5

Preschool Teacher Educational Attainment by Provider Type:  
Union City, 2004-05



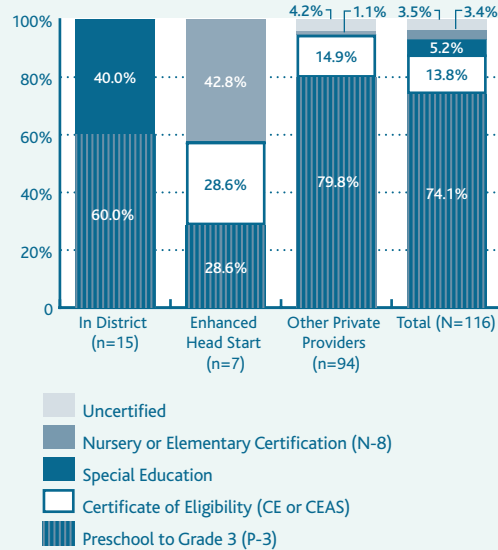
SOURCE | Union City Public Schools, 2004-05

## 2

## The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.6

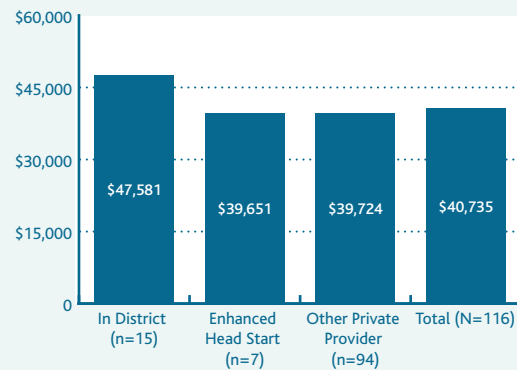
Preschool Teacher Certification by Provider Type:  
Union City, 2004–05



SOURCE | Union City Public Schools, 2004–05

FIGURE | 2.7

Average Preschool Teacher Salary: Union City, 2004–05



SOURCE | Union City Public Schools, 2004–05

➤ In Union City, the average preschool teacher salary was \$40,735. On average, preschool teachers in district-run programs earned about \$7,900 more than did teachers in any other provider type. The reasons for this continued difference in salaries is unclear. When compared to teachers in community provider programs, district teachers have similar levels of education, certification, and years of experience as lead teachers.

### Preschool Budget

The Abbott preschool program is funded by the state from two different sources. Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) is allocated to all Abbott districts and another 102 school districts serving low-income students. Since 2002–03, Abbott districts also receive Preschool Expansion Aid (PSEA) to cover the costs of expanding the programs to meet full enrollment.

➤ At \$9,164 in 2003–04, Union City's preschool program has less money on a per student basis than the other Abbott districts on average. District staff report that preschool costs are kept down by conducting intensive budget training for community providers and monitoring expenditures through monthly, rather than quarterly reporting.

### Preschool Leadership

State regulations require each Abbott school district to establish an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC). The ECEAC is a group of community stakeholders who are interested in the education and welfare of preschool-age children. The purpose of the ECEAC is to meet regularly, review the school district's progress towards full implementation of high-quality preschool programs, and participate in program planning, budget development, and early childhood facilities planning.

- Union City's Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC) includes 15 people: the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, general and special education teachers, private preschool providers, Child Study Team members, a City Commissioner, and representatives from the district early childhood education office. The ECEAC meets four times per year to review and discuss curriculum and facilities planning. The district business administrator has several meetings with the ECEAC to elicit their input during budget development. The ECEAC also participated in the design of the district's Early Childhood Center.

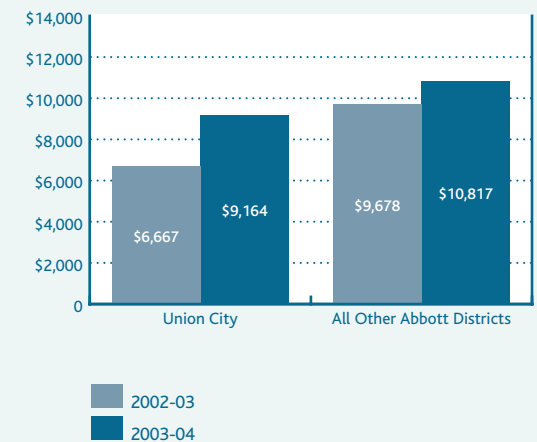
### Preschool Student Outcomes

We turn to outcomes to ask if the elements discussed so far—student and family characteristics, opportunities for students to learn, teacher qualifications and supports, budget, and leadership—have worked together to improve student learning among the district's three- and four-year-olds.

- The Union City Board of Education is keeping track of student progress in preschool and beyond with the intention of evaluating the preschool program in the future.
- In 2003–04, Union City preschool teachers and administrators were introduced to the Early Language Assessment System (ELAS), a performance-based assessment system. The ELAS will ultimately be used statewide to generate information about how preschoolers are doing and help preschool teachers tailor their instruction to children's needs.

FIGURE | 2.8

Per Student Preschool Aid: Union City and All Other Abbott Districts, 2002–03 and 2003–04



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–2004

## 2

## The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.9

## Abbott Preschool Program: Benchmark Status In Union City

Benchmark	Status
District must serve at least 90 percent of eligible populations by 2005-06	Met
District teachers required to have bachelor's degree	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with the district to earn bachelor's degree	Met
District teachers required to have certification (except those who received N-8 certification before 1999).	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with district to earn P-3 certification.	Met

As a recent report published by the United States Government Accountability Office noted, New Jersey's public preschools do not currently generate consistent and reliable information that will help us to understand how well children are doing statewide. We need to strike a balance between the concerns of early childhood education specialists about widespread assessment of young children and the need to know exactly how well the programs are serving Abbott preschoolers. Outcome measures are needed to help stakeholders to identify programs that work and those that need more assistance.

## Endnotes

3. The New Jersey Department of Education covers the cost for six hours, 180 days per year of preschool education. The New Jersey Department of Human Services funds before- and after-school "wraparound" care and care during the summer to provide a ten-hour, 245-day per year program.

4. Age eligibility for three- and four-year-olds is based on the date the district uses to determine age eligibility for Kindergarten.

5. Students who receive itinerant services may be "pulled out" of general education classrooms to receive their special education and related services or speech-language services.

6. As with the Abbott preschool teacher education requirement, the certification standard applied immediately to teachers in district-run programs. Teachers in community provider programs have until September 2006, and Head Start teachers have four years from the date when their program contracted with the Abbott district.

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New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) define what all students should know and be able to do at each grade and by the time they graduate from high school. Abbott provides several means to help students in low-income, urban districts achieve these standards.

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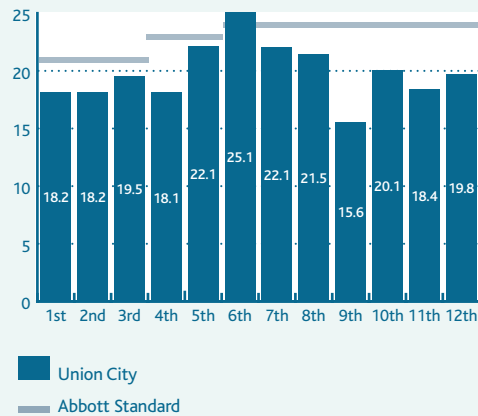
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## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.1

Average Class Size by Grade: Union City, 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 2002–03

These include:

- Funding at the same level as the wealthiest (“I and J”) suburban districts in the state;
- Class size limits;
- Comprehensive, or “whole-school” reform;
- Programs and services to meet the needs of students and their families;
- Assessment in each content area to measure student improvement at the classroom, school, and district levels; and
- Ways to help “low-performing” schools improve.

### Opportunities for Students to Learn

**Class Size.** Research suggests that smaller class sizes can help teachers spend less time on behavior management and more time on instruction that is better attuned to students’ needs. In fact, there is strong evidence that smaller class sizes help students in the early elementary grades to perform better in school. Evidence on the benefits of smaller class sizes for students in later grades is less clear. In recognition of the potential benefits to students of all ages, Abbott schools have class size standards as follows:

Kindergarten through Grade 3: 21

Grades 4 through 5: 23

Grades 6 through 12: 24

- In 2002–03, Union City’s average class sizes in most grades were smaller than the Abbott standard. Limited classroom space may have hampered the district’s progress in this regard, however: class sizes in Grade 6 exceeded state standards in 2002–03.
- In 1994–95, the average Union City elementary school class size was about 21. Class size increased to a high of 26 in 1999–00, and then decreased to just over 20 children per class in 2002–03. Elementary school class sizes in the other Abbott districts decreased from 21 to just less than 19. Across the state and in the wealthiest districts, class sizes have stayed at about 20 students throughout this period.
- The average Union City high school class size was 26 in 1994–95. The class size stayed at about 15 for several years, and rose again to about 19 in 2002–03. The average high school class size remained steady at about 20 in all other district groupings.

### Programs for Children with Disabilities.

The law requires that school districts provide children with disabilities with educational experiences and services tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be in an environment

with general education students and not in self-contained settings.

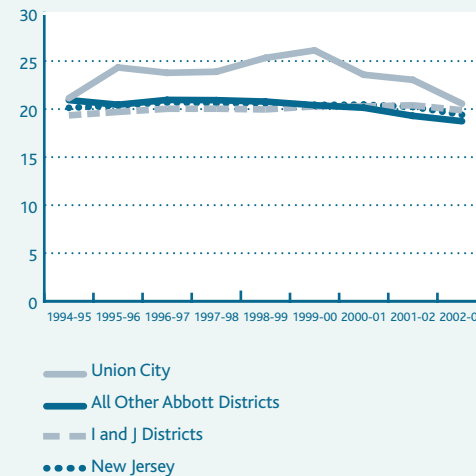
- Union City has 851 special needs students ages six to 21. Almost half of the district's students with disabilities go to school in "very inclusionary" settings (spending 80% or more of their day with the general education population) compared to 27 percent in the other Abbott districts and 42 percent in the state overall. More than one in four (28%) students with disabilities in Union City are in self-contained classrooms for a major portion of the day (spending less than 40% of the day in general education classrooms).

**College Preparatory Classes.** Nationwide, high school students of color are under-represented in college admissions. One reason might be a lack of opportunity to learn challenging material that would make them more competitive applicants.

- Union City's high schools offer an array of honors and advanced placement courses to help students become more competitive applicants and prepare them for college. We compared Union City's honors and AP course offerings to those in Tenafly, an "I" district several miles away. In 2003–04, Union City offered 21 honors and advanced placement courses compared to Tenafly's 31.

FIGURE | 3.2

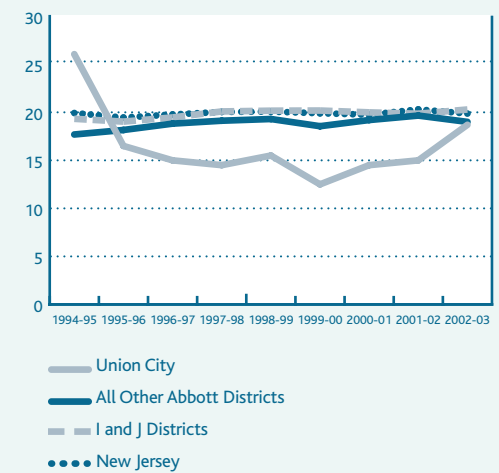
Elementary School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

FIGURE | 3.3

High School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



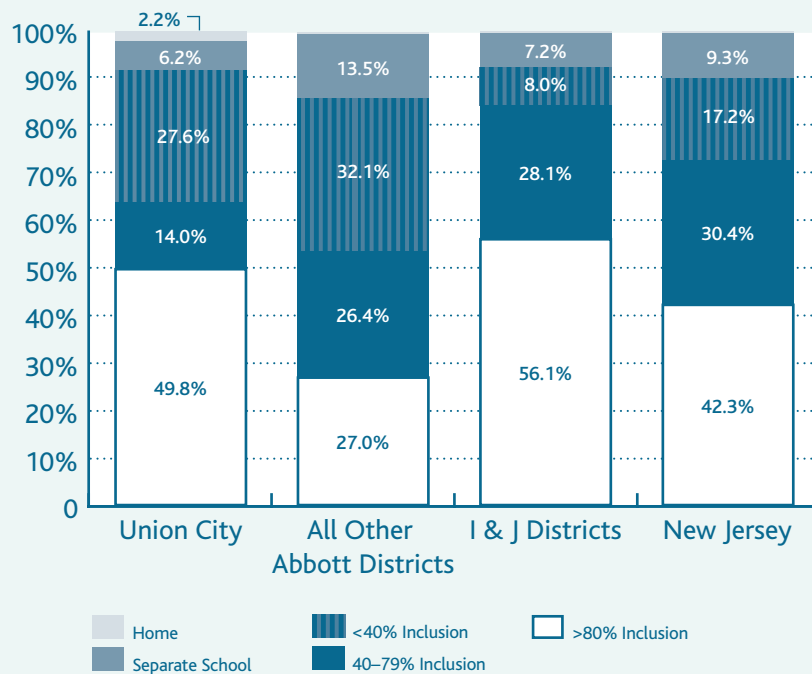
SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.4

Educational Environment of Students with Disabilities Ages 6–21 by District Grouping, 2003–04



NOTE: Less than one percent are educated in a residential setting in all district groupings. Less than one percent are educated at home in All Other Abbott Districts, I & J Districts, and the State.

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Special Education Programs, 2003–04

### Students and Family Supports

Under Abbott, the State funds and the districts implement “supplemental programs.” The purpose of these programs is to address disadvantages experienced by young people who grow up in poor cities. There are two kinds of “supplemental” programs under Abbott. Some programs are required; funding to support other programs is available if a school or district can show that the students need them. Below, we present information on some of the supplemental programs and services available in Union City’s public schools: intensive early literacy; parent involvement; access to technology; and alternative education and dropout prevention. More supplemental programs are described in the larger technical report.

**Early Literacy.** Under Abbott, schools are required to provide 90-minute blocks of reading instruction to children in Kindergarten through Grade 3. Students in Grades 1 through 3 who are not reading at grade level must receive one-on-one tutoring; older elementary grade students not reading at grade level must receive small-group tutoring.



- Union City is one of 11 New Jersey school districts involved in the Reading First early literacy program.<sup>7</sup> The program is designed to: 1) measure student progress through ongoing screening and classroom assessments; 2) identify children at risk for reading failure; 3) provide professional development for teachers using research-based reading programs; and 4) work with parents to promote parent partnerships, parent literacy, and reading at home. Kindergarten through Grade 3, special and general education students and teachers take part in the program. Like Success for All, Reading First includes a 90-minute intensive early literacy period for students in the early elementary grades. In 2003–04, Edison and Washington Schools were the first to participate in Reading First because they were designated as “needing improvement” under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Beginning in Fall 2004, the district began implementing Reading First at Gilmore, Veterans’ and Robert Waters Schools. Although not formally designated as Reading First schools, Hudson, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Wilson Schools and three community provider programs are also using similar strategies in their Kindergarten classrooms.
- Veterans’ Memorial Elementary School tests students’ reading skills three times a year and places them into different early literacy instructional groups based on their performance: “benchmark” (grade level), “strategic” (moderately at-risk), or “intensive” (high-risk). High-risk, or “intensive” students in Grade 1 receive tutoring with a reading specialist during

the day. Second and third graders at high risk receive after-school tutoring. The remaining students work with teacher tutors. Robert Waters School provides Reading Recovery tutoring to students scoring in the lowest 20th percentile on the same test.

**Parent Involvement.** Emerging research suggests that children with parents who are involved in their *learning* are more likely to attend school, earn higher grades, improve their social skills, graduate from high school and go on to college. Parent involvement in the school can be important too if it is linked to improving learning, developing specific skills or encouraging children to take more challenging classes. Parent involvement can also build a sense of community accountability for student learning. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, districts are required to use a portion of their federal funding to form and support a district parent advisory council. Abbott schools are required to make efforts to involve parents and caregivers in their children’s education and in general school decision-making. At the very least, each school should have a parent-community coordinator (family liaison), and parent

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## K-12 Education

Union City Online placed over 2,000 computers in the classrooms, libraries, computer labs, and media centers.”

representation on its School Leadership Committees (SLC).

- SLC chairs at the five schools we visited told us that there are parent representatives on their management teams.
- In Union City, every school has a parent-community coordinator. According to the district's handbook for parent-community coordinators, the liaison's mission is “to build a bridge between school and home by helping parents, grandparents, and/or guardians get the information, help and support they need to ensure their children's academic and social success in school.” Parent-community coordinators work with principals, faculty, and parents to establish parent groups, and communicate the objectives of continuous school improvement. Parent involvement is also a large component of the early childhood program. Every private preschool provider has a family worker, and every in-district school has a parent-community coordinator.
- The district also has a parent handbook that includes parent involvement policies, opportunities for training, and policies on visiting the school and meeting school staff members.

**Access to Technology.** Under Abbott, there should be no more than five students to each computer in each school throughout the district. Abbott districts are also required to have staff who make sure that: students master the technology needed to reach the state's Core

Curriculum Content Standards; classrooms and libraries have adequate equipment; and technology is effectively used to support teaching and learning.

- In the early- to mid-1990s, before Abbott funding began, the Union City Board of Education combined local school revenues with funding from private enterprise and federal grants to support a massive investment in a network that linked classrooms and school libraries, district offices, public libraries, and Union City's government offices. The project, known as “Union City Online,” placed over 2,000 computers in the classrooms, libraries, computer labs and media centers. Access to and training in technology is also fully integrated throughout the district.
- Through a web-based system known as “Class Link,” Union City students access and submit homework on-line. Through Project Hiller, 30 ninth graders at Union Hill High School received laptops and printers for their homes. This project provided students who would not otherwise have access to computers the opportunity to use up-to-date technology to complete their homework and school projects. Students can also take a CISCO certification course that teaches students the skills needed to design, build, and maintain small- to medium-sized networks. Through the Teen Tech program, Union Hill High school students work with the technology facilitator to diagnose and repair computer equipment for credit. Union

Hill students can also participate in a summer web design program for credit and wages.

- The new Veterans' Memorial Elementary School is a wireless building and each grade has two carts of laptops. The district provides laptop computers to all teachers at the school and all lesson plans are submitted to the principal electronically. The school has a technology curriculum with benchmarks, and all students in Preschool through Grade 5 are enrolled in computer skills classes.
- Union City students had easier access to computers than their peers in any other district grouping between 1994–95 and 2002–03. There were only 4.3 students to every computer in 1997–98; in 2002–03, there were 3.2, well below (better than) the Abbott standard of five students to every computer. Student access to computers also improved in the other Abbott districts as it did throughout the state and in the wealthiest districts.

### Alternative Education and Dropout

**Prevention.** Abbott districts are also required to identify and provide services to students at risk of failing and dropping out. At a minimum, the districts are required to provide alternative programs for young people in middle and high school, and be adequately staffed with dropout prevention specialists.

- In Union City, the Middle School Alternative Education Program is an alternative setting for

eight grade students identified as at-risk by the Support Services Task Force of their school. Students are eligible for the program if they have poor academic performance, social and emotional problems, and/or difficulties in the home environment. The curriculum is tailored to the educational needs of each student with special provisions made for students who need remediation and tutoring. In addition to the academic program, students work as volunteers in county hospitals and nursing homes. They also receive individual and group counseling from the school social worker.

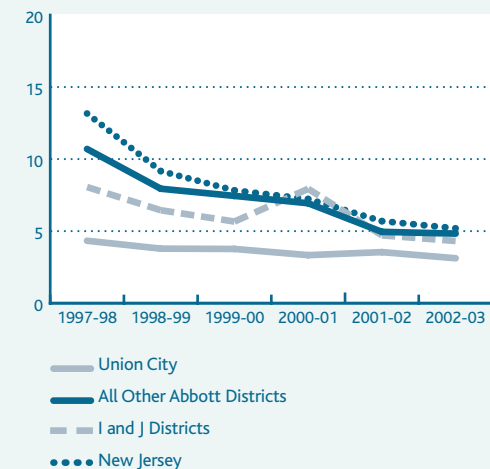
- The Focus on Success Program at Emerson and Union Hill High Schools serves a total of 64 ninth grade students who are at risk of dropping out. Students in these programs typically come from eighth grade alternative education programs in the district. Focus on Success keeps these students together with a small number of teachers as they move up through high school.

### K-12 Teacher Qualifications and Supports

**Highly Qualified Teachers.** The Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) outlines several measures that schools and districts must take to ensure a quality public education to all of their students. One provision requires that certain teachers must be “highly qualified” in each subject they teach.<sup>8</sup> The requirements of becoming highly qualified vary depending

FIGURE | 3.5

Student–Computer Ratio by District Grouping, 1997–98 to 2002–03



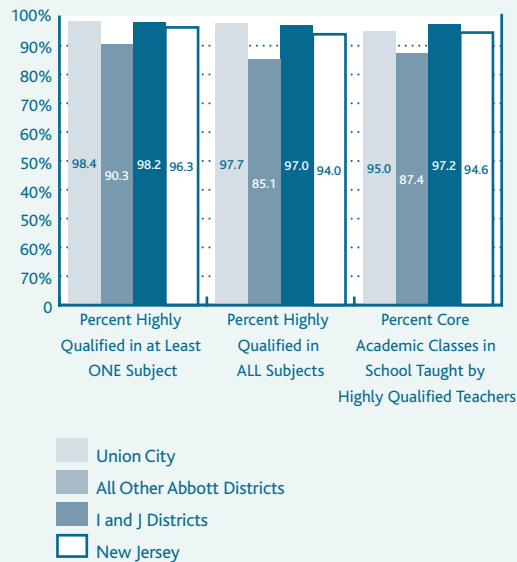
SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.6

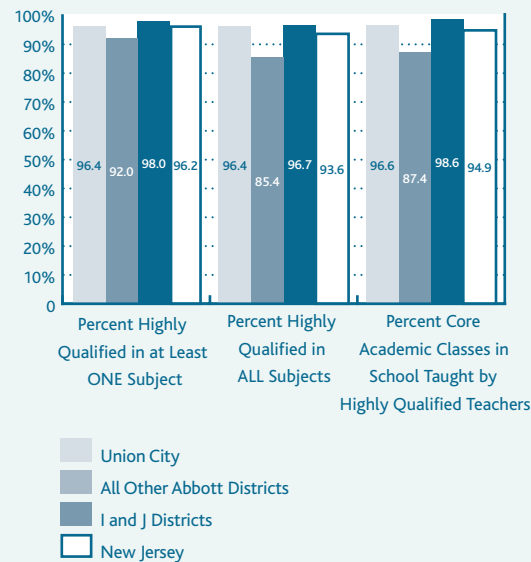
Highly Qualified Teachers by District Grouping:  
Elementary Schools, 2003–04



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

FIGURE | 3.7

Highly Qualified Teachers by District Grouping:  
High Schools, 2003–04



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

on when the teacher is hired and what type of school he or she teaches in. In general, a teacher must hold a four-year college degree, be fully certified, and show a level of knowledge in his or her subject matter by passing a state test. New middle and high school teachers must also have a certain number of college credits in the subject matter they teach. The law applies equally to teachers who teach many core subjects (such as many elementary school and special education teachers), those who specialize in a single subject (such as many middle and high school teachers), basic skills teachers; and bilingual and ESL teachers.

All districts must submit a “highly qualified teacher” report. Reading left to right, the three sets of grouped bars in Figure 3.6 show the percent who are highly qualified in at least *one* subject, the percent who are highly qualified in *all* core subjects, and the percent of core subject area classes taught by a highly qualified teacher.

➤ In 2003–04, Union City did better than the other Abbott districts, the state average, and even the wealthiest school districts in the state

in the percent of elementary school teachers who are “highly qualified” under the federal definition. Nearly all of the elementary school teachers in the district are highly qualified. About 95 percent of core classes in Union City were taught by a highly qualified teacher.

- Almost all of the district’s high school teachers are highly qualified in one or all of the subjects they teach, and almost all classes were taught by these highly qualified teachers in 2003–04. Union City compares well with the wealthiest districts and does better than the other Abbotts and the state average on all three measures.

**Staffing Patterns.** Several staffing positions are needed to put the Abbott reforms into action. Some positions are required in all schools; others are specific to elementary or secondary schools.

- Between 2002–03 and 2003–04, there was some change in the extent to which Union City schools staffed positions that are required under Abbott. In 2003–04, more Union City schools had a security officer (100%) and technology coordinator (100%). Fewer schools had a guidance counselor and a librarian. More elementary schools had teacher tutors on staff to assist children who have difficulty reading and a social worker; fewer had an instructional facilitator. In addition, fewer middle and high schools had an attendance/dropout prevention officer and a health and social service coordinator.

### K-12 Budget

Public education is, of course, an essential service provided by local governments and education costs are higher in school districts with high concentrations of low-income households. Because local taxes are based on property values, property wealth is a good indicator of the availability of money to support education.

- The wealthiest suburbs had more than four times more property wealth per student than Union City in 2003. That same year, the state average was triple that of Union City.

**General Education Funding.**<sup>9</sup> The basic source of general education funding in New Jersey is the local tax levy. In many school districts, the local tax levy is supplemented by state aid. Several sources of state aid—available to all New Jersey school districts based on a formula—come out of the school funding law called the *Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act of 1996 (CEIFA)*. “Core Curriculum Standards Aid” (CCSA) makes up the difference between what school districts can afford and what the state estimates to be an adequate level of school funding to

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.8

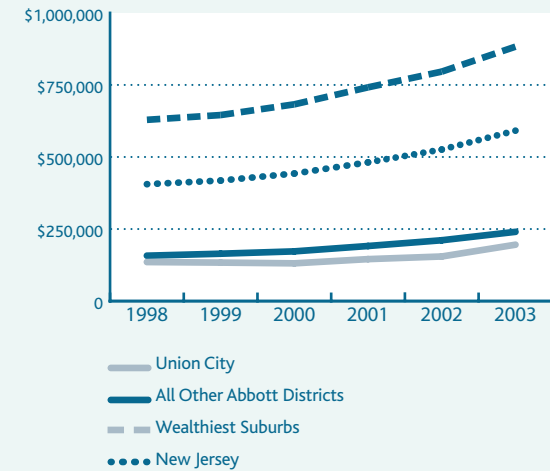
Percent of Schools with Required Abbott Staff Positions: Union City and All Other Abbott Districts, 2002-03 to 2003-04

	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
<b>Elementary Schools Staff</b>				
Instructional Facilitator	88.9%	87.5%	97.5%	95.3%
Social Worker	88.9%	100.0%	69.2%	68.0%
Teacher Tutor	25.0%	62.5%	24.6%	39.8%
All Positions	25.0%	62.5%	20.2%	32.9%
<b>Middle and High Schools Staff</b>				
	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Attendance/Dropout Prevention Officer	50.0%	37.5%	49.3%	52.4%
Health-Social Service Coordinator	87.5%	50.0%	32.6%	36.7%
All Positions	37.5%	12.5%	24.2%	25.6%
<b>All Schools Staff</b>				
	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Family Liaison (Parent-Community Coordinator)	91.7%	91.7%	67.8%	70.4%
Guidance Counselor	83.3%	75.0%	94.1%	94.1%
Librarian/Media Specialist	91.7%	75.0%	89.4%	91.5%
Nurse/Health Specialist	91.7%	91.7%	97.4%	97.2%
Security Officer	91.7%	100.0%	88.0%	88.7%
Tech Coordinator	91.7%	100.0%	82.2%	85.9%
All Positions	83.3%	50.0%	56.6%	57.0%

SOURCE | DOENET Abbott School-Based Budget Staffing Tables, 2002-03 to 2003-04

FIGURE | 3.9

Average Property Value Per Student by District Grouping, 1998-2003



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Community Affairs: Office of Local Government Services, 1998-2003

support a thorough and efficient education. Some districts also receive “Supplemental CCSA” to ease their local tax burdens. A third type of funding, “Stabilization Aid” goes to districts that might otherwise lose too much CCSA from year to year because of enrollment changes.

A key feature of Abbott is the requirement that general education funding in the poorest urban school districts be at a level *equal* to what is spent on average in our state’s most successful suburban districts. In recognition of the low property wealth and high tax rates in these districts, the state is required to provide the funding needed to achieve this equality. Abbott districts have received this funding—called “Abbott Parity Aid”—from the state every year since 1997–98.<sup>10</sup>

➤ On a per student basis, Union City and the other Abbott districts have as much money as the successful suburban districts to support general education. In fact, there has been equity in funding for general education between the poorest cities and the wealthiest suburbs in New Jersey since 1997 when Abbott parity began.

**Supplemental Programs Funding.** To be ready and successful learners, the children and youth of Union City have unique needs for health, nutrition, and social services that must be addressed. There are three sources of money to support supplemental programs in Abbott districts: one comes from the federal government and two from the state. The federal funding is called “Title I” and provides funding for schools serving children from low-income families. The money is intended to improve educational quality and give extra help to struggling students. The second supplemental programs funding source, “Demonstrably Effective Program Aid” (DEPA), has been provided by the state since CEIFA. It is targeted to school districts serving poor children and calculated on a per student basis. Both Abbott and non-Abbott districts may receive Title I and DEPA funds.

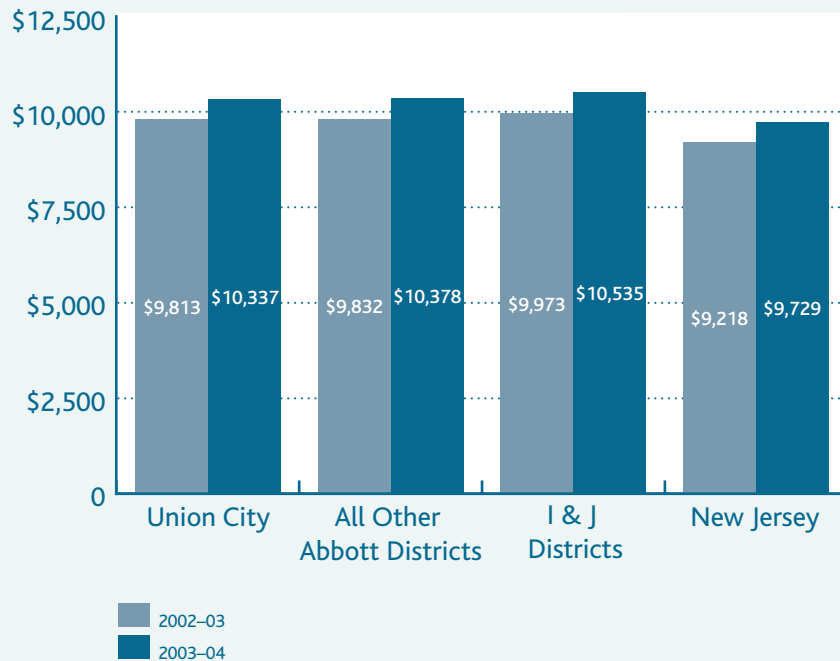
Only Abbott districts receive “Additional Abbott Aid,” the third source of supplemental programs funding. Each Abbott district must apply to the state for Additional Abbott Aid and justify its request with evidence of

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## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.10

Per Student General Education Funding by District Grouping, 2002–03 and 2003–04



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–2004

student need. The New Jersey Department of Education reviews district requests and issues its decisions. The state may fully fund, deny portions, or fund programs at lower levels than requested by the districts. School districts may appeal the state's decision in court. Not surprisingly, this process has been a source of conflict between the Abbott districts and the New Jersey Department of Education since it began in 1999.

- In 2003–04, Union City received an additional \$819 per student in supplemental program aid to support the second half-day of Kindergarten and other programs and services to meet the needs of its students and their families. The per student amount Union City received in 2003–04 was \$1,198 less than the average of other Abbott districts because Union City did not request Additional Abbott Aid from the state.
- Over the years, the district has received grant funds to support technology initiatives and student services. According to the district, these grants make up a small portion of the budget.

### K-12 Leadership

**School Leadership Councils.** State regulations require every school in the Abbott



districts to have a School Leadership Council (SLC). The SLC is a group that serves on a volunteer basis to represent school staff and neighborhood residents. Their primary purpose is to help improve teaching and learning. They do this by taking part in program planning and decision-making and encouraging broad participation by school staff and neighborhood stakeholders. SLC members serve at least two years with staggered terms. SLCs should meet at least once a month.

SLCs should take part in a wide variety of activities to carry out their functions, including: reviewing needs assessment and achievement data; reviewing school-based budgets prepared by the central office and making recommendations to amend them; and participating in training provided by the district or the New Jersey Department of Education. SLCs that are trained to perform personnel functions may also interview school principal candidates and recommend candidates to the district's Superintendent.

Along with the other Abbott districts, Union City used school-based budgeting in

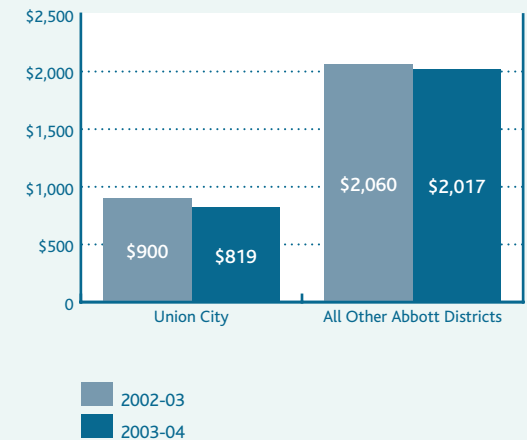
the early years of Abbott. These budgets were "zero-based," that is, they specified each and every needed program and staff member from the ground up. In general, SLCs took the lead in school-based planning and budgeting efforts, getting input from a variety of school staff and community members on needed programs and staffing.

In all of the Abbott districts, control over budgeting and planning moved away from the schools and their SLCs and returned to the district office in 2002–03. Since then, the process has begun with the district's business administrator, who sets school budgets based on a state template, previous spending levels, and a three percent cost-of-living increase. The district's business administrator sends a copy of each school's budget to its SLC for review and modification. SLCs may then be asked to support and sign their school's budget before it is packaged with the district's budget and sent to the New Jersey Department of Education.

➤ In Union City, each SLC is made up of the principal, teachers, non-instructional support staff, parents and caregivers, community representatives, and the Whole School Reform facilitator.

FIGURE | 3.11

Per Student Supplemental Program Aid: Union City and All Other Abbott Districts, 2002–03 and 2003–04



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002-2004

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## K-12 Education

Each Abbott district should have an Abbott Advisory Council to review district policies and procedures and implement the Abbott reforms.

SLC meetings are held at different times (after school and evening) to increase the chance that parents and community members will attend.

- SLCs in the district follow New Jersey Department of Education regulations about the purpose of the council and the roles and responsibilities of its members, including participation in plan and budget development. Before the SLCs developed their schools' three-year operational plans, members reviewed student data and surveyed staff, students, and parents to find out what programs and services should be brought in to address needs.
- In some of the Union City schools we visited, SLC members voted on both three-year operational plans and budgets (as required by Abbott): a majority vote was needed for them to pass. In other schools, SLC members simply signed their name to show support.

**Abbott Advisory Council.** Each Abbott district should have an "Abbott Advisory Council," a steering committee that represents the district and its community stakeholders. The primary responsibility of the Council is to review district policies and procedures to implement the Abbott reforms.

- The Union City Abbott Advisory Council (AAC) is made up of 20 members including: the Superintendent who serves as chairperson, two Assistant Superintendents, the business administrators, two district supervisors, Whole

School Reform facilitators from each of the district's 12 schools, one parent, and one community representative. AAC members typically participate on other school/district committees, such as the SLC. Meetings are held once a month. The focus of the Union City AAC during the 2003–04 school year was on the revision of the district's three-year operational plan.

### K-12 Student Outcomes

As education stakeholders, we need to ensure that educational success is not determined by where a student lives. We need to make sure that the schools provide: opportunities for students to learn; staff to teach students, and supports for that staff; adequate financial resources; a sound educational environment; and the leadership to guide the whole process. The Abbott remedies were intended to support efforts of schools, districts, parents and advocates to improve these elements of schooling. We cannot understand how schools or districts are doing—or help them to do better—unless we consider all of them. We encourage readers to review and consider the student outcomes presented below in light of the material presented up to this point.

**Student Attendance.** Students who feel safe at school and are engaged in their academic work tend to go to school more often. Of course, students also miss school because of other reasons such as poor health and family problems. In general, we think that student attendance is an important indicator that school is a positive experience for children and youth and that the students' families, the district, and the larger community are addressing any obstacles to attendance that may exist. It is presented here as a leading indicator: students can only benefit from opportunities to learn if they attend school regularly.

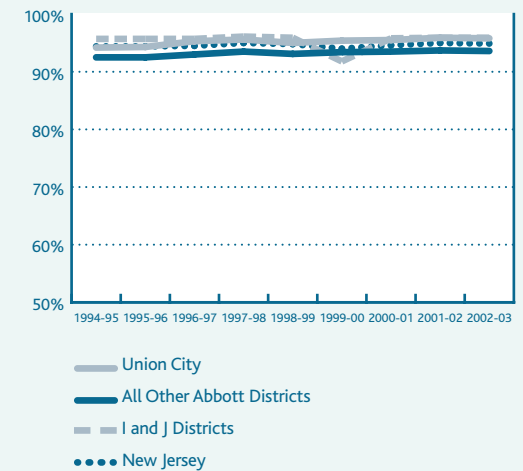
- Union City's elementary school student attendance was at 94 percent in 1994–95 and rose slightly to 96 percent in 2002–03, about the same as the wealthiest districts in the state. At the elementary school level, attendance across New Jersey was high, at about 95 percent in 1994–95 and stayed just as high right through 2002–03.
- Attendance rates in the high schools were lower than in the elementary schools across the state. Union City's high school attendance was consistently better than in the other Abbott districts, ranging between 92 to 95 percent between 1994–95 and 2002–03. The high school attendance rate remained at about 92 percent

across the state. High school attendance was highest in the wealthiest suburbs at about 95 percent in all years except 1999–00.

**Child and Youth Well-Being.** Children and youth who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy are better able to learn at school. Many of Abbott's supplemental programs have as their purpose to improve the well-being of children and youth of New Jersey's cities. School staff either provide direct services to children and their families or help them to link with needed services already provided in the community. Service provision and linkage are essential parts of the jobs of health and social services coordinators, parent-community coordinators, family liaisons, social workers, and guidance counselors, to name a few. As a central public institution of the urban community, schools play a critical role in ensuring the well-being of children and youth. Schools are not alone in their responsibility—parents, elected officials, and public and private agencies in the city must all play a role. As the African proverb so famously says: "It takes a whole village to raise a child."

FIGURE | 3.12

Student Attendance by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1994–95 to 2002–03



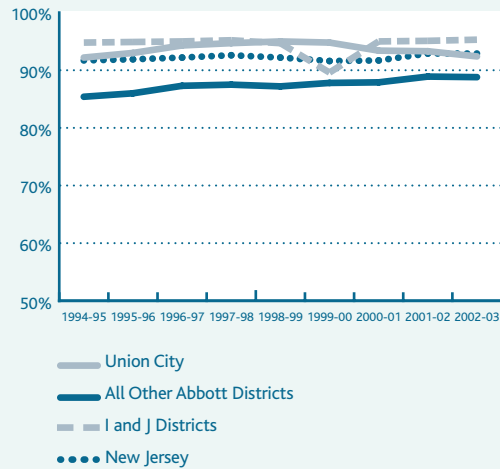
SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.13

Student Attendance by District Grouping:  
High Schools, 1994–95 to 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03

FIGURE | 3.14

Child and Youth Well-Being Indicators: Union City and New Jersey, 1997–2002

Indicator	Time Period	Union City				New Jersey	
		Time 1		Time 2		Time 1	Time 2
		NUMBER	PER 1,000	NUMBER	PER 1,000	PER 1,000	PER 1,000
Child Death	1997–2000	1	0.1	0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Teen Death	1997–2002	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.4	0.3
Births to Teens (10–14)	1998–2002	*	*	3	1.4	—	0.5
Births to Teens (15–19)	1998–2002	124	56.1	118	53.3	34.1	28.8
Child Abuse and Neglect	1998–2002	43	2.2	102	5.3	4.2	3.4

SOURCE | New Jersey Center for Health Statistics, 1998–2002; 2000 US Census; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004 *Kids Count*; Association for Children of New Jersey, 1997–2002 Kids Count

\* Unknown

➤ The City of Union City compared poorly with the state on two critical indicators of child and youth well-being. The teen birth rate among young women ages 15 to 19 remained steady, but was almost double the state average. The number of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases more than doubled between 1998 and 2002.

**School safety.** For many years, federal law has required every school and district to report the violence and vandalism that occur in schools. The New Jersey Department of Education compiles annual counts and reports them publicly. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) specified a standard of safety beyond which schools are defined as “persistently dangerous.” Under the “Unsafe School Choice Option,” the law provides that families of children who are victims of violence or who go to a persistently dangerous school may choose to send their child to another public school in the district or a charter school in the same city.

The New Jersey Department of Education considers how many violent and disruptive incidents occur over a three-year period to identify persistently dangerous schools.

There are two types of incidents counted.

They are:

- 1) *Category A Offenses*: firearm offenses; aggravated assaults on another student; assaults with a weapon on another student; and assaults on a school district staff member.
- 2) *Category B Offenses*: simple assault; weapons possession or sales (other than a firearm); gang fight; robbery or extortion; sex offense; terroristic threat; arson; sales or distribution of drugs; and harassment and bullying.

The persistently dangerous classification has been roundly criticized by many camps and on many grounds. The most important criticisms, for the purposes of this report, are related to reporting accuracy. Our first concern is the likelihood of under-reporting by schools and districts. Principals and superintendents who abide to the letter of the law feel that they are unfairly penalized while schools and districts that “fluff” their reports are not. We suspect that such “fluffing” is fairly widespread in New Jersey, considering the critical importance of school safety to parents and children and the attention given to the annual publication of such incidents. Under newly adopted regulations, school districts have the

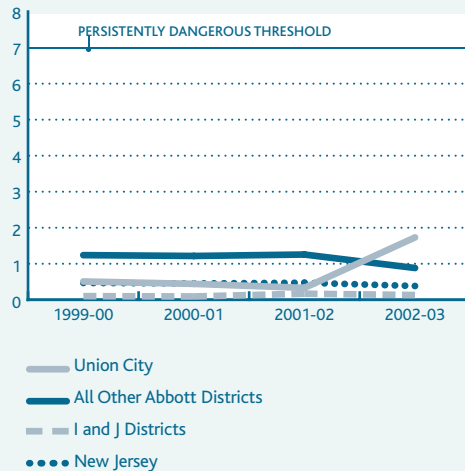
Children and youth who are physically, socially and emotionally healthy are better able to learn at school.

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.15

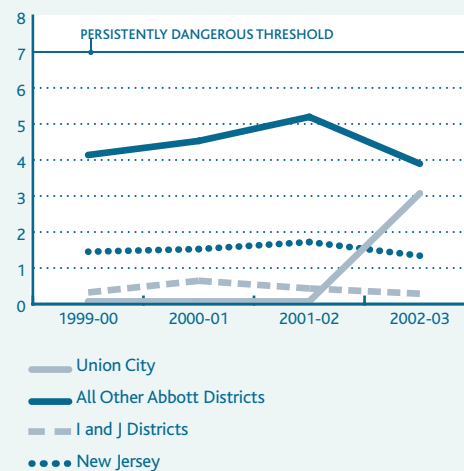
"Category A" Offenses by District Grouping:  
Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Program Support Services, Division of Student Services, 1999–2003

FIGURE | 3.16

"Category A" Offenses by District Grouping:  
High Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Program Support Services, Division of Student Services, 1999–2003

power to penalize any employee who knowingly falsifies incident reports.<sup>11</sup> The new regulations do not outline what powers the State Department of Education has to penalize school districts that knowingly falsify reports.

➤ None of Union City's schools qualified as persistently dangerous because of the number of Category A or Category B incidents.

**Student Achievement.** In New Jersey, the fourth grade test is called the ASK<sub>4</sub> (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge). It is essentially the same test as the former ESPA (Elementary School Proficiency Assessment). The 8th grade test is called the GEPA (Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment). The 11th grade test is the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Before 2001–02 high school students took a different test called the HSPT (High School Proficiency Test).

There are many ways to examine achievement test results; each way tells a part of the story. *Proficiency percentages* tell us how many students met standards for their grade level, but do not tell us about small or large changes that did not cross the state's official

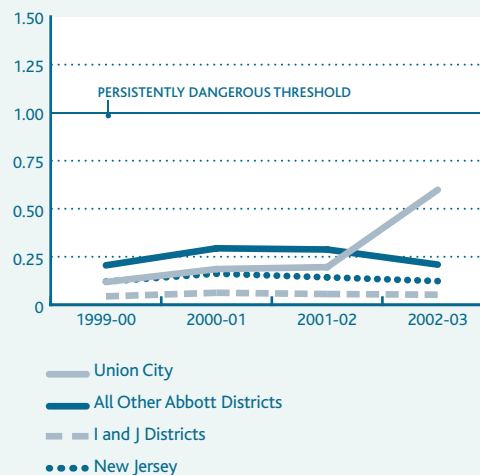
proficiency cutpoints. *Average test scores* show changes that may not register in a proficiency analysis, but do not tell us how many students met the state's standards.

Below, we present proficiency percentages and average scale scores for the language arts literacy and math tests at Grades 4, 8, and 11, respectively. First, we compare average scores over time for general education students in Union City, all other Abbotts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts in the state, and the state overall. Second, we show the percent of Union City's general education students scoring within the three proficiency categories over time. Finally, in recognition that district averages may mask important differences between schools, we highlight schools that did well on each test and schools that improved the most over time.<sup>12</sup>

➤ Union City's fourth graders made gains in language arts literacy and math, and scored well above the proficiency threshold between 1999–00 and 2002–03. Union City's general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores in many districts throughout the state.

FIGURE | 3.17

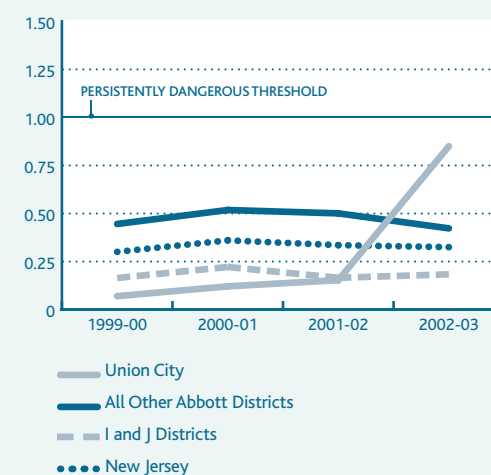
NCLB (Category B) Index by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Program Support Services, Division of Student Services, 1999–2003

FIGURE | 3.18

NCLB (Category B) Index by District Grouping: High Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



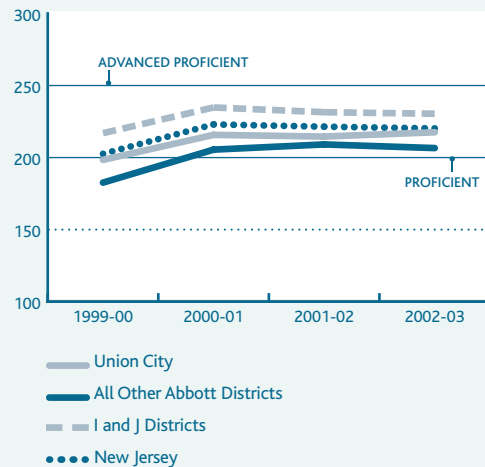
SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Program Support Services, Division of Student Services, 1999–2003

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.19

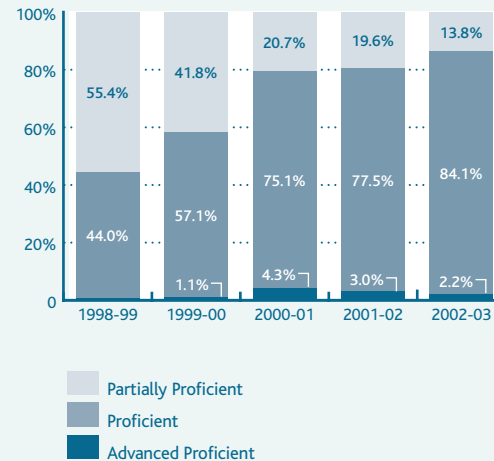
Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Score by District Grouping,  
1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

FIGURE | 3.20

Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency:  
Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

- Between 1998–99 and 2002–03, the percent of fourth graders scoring proficient or better on language arts literacy dramatically increased from 45 to 86 percent.
- Grade 4 math scores also improved over time. Union City's math scores improved from 208 in 1999–00 to 226 in 2002–03. On average, the district's children are scoring only 24 points below the "advanced proficient" threshold. The district's increase in Grade 4 math scores is larger than for any other district grouping analyzed. Grade 4 math scores in all other Abbotts and the state improved, though less so, and the scores in the wealthiest districts remained relatively stable.
- In 1998–99, about half (48%) of Union City's fourth grade students met the state's math standards compared to 76 percent in 2002–03. About one in three (33%) students scored in the advanced proficient range in 2002–03 compared to just eight percent in 1998–99.
- There was some variation among the schools on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test in 2002–03. Woodrow Wilson Elementary School was the highest performer with every general education student scoring proficient or better on the test that year. Roosevelt, Jefferson, and Gilmore Elementary Schools were also high performers with more than 90 percent of students meeting the state's standards.
- Improvement over time is, of course, an important indicator that a school is moving in the right direction: Robert Waters and Hudson

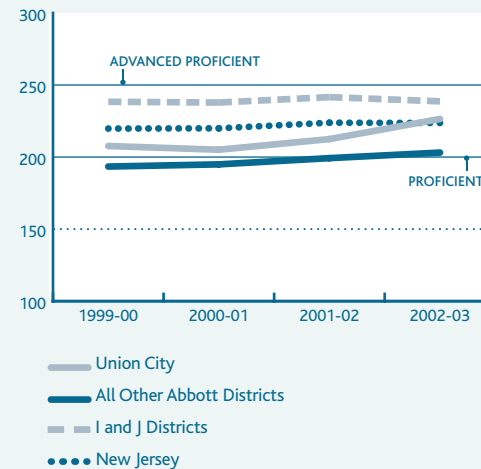


Elementary Schools showed the biggest gains in the average score of general education students on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

- Union City schools also scored well across the board on the Grade 4 math test. At Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, every general education student that took the Grade 4 math test scored proficient or better. Robert Waters stands out among the elementary schools as having improved the most between 1999–00 and 2002–03 with a 45-point gain in the average score of general education students.
- When compared to the array of instructional programs and reforms for elementary school students, Abbott has yet to provide for students in the middle and high school grades. Overall, Grade 8 average scores have remained stable, above the proficient level, between 1999–00 and 2002–03. Ninety percent of eighth graders scored proficient or better in language arts literacy in 2002–03; 71 percent met or exceeded the state's math standards that same year.
- Performance on the 2002–03 Grade 8 tests did not vary a great deal among Union City schools. In language arts literacy, the highest performers were: Robert Waters and Woodrow Wilson Elementary Schools, and Columbus Middle School.<sup>13</sup> In each of these schools, more than 90 percent of eighth grade general education students scored proficient or better.

FIGURE | 3.21

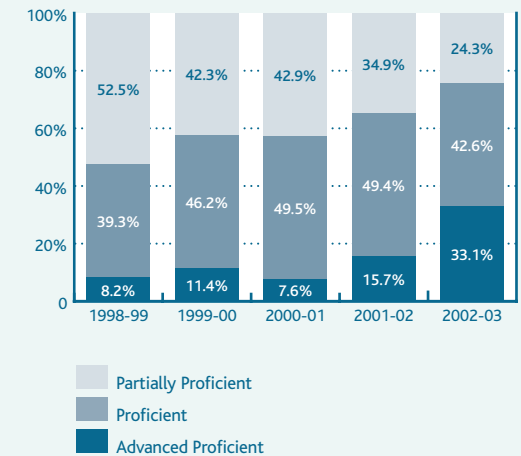
Grade 4 Math Average Score by District Grouping 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

FIGURE | 3.22

Grade 4 Math Proficiency: Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



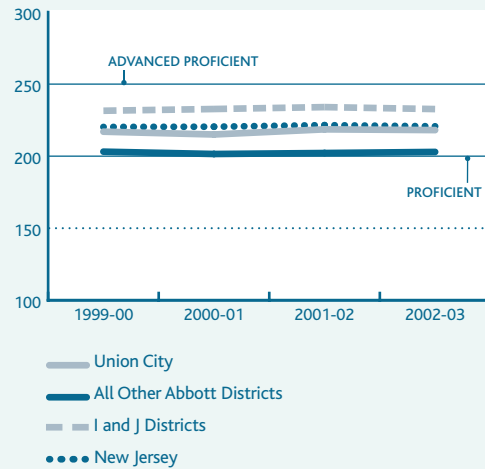
SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.23

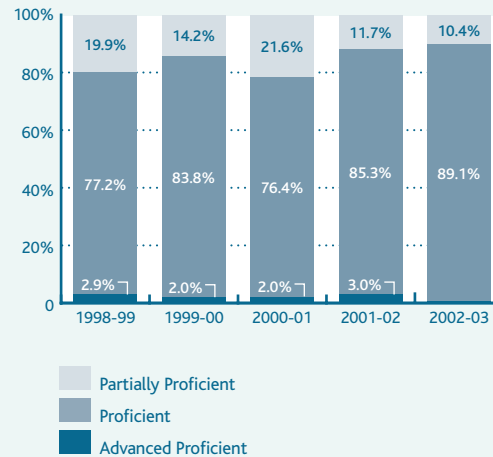
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Score by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2000–01

FIGURE | 3.24

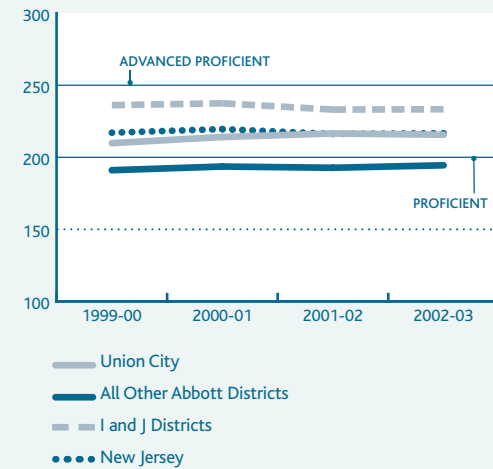
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2000–01

FIGURE | 3.25

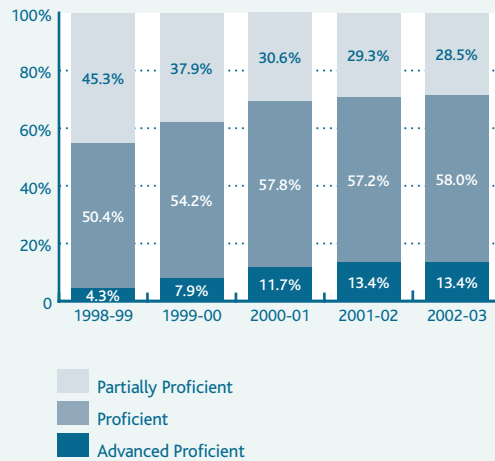
Grade 8 Math Average Score by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card 1999–00 to 2000–01

FIGURE | 3.26

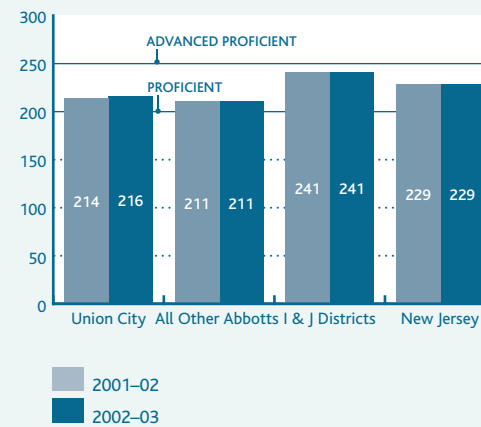
Grade 8 Math Proficiency: Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999-00 to 2002-03; School Report Card, 1999-00 to 2000-01

FIGURE | 3.27

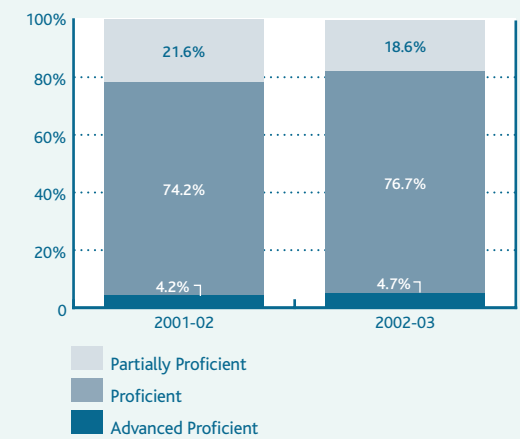
Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Average Score by District Grouping 2001–02 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2002-03; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

FIGURE | 3.28

Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Union City, 2001–02 to 2002–03



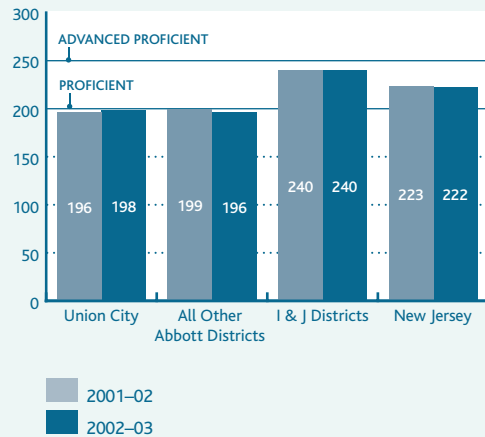
SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2002-03; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.29

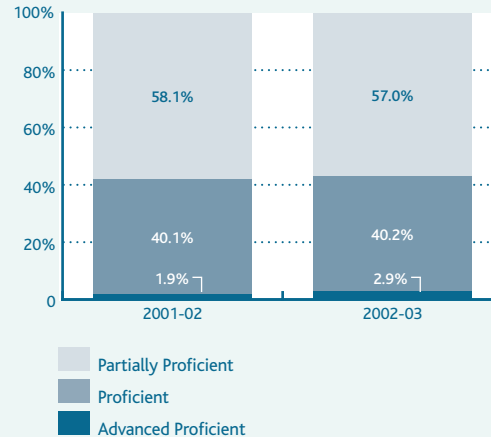
Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Average Score by District Grouping, 2001-02 to 2002-03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2002-03; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

FIGURE | 3.30

Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Proficiency: Union City, 2001-02 to 2002-03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2002-03; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

- Edison Elementary and Columbus Middle Schools were the highest performers in Grade 8 math: more than 80 percent of their general education students scored proficient or better in 2002-03.
- Two schools showed eight-point gains in the average score on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test between 1999-00 and 2002-03: Robert Waters and Roosevelt Elementary Schools. General education eighth graders at Roosevelt Elementary School had the biggest point gain on the math test during those years (31 points) followed by Edison Elementary School with a 12-point gain.
- On average, Union City's Grade 11 language arts literacy scores were above the proficiency level in 2001-02 and 2002-03 with about 80 percent of the district's 11th graders meeting the state proficiency standard or above. Districtwide, Grade 11 math scores remained below the proficiency level, with less than half of students meeting state standards. Like the nationwide stagnation in Grade 11 test scores, these are probably the result of our relative lack of attention to reforming high schools in New Jersey. Until recently, the Abbott remedies have provided less in the way of real instructional reforms at the middle or high school levels when compared to what has been available for younger children.

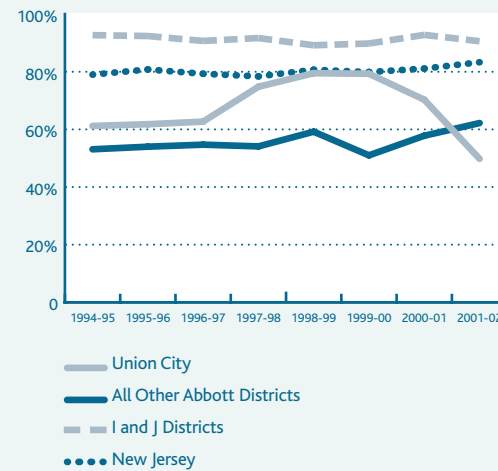
➤ Performance on the Grade 11 test differed only a little between Union City's two high schools. Both were high performers in language arts literacy in 2002–03, although a somewhat higher percentage of students scored proficient at Union Hill (86%) than at Emerson (78%). Fewer than half of the general education students in both high schools scored at least proficient in math, however. Union Hill's students improved from 2001–02 to 2002–03 with a four-point gain in the average score of general education students on both tests.

**High School Completion.** High school completion is an important event that greatly affects young people's chances for social and economic improvement. Because of this, and because it is the culmination of a school system's responsibilities to its community's residents, graduation is a major indicator of educational success. In New Jersey, there was no official way to estimate graduation rates until recently. We estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index.

➤ According to our estimate, the district's cumulative promotion index decreased from 61 percent in 1994–95 to 50 percent in 2001–02.

FIGURE | 3.31

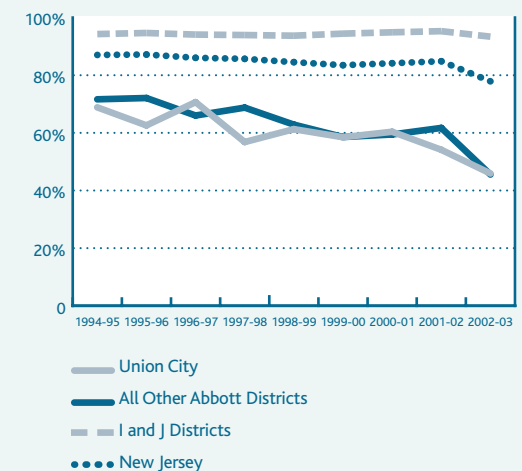
Cumulative Promotion Index by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2001–02



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

FIGURE | 3.32

Graduation by Traditional Grade 11 Exam (SRA) by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

## 3

## K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.33

Summary Table. Abbott K-12 Programs: Benchmark Status In Union City

Benchmark	Status
Kindergarten-Grade 3 maximum class size: 21	Met
Grades 4 and 5 maximum class size: 23	Met
Grades 6 through 12 maximum class size: 24	Not Met
Abbott districts have funding parity with the I & J districts	Met
Student to computer ratio is 5 to 1	Met
2003-04 Grade 4 Achievement Tests*: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 68% percent score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 53% score at least proficient in math.	Met in: Roosevelt School Robert Waters School
2003-04 Grade 8 Achievement Tests: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 58% score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 39% score at least proficient in math.	Met in: Roosevelt School Christopher Columbus School Robert Waters School
2003-04 Grade 11 Achievement Tests: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 73% score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 55% score at least proficient in math.	Not Met
To avoid being considered "persistently dangerous", schools must have an average of less than 7 or more Category "A" offenses for three consecutive years.	Elementary School: Met Secondary School: Met
To avoid being considered "persistently dangerous" schools must have an NCLB Index rating less than 1.	Elementary School: Met Secondary School: Met

\* The New Jersey Department of Education provided 2003-04 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data several months prior to releasing statewide 2003-04 achievement test scores. Therefore, we include the 2003-04 AYP data to provide readers with the most updated information available, while achievement test score data is only analyzed through 2002-03.

Part of this decrease occurred as a result of a large increase in Grade 9 enrollment in 2001–02. The decrease also reflects a lower rate of promotion from grade to grade in the two district high schools that year. By this measure, high schools across the state graduated about 80 percent of their students and the wealthiest districts graduated about 90 percent. The other Abbott districts graduated about 53 percent in 1994–95 but that figure rose to about 62 percent in 2001–02. More needs to be done to assess the true graduation rates in New Jersey high schools.

**Routes to Graduation.** High school achievement tests assess if students have mastered the content and skills outlined in New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. Before 2001–02, it was assumed that graduating general education students mastered the content standards and passed the traditional Grade 11 exam. Since then, New Jersey high school students who fail one or more sections of the traditional exam can still earn a standard, academic diploma if they take and pass the alternative exam, the

Special Review Assessment (SRA). People disagree about alternative routes to graduation like the SRA. Critics argue that students must show that they have mastered curriculum standards to graduate from high school. Supporters praise New Jersey's SRA and argue that states with a single, high-stakes graduation test have a strong incentive to push the students out of school who cannot pass the test. We believe that the people of New Jersey can do both: maintain high academic standards and make sure that all students have the opportunity to earn academic diplomas.

7. In Union City and the other Abbott districts, the percentage of students who graduated by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam decreased since 1994–95. In Union City, 69 percent of the class of 1994–95 graduated after passing the traditional exam. By 2002–03, less than half graduated this way.

#### Endnotes

7. Reading First is a program intended to help all students to become successful early readers. The U.S. Department of Education funds states and local school districts to develop high-quality reading instruction in Kindergarten through Grade 3. The program is especially intended for use by low-performing schools.

8. Federal law on "highly qualified teachers" applies to teachers in the following "core content areas:" English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, world languages, civics and government, economics, arts (music, theatre, and art), history, and geography. New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards that align with these content areas are: language arts literacy, science, mathematics, social studies, world languages, and the visual and performing arts.

9. We focus on general education funding as the foundation of a school district's budget. Most school districts also receive categorical aid from the federal and/or state governments to

fund supportive programs and services for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other special needs populations.

10. As of school year 2004–05, Abbott Parity Aid is known as Educational Opportunity Aid (EOA) and Additional Abbott Aid is known as Discretionary Educational Opportunity Aid (DEOA).

11. The newly adopted regulation guiding penalizing school employees who falsify violence and vandalism incident reports is New Jersey Administrative Code 6:16, Section 5.3.

12. Here, a school is identified as a high performer if its general education students met or exceeded the proficiency threshold set by the New Jersey Department of Education in compliance with the "adequate yearly progress" provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

13. Columbus students began attending José Martí Middle School in 2003–04.





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Many of New Jersey's urban schools are unsafe, overcrowded, and unsuitable for helping students to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Under Abbott, the state is required to address this situation. In 2000, the legislature enacted the Abbott School Facilities Construction Program, with with several key features.

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## 4

## School Facilities Construction

The LRFP process was a unique chance for school districts to assess their existing schools, and where needed, plan to build better ones that would accommodate children's needs and improved instructional practices.

The key features include:

- Priority to health and safety repairs;
- Long range plans developed by districts with community partners;
- More classrooms to eliminate overcrowding;
- Space to provide preschool to all eligible three- and four-year-olds;
- 100 percent state-financed for approved costs; and
- Schools to accommodate state-of-the-art teaching and learning.

#### The First-Round Long-Range Facilities Plans

The first step of the Abbott school facilities construction program was to develop a districtwide Long-Range Facilities Plan. The New Jersey Department of Education issued guidelines in September 1998 to help Abbott districts develop them. Districts' final plans were due to the state just six months later in March 1999. LRFP development involved several procedures, including:

- Projecting future enrollments;
- Assessing the safety and educational adequacy of current schools;
- Planning future educational needs, with a set minimum standards as a guideline;

- Engaging parents and other community members in the process; and
- Planning for "swing space" while construction is under way.

The LRFP process was a unique chance for school districts to assess their existing schools and, where needed, plan to build better ones that would accommodate children's needs and improved instructional practices. The development of the first-round LRFPs did not go very smoothly for a number of reasons. Most districts did not have time to assess their current educational programs. They also did not have the expertise to translate educational practices into new building designs.

- Union City's first-round long-range plan included a total of 18 projects. Eleven of the original projects were to be new schools; one existing school was to be rehabilitated, and six schools were to be converted from another use.
- Union City was the only district in New Jersey to renovate a private preschool provider-owned building under its first-round Long Range Facilities Plan. Provider building quality should continue to be addressed during the upcoming, second-round planning process.

### Leadership

**Facilities Advisory Board.** Each Abbott district was required by the New Jersey Department of Education's guidelines to assemble a facilities advisory board (FAB) to guide the development of the LRFP. The board was to include parents, teachers, principals, community representatives, an architect, an engineer, and a staff person from the New Jersey Department of Education. The FAB's role was to review and refine the recommendations made by an educational facilities specialist and architect and recommend the plan for adoption by the school board. The Education Law Center has recommended that FABs continue to meet until plans are fully implemented to seek input and guide the district-wide planning, design, and construction of school facilities.

- Union City's FAB is one of the very few in the Abbott districts that continues to meet and function to this day. Members include parents, teachers, non-instructional staff, and students (high school students are providing input as the new high school is being designed). The FAB meets on an as-needed basis, typically by grade

structure (preschool/elementary, middle, and high school), to address specific issues around construction projects.

### Progress and Challenges

**Progress.** The first LRFPs in the state were approved by the New Jersey Department of Education in 2000; the most pressing health and safety projects got seriously underway after Governor McGreevey created a new state agency, the New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation (SCC), to oversee the whole process in 2002.<sup>14,15</sup>

For Abbott districts, LRFPs were developed and approved by their school boards, and then submitted to and approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. Once LRFPs are approved, districts prioritize projects and submit them one by one to the New Jersey Department of Education. The Department of Education checks each project for compliance with the approved LRFP and estimates project costs.

From the outset, all parties acknowledged that the Abbott school construction program would be a vast undertaking. As with any

FIGURE | 4.1

#### Union City's First-Round Facilities Plan Overview

	PROJECTS	
	Number	Percent
New Schools	11	61.1%
Rehab/Additions	1	5.6%
Conversion	6	33.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

SOURCE | Education Law Center communications with the School Construction Corporation, New Jersey Department of Education, and individual districts.

## 4

## School Facilities Construction

FIGURE | 4.2

## Overview of Union City's Current Projects

School	Type	Estimated Completion
Jose Marti M.S.	New School	Complete
35th Street Uptown M.S.	New School	
Emerson High School	New Demonstration Project	—
34th St Uptown E.S. #1	New School	December 2007
Columbus K-5	New School	September 2007
Gilmore PreK-5	New School	September 2007
Magnet K-8	New School	—
Schlem ECC	Conversion	December 2005

SOURCE | Education Law Center communications with the School Construction Corporation, New Jersey Department of Education, and individual districts.

FIGURE | 4.3

## Status of Facilities Projects: Union City &amp; All Other Abbott Districts\*

	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts
	NUMBER	PERCENT	PERCENT
To Be Submitted to NJDOE	10	55.6%	61.3%
Pre-Development	2	11.1%	19.7%
In Design	5	27.8%	7.5%
Construction Contract Awarded	0	0.0%	9.2%
Completed	1	5.6%	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

SOURCE | Education Law Center communications with the School Construction Corporation, New Jersey Department of Education, and individual districts.

\* As of September 2004

effort this size, it will take a long time. Many schools operate year-round and the district must have the space to provide an adequate educational program while facilities projects proceed. Even though the state finances and oversees the process, the district must take great care in pacing the submission of its projects and moving them through the pipeline to completion.

- As of September 2004, eight (44%) of Union City's 18 school construction projects were in the pipeline toward completion, with none in construction and one completed.
- At least part of the district's success with school facilities construction can be credited to the strong, close involvement and support of the Mayor and city council, particularly around finding suitable land sites.
- Union City was one of six districts awarded a "Demonstration Project": a new school to replace Emerson High School and an athletic complex at the site of Roosevelt Stadium.
- Through its designation as a School Renaissance Zone, Union City will also have a new magnet school.

**Challenges.** There are many ways for a school construction project to get hung up on its way to completion. The New Jersey Department of Education and the district may disagree about spaces, forcing a prolonged series of negotiations. The SCC may determine, as a result of its own review, that the district should build a new school rather than renovate the existing one. The school district may have difficulty getting the land needed to build new schools.

➤ Two school projects were initially delayed because the state wanted the existing buildings to be renovated instead of demolished due to their historical landmark status. This issue was resolved when an agreement was made to remove and preserve certain parts of those buildings.

#### Endnotes

14. Abbott districts were required to address emergency school facilities defects which would directly affect the “health and safety” of children in these buildings. Health and safety projects include: roof repairs, window replacement, asbestos removal, and boiler repairs.

15. The SCC is a quasi-public agency housed within the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

## Next Steps for Education Stakeholders

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### Next Steps for Education Stakeholders

- **Read the report.** Try to make the time to read the whole technical report: it contains a lot of useful context and information. It is available on the Education Law Center website: [www.edlawcenter.org](http://www.edlawcenter.org).
- **Talk about what you learned.** Discuss what you read with your friends, family, congregation members, and work colleagues
- **Dig deeper.** Ask why and how. If you read about something that pleases or concerns you, learn more about why and how it came to be that way. Ask about quality. The indicators may tell you that a program or practice exists but not how well it is being implemented.
- **Look at other sources of information.** The Abbott Indicators are comprehensive, but not exhaustive. Other sources of information will be needed to get a clear idea of what the schools are doing. For example, low-performing Abbott schools are required to undergo an external review process called Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA). If your school had a CAPA review, you can read the resulting report.
- **Look for meeting announcements.** Look for events and meetings where other people in your community will be discussing this report in particular or school improvement in general. You can find out about them on local television stations and in local newspapers.
- **Take part.** Attend local meetings and engage in conversations about what you learned with your neighbors, school and district staff, and your school board members.
- **Push for solutions.** Remember the goal is to support school improvement. It is not enough to identify strengths and weaknesses. Once you talk about the findings with your neighbors, decide what needs to be done and help make sure that it happens.
- **Stay involved.** School improvement is a multiyear investment. It will take your continued commitment.



## Abbott Indicators List

The following is the list of Abbott indicators in the technical version of the report. The indicators included in this summary report are highlighted in bold. Findings from all indicators are included wherever they were available and of sufficient quality.

### The Community and Students

What conditions of living and learning in the community served by the district might affect children's and youth's readiness to learn?

- Female-headed households with children
- Adult educational attainment
- Labor force participation
- Unemployment rate
- Median household income
- People living below poverty level
- Children living below poverty level
- Foreign-born population
- Rent-income ratio
- Vacant housing
- Violent crimes

What student characteristics might affect the nature and extent of services offered by the district?

- Eligibility free-/reduced-price lunch
- Race/ethnicity
- English language learners
- Students with disabilities
- Immigrant students
- Homelessness
- Student mobility rate

### The Preschool Program

#### Opportunities for Students to Learn

How close is the district to achieving universal enrollment for all three- and four- year-olds?

- Percent of preschool universe served (Census/ASSA)
- Total preschool population served
- Number of providers by type
- Waiting list
- Head Start inclusion
- Outreach activities
- Identification of unserved families

Is the district providing a "high-quality" preschool education to all eligible children?

- **Programs for children with disabilities**
  - Preschool Child Study Team (CST)
- Curriculum development
  - **Curricula used**
  - People involved
  - Considerations/inputs to adoption
  - Review frequency
  - Alignment to *Expectations*
- Transition activities (into preschool and Kindergarten)
- Health and social services
  - Direct services offered
  - Methods for assessment
  - Referral methods
  - Transportation services
- **ECERS-R quality scores**



## Abbott Indicators List

### Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

Are preschool programs adequately staffed and are staff adequately supported?

- Number of teachers
- Educational attainment of preschool teachers
- Preschool teacher certification
- Preschool teacher experience
- Preschool teacher salary
- Performance evaluation
- Professional development opportunities
  - Criteria
  - Methods
  - Joint preschool-Kindergarten professional development

### Budget

Are the preschool programs adequately funded?

- Preschool revenues

### Leadership

To what extent does the district's ECEAC represent its stakeholders and participate in the district's early childhood program planning and decision-making?

- Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC)
  - Representation
  - Training
  - Frequency of meetings
  - Involvement in program planning, budgeting, and facilities planning
  - Other activities

### Student Outcomes

Have preschool students developed the skills they will need to continue to learn and develop in Kindergarten?

- Assessment methods used
- PPVT-III or ELAS scores

### K-12 Education

#### Opportunities for Student Learning

Do our schools provide high-quality instruction in a range of content areas adequate to ensure that students can meet content standards?

- Whole School Reform
  - Model chosen
  - Approval of model
  - Year adopted
  - Reason for adoption
  - Adoption procedures
- Class size
- Programs for children with disabilities
- Curriculum development
  - Curricula used
  - People involved
  - Considerations/inputs to adoption
  - Review frequency
  - Method for ensuring alignment across grade levels
- College preparatory course
  - AP courses
  - AP course eligibility
  - Availability of college preparatory sequence (math and science)

## Abbott Indicators List

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### Student and Family Supports

Is the school providing programs and services to support students' well-being and academic performance in accordance with demonstrated need?

- Full day Kindergarten
  - Class size
- Early literacy
  - 90-minute reading blocks
  - Small group/one-on-one tutoring
- Health and social services
  - Referral and coordination
  - On-site services
- Nutrition program
- Access to technology
- Student-computer ratio
- Alternative education program
- College and work transition programs
- After-school programs
- Summer programs
- Art and Music programs

Are strategies in place to ensure effective parent outreach and involvement?

- Parent involvement policies and practices

### Teacher Qualifications and Supports

Are our schools adequately staffed and supported?

- Student-teacher ratio
- Faculty attendance
- Highly qualified teachers
- Abbott staffing patterns
- Professional development
  - Description of instructionally-linked, curriculum-specific training
  - Inputs to selecting professional development opportunities
- Performance evaluation criteria and methods
- Frequency of teacher networking and collaboration
- Other teacher supports

### Budget

Are our schools adequately funded?

- Property wealth
- Local tax rates
  - Average tax rates
  - School tax rates
- General education budget
- Supplemental programs budget
- Additional Abbott Aid application process

### Leadership

Do our schools and does our district have adequate and representative leadership?

- School Leadership Councils
  - Representation of stakeholder groups
  - Training in roles and responsibilities
  - Frequency of meetings
  - Involvement in planning and budgeting
  - Other activities
- Abbott Advisory Council
  - Representation of stakeholder groups
  - Frequency of meetings
  - Involvement in planning and budgeting
  - Other activities

### Student Outcomes

How physically, socially, and emotionally healthy are our children?

- Child death
- Teen death
- Teen births
- Substantiated abuse and neglect cases
- School violence and vandalism rates

## Abbott Indicators List

Are all students in Kindergarten to grade 12 learning according to statewide standards?

➤ **Student attendance**

➤ Suspension rates

➤ **Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy and Math Assessments**

• Mean scores

• Proficiency percentages

• AYP status

➤ **Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy and Math Assessments**

• Mean scores

• Proficiency percentages

• AYP status

➤ **Grade 11 Language Arts Literacy and Math Assessments**

• Mean scores

• Proficiency percentages

• AYP status

➤ **High and low performing schools**

➤ **Kindergarten through grade 2**

• Early Language Assessment System scores

• Terra Nova Edition 2, where available

➤ **Graduation**

• Estimated rates (cumulative promotion index)

• Graduation via HSPA

• Graduation via SRA

➤ **College Entrance**

• SAT participation

• Verbal and math mean scores

### School Facilities Construction

#### Healthy, Safe and Educationally Adequate Schools

What are the district's long-range facilities plans?

➤ **LRFP approval status**

➤ **Number and type of planned projects**

➤ **Process of development**

How much progress has been made toward completing educational facilities projects in the districts?

➤ **Plans to upgrade preschool facilities**

➤ Status of projects (complete, construction, design, predevelopment, not yet submitted)

➤ Estimated completion dates

➤ Cooperation with municipal partners

➤ Community input

➤ Barriers to progress

To what extent is there adequate, representative leadership that encourages meaningful public participation for school facilities planning and project implementation?

➤ **Facilities Advisory Board**

• Representation of stakeholder groups

• Frequency of meeting (beyond LRFP submission)

• Involvement in plan development

• Transparency to public

• Other activities

## District and Community Reviewer Letters



STANLEY SANGER  
SUPERINTENDENT  
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201.348.5851 • FAX 201.330.1736

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Dr. Erain Applewhite-Coney  
Project Co-Director  
Education Law Center  
60 Park Place, Suite 300  
Newark, N.J. 07102

Re: Union City Public Schools 2004 State Standardized Test Scores

Dear Dr. Applewhite-Coney:

The vision of Union City Public Schools, in accordance with the "No Child Left Behind" federal mandate, emphasizes the attainment of proficiency for all students. In 2003-2004 this vision was manifested by special support for those requiring particular assistance, especially English Language Learners (Limited English Proficient, LEP) and Special Education (SE) students. The 2003-2004 school year also saw the implementation of a secondary action plan designed to improve performance at the high school level, especially in the area of math.

Union City's vision was realized, as measured by the outstanding performance of its students on the three operational State of New Jersey standardized tests, the Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Grade 4 (ASK 4), the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA 11).

At grade 4, the passing rates for All and General Education students vastly exceeded the State of New Jersey Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators. The passing rates for All students were within three percentage points of those of All students statewide in both LAL and Math. **General Education students in Union City outsourced General Education students statewide in Math. The passing rates of the subgroups LEP and SE exceeded the passing rates of those subgroups statewide.** All Union City subgroups vastly out-performed their counterparts in other DFG A and Special Needs districts. Compared to 2003, passing rates of All, General Education and LEP students increased in LAL. Passing rates of All, General Education, LEP and SE students increased in Math.

UNION CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2004 ASK 4 (GRADE 4)								
	LAL				MATH			
	GEN	SE	LEP	ALL	GEN	SE	LEP	ALL
District	87.0	24.2	51.7	67.5	82.9	47.4	60.7	70.0
State Objective	68	68	68	68	53	53	53	53
State	90.3	49.1	48.7	82.2	78.4	46.4	47.2	72.1
DFG A	74.3	23.0	44.6	62.8	59.5	27.2	44.7	52.9
Special Needs	75.4	25.3	45.1	64.1	60.7	28.3	45.2	53.8

At grade 8, the passing rates for All and General Education students vastly exceeded the State of New Jersey Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators. The passing rates for All students were within three percentage points of the state in LAL and exceeded those of the State in Math. **General Education students in Union City outsourced General Education students statewide in LAL and Math. The passing rates of the subgroup LEP exceeded of the passing rate of that subgroup statewide in LAL and Math.** The passing rates of the subgroup SE exceeded the passing rates of that subgroup statewide in Math, and were within three percentage points in LAL. All Union City subgroups vastly out-performed their counterparts in other DFG A and Special Needs districts. Compared to 2003, passing rates of All, General Education, SE and LEP students increased in both LAL and Math.

UNION CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2004 GEPA (GRADE 8)								
	LAL				MATH			
	GEN	SE	LEP	ALL	GEN	SE	LEP	ALL
District	92.5	27.1	30.2	68.3	80.6	29.5	35.8	62.3
State Objective	58	58	58	58	39	39	39	39
State	82.5	27.6	17.5	71.8	71.3	20.8	23.6	61.7
DFG A	55.2	8.5	14.7	42.4	41.9	7.8	19.6	33.2
Special Needs	57.8	9.1	14.6	44.6	43.5	8.2	19.4	34.5

## District and Community Reviewer Letters

At grade 11, the passing rates for General Education students exceeded the State of New Jersey Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators in LAL and Math, while the passing rate for All students were within five percentage points of those indicators. **The passing rates of LEP students exceeded those of the state in LAL, and were within three percentage points of the state in Math.** All Union City subgroups vastly out-performed their counterparts in other DFG A and Special Needs districts. Compared to 2003, passing rates for All, General Education, SE and LEP students were higher in both LAL and Math. Passing rates of General Education students increased by 8.3% in LAL and 21.2% in Math. Passing rates of All students were up 12.3% in LAL and 18.3% in Math.

UNION CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2004 HSPA (GRADE 11)								
	LAL				MATH			
	GEN	SE*	LEP	ALL	GEN	SE*	LEP	ALL
District	89.7	39.3	29.2	69.4	64.3	19.4	27.0	50.1
State Objective	73	73	73	73	55	55	55	55
State	91.6	40.8	24.1	82.2	78.9	26.8	29.3	70.1
DFG A	72.4	13.6	18.2	58.0	46.5	5.6	19.3	37.6
Special Needs	75.1	15.3	19.5	60.6	49.6	6.3	20.1	40.2
* Combined passing rate of SE and IEP Exempt								

In 2004-2005 the Union City Public School District continues to provide all its students with the skills needed to attain the State of New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The district has maintained and strengthened its Bilingual and Support Services programs designed to meet the needs of its English Language Learners and Special Needs populations. The secondary action plan, now in its second year, continues and has been expanded with added components, including a plan to enhance the transition between the middle and high school grades. As it has in the past, the district continues its efforts to achieve educational excellence.

We thank you for the opportunity to participate in ELC Indicators Report and look forward to working with you in the future. This report validates the efforts the district has made. We look forward to the challenge and are confident that our educational design will promote sustained academic achievement for all Union City students.

Sincerely yours,

  
Stanley Sanger  
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: D. Sciarra  
L. Hirsch

## Acknowledgements

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The Abbott Indicators Reports were created through the efforts of a great many contributors. We list those contributors below, with apologies to the inevitable few whom we inadvertently left out.

This report was written by Lesley Hirsch and Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D, Co-Directors of the Abbott Indicators Project at the Education Law Center. Letitia Logan of the Education Law Center also made significant contributions to the writing.

Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D. conducted the Union City interviews. Lesley Hirsch and Letitia Logan collected and analyzed the data with guidance and assistance from Judith Pollack and Michael Weiss, of Educational Testing Services, Inc.

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Adriana Birne, Principal, Early Childhood Program

Frank DeRiso, Supervisor, Data

Martha O'Connell, Elementary Supervisor, Office of Academic Programs

Gary Ramella, Director, Information Services

Stanley Sanger, Superintendent

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**Martha O’Connell, Abbott Advisory Council Chair**  
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### Report Reviewers

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At each pilot site, we provided district staff with the draft report for review and assembled an all-volunteer community review team. All reviewers were invited to recommend changes. We incorporated some of their

## Acknowledgements

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**Frank Cocuzza, New Jersey Education Association**

**Robert Dorsett, New Jersey Education Association**

**Roxanne Dworak, Miftaahul Uloom Learning Center**

**Jo Ann Juncker, Ed.D., New Jersey City University**

**Marciano Rodriguez, Parent**

**Michael Shababb, North Hudson Community Action Corporation**

The comprehensiveness and usefulness of this report is a testament to the many contributions listed here. Any errors or omissions are, of course, the full responsibility of the primary authors.



## About the Education Law Center

The Education Law Center (ELC) was established in 1973 to advocate on behalf of New Jersey's public school children for access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws. ELC works to improve educational opportunities for low-income students and students with disabilities through public education, policy initiatives, research, communications and, when necessary, legal action.

ELC serves as counsel to the plaintiffs in the Abbott v. Burke case—more than 300,000 preschool and school-age children in 31 urban school districts throughout New Jersey. Through the Abbott decisions, the New Jersey Supreme Court has established an unprecedented legal framework of remedial measures to assure the rights of urban public school children to an adequate education. The remedies ordered by the Court include standards-based education and reform supported

by foundational funding equal to New Jersey's most affluent suburbs; supplemental funding for programs that address the social and health needs of students, whole school reform; school based management; high quality preschool for all three and four year olds; and safe and educationally adequate school facilities. ELC's successes in Abbott have resulted in an additional \$800 million in foundational state aid each year for the Abbott districts and schools, \$300 million in preschool aid, and \$6 billion in school construction funds. The New York Times editorialized that Abbott represents "the most important equal education ruling since Brown v. Board of Education" (April 30, 2002).

ELC also operates the Student Rights Project (SRP) to protect the educational rights of all students, focusing on students with disabilities. SRP is the only non-profit, legal assistance program in New Jersey that specializes in education law and provides free legal representation to income-eligible parents, guardians and caregivers of students

in disputes involving K-12 public education. Because demand for SRP's services far exceeds attorney resources, SRP gives priority to low-income students who attend school in poor urban or rural districts.

Please direct any questions about this report or the Abbott Indicators Project to:

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