TRACKING PROGRESS | ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Abbott Indicators Technical Report

Trenton

NEW JERSEY

EDUCATION LAW CENTER

SPRING 2005

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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. All of 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 provide an education that at least equips students with the 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.

Executive Summary

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, and advocates, 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 Trenton'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.

Trenton Abbott Indicators Project and Report

Trenton is one of 31 urban school districts in New Jersey known as Abbott districts. As an Abbott district, Trenton receives funding to equalize its per student general education budget with the most successful suburban school districts in the state. Trenton'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

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indicators, the Trenton Abbott Indicators Report presents the status of these reforms and student progress to date.

The Trenton Abbott Indicators Report and three others we are releasing this year in Camden, Newark, and Union City 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 Trenton. The project goals are to:

1. *Inform* people in Trenton about the status of school improvement efforts and student outcomes.
2. *Engage* people in Trenton 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.

Key findings of the Trenton Abbott Indicators Report are presented below. First, we list indicators about Trenton 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."[1] Ultimately, maximizing *opportunities for students to learn* is the main focus of school improvement efforts. Other elements of effective schooling are needed to provide students with these opportunities. These are: *student and family supports*, *teacher qualifications and supports*, *budget*, *leadership*, and *school facilities*.

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

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all of the elements of effective schooling have been implemented. In the full report that follows, all indicators findings are presented with accompanying figures and discussion.

Key Findings

The Community and Students

- At 11 percent in 2000, the unemployment rate was almost twice as high in Trenton as it was statewide.
- In 2000, more than one in five Trenton residents lived below the poverty level compared to eight percent of residents statewide. That same year, more than one quarter of Trenton's children were in families earning below the poverty level compared to 11 percent throughout New Jersey.
- In 2002, the violent crime rate was more than four times higher in Trenton than it was throughout the state.
- In 2003–04, 61 percent of Trenton's public school students were eligible for free-or reduced-price lunch compared to about one in four students statewide.
- Trenton students move more than New Jersey students on average:17 percent 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.

The Preschool Program

- By 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to enroll 90 percent of their eligible populations of three-and four-year-olds. The Trenton preschool program is on its way to meeting the state's 2005–06 enrollment requirements. The program served 79 percent of the eligible population in 2003–04 and was expected to serve all eligible children in 2004–05.
- 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. More than half of Trenton's 61 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms. The remaining 43 percent were enrolled in a separate school. The data suggest that the district reported students enrolled at the Step Ahead Program as attending a separate school. According to a community member who reviewed this report, Step Ahead serves only children with disabilities despite efforts to develop an inclusionary program. If so, then all of Trenton's preschoolers with disabilities are educated in self-contained classrooms.

- Currently, Trenton's preschool providers use a variety of curricula. In 2005, the district plans to institute a uniform, research-based approach across program locations. As of the date of this writing, the new curriculum had not been selected.
- In 2004–05, all preschool teachers working in the district or private provider programs had earned their four-year degrees as required under Abbott.
- Preschool teachers were on their way to meeting the Abbott certification requirement. In 2004–05, all but one teacher in all of the programs had earned at least provisional early childhood certification.
- Special education certified teachers only taught in self-contained special education classrooms in 2004–05. However, there were no special education certified teachers at Step Ahead, where some preschoolers with disabilities were enrolled.
- In Trenton, the average preschool teacher salary was $47,797. On average, preschool teachers in district-run programs earned $20,000 more than teachers in any other type of provider setting. Teachers working in the district's programs had more years of schooling and spent more years in their current positions on average than their counterparts in the other provider settings.
- Preschool and Kindergarten teachers did not have common planning time when they could coordinate their approaches and plan for student transition.
- At $12,183 per preschooler in 2003–04, Trenton's preschool aid was comparable to the district's combined education budget for Kindergarten through Grade 12.
- Better program quality measures are needed for all Abbott preschool programs so that we can know where efforts are succeeding and identify the programs that need assistance.

K-12 Education

- Abbott funding has had some immediate, clear effects on conditions in the Trenton schools. Trenton students have had dramatically better access to computers and there are fewer students to every certificated faculty member than in the wealthiest suburbs in the state.
- Research shows that children in the early elementary grades benefit from smaller class sizes. In 2002–03, Trenton'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 Grades 5, 10, and 12 exceeded state standards.
- Trenton has about 2,500 special needs students ages six to 21. Only about one in five students with disabilities goes to school in a "very inclusionary" setting where they are educated with general education students for 80 percent or more of the school day. In Trenton, as in the other Abbott districts, about one in three students with disabilities is in a general educa-

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tion setting for less than 40 percent of the school day, compared to about one in 13 in the wealthiest suburbs.

- The district runs Daylight/Twilight High School, a multi-site program to give dropouts and over-age students ages 16 and older another way to earn a standard academic diploma. The program offers courses in all core content areas; and elective credits in community service, work study, and life experience. A key feature of the program is its support system for students experiencing problems of any kind.
- Staff at the schools we visited told us that testing is more than a high-stakes effort in Trenton. Teachers regularly use assessments to help them understand students' strengths and weaknesses and tailor their instructional methods all year round.
- Trenton Central High School offers many honors and advanced placement courses to help students become more competitive applicants and prepare them for college. We compared Trenton's honors and AP course offerings to those in Princeton, a nearby "I" district. Trenton offers 19 advanced placement courses compared to Princeton's 26.
- In 2003–04, about three out of four Trenton elementary school teachers were highly qualified in at least *one* subject and just over half were highly qualified in *all* of the subjects they taught under the federal definition. The district had the lowest percentage of highly qualified elementary school teachers among the district groupings we examined.
- In 2003–04, fewer than half of the district's high school teachers were highly qualified in *one* or *all* of the core subjects they taught, also the lowest percentage among the district groupings analyzed in this report. However, 80 percent of core subject classes in the high schools were taught by highly qualified teachers.
- Staffing data show that, in 2003–04, all of Trenton's elementary schools had teacher tutors on staff to assist children who were reading below grade level. The schools we visited in Spring 2004 provided tutoring to some, but not all students who needed it.
- Between 2002–03 and 2003–04, there was some change in the extent to which Trenton schools staffed positions that are required under Abbott. More schools had at least one family liaison, guidance counselor, security officer, and technology coordinator. Fewer elementary schools had at least one social worker. Fewer middle and high schools had a health and social service coordinator in 2003–04.
- Property wealth is an important indicator of local capacity to support its public services including education. The wealthiest suburbs had five times more property wealth per student than in Trenton in 2003. That same year, the state average was four times higher than in Trenton.

- On a per student basis, Trenton and the other Abbott districts have as much money as the most successful suburban districts to support general education. In fact, there has been general education funding equity between the poorest cities and the wealthiest suburbs in New Jersey since 1997–98 when Abbott parity began.
- In 2003–04, Trenton received an additional $2,424 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.
- In 2003–04, Trenton cancelled many of its after-school programs in response to delays in receiving supplemental program funding from the state.
- The New Jersey Department of Education did not fully fund any district's 2004–05 request for Additional Abbott Aid. Nineteen school districts appealed the state's decision. The Trenton Public Schools requested about $32 million and the Department of Education initially approved $25.9 million of its request. After an appeal, Trenton and the state negotiated a settlement that resulted in about $31.1 million to support Trenton's supplemental programs.
- Each Abbott district should have an "Abbott Advisory Council," a steering committee that represents the district and its community stakeholders. The primary responsibilities of the Council are to review district policies and procedures to implement the Abbott reforms.

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As of September 2004, Trenton did not have a districtwide Abbott Advisory Council.

- The City of Trenton compares poorly with the state on measures of teen birth and child abuse and neglect. Although there has been some improvement on both counts, these rates are still high and much higher than the state average. As a central public institution, 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.
- None of Trenton's schools qualified as persistently dangerous under federal law. Although Trenton Central High School was not considered persistently dangerous, it reported well over the number violent and disruptive incidents—Category A or Category B—to place it in the persistently dangerous range in three *nonconsecutive* years out of the four we reviewed.
- Trenton's fourth graders have made gains in language arts. Trenton's general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores throughout the state, and stayed at about the same level through 2002–03.
- Fourth grade general education math scores improved by seven percent between 1999–00 and 2002–03.
- There was little change in Grade 8 and 11 achievement test results between 2000 and 2003: at both grade levels and in both tests, the district's average scores have remained slightly below the proficiency threshold. 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.
- Trenton's elementary school suspension rates decreased a great deal since 1999–00 when they were higher than any other district grouping we examined. At nine percent in 2002–03, Trenton's elementary school suspension rate was comparable to the other Abbott districts but higher than the average of the wealthiest suburban districts (3%).
- Trenton's high school suspension rates have swung between 10 and 20 percent since 1999–00. High school suspension rates have remained in the 20 percent range in the other Abbott districts and about 10 percent in the I and J districts.
- In New Jersey, there was no official way to estimate graduation rates until recently. In this report, we estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index. Our estimates suggest that 56 percent of the class of 2001–02 graduated from Trenton's high schools, compared to 63 percent in the other Abbott districts, 83 percent across the state, and about 91 percent in the wealthiest suburbs. The cumulative promotion index estimates the percentage of students who graduate from high school in four years. The district reports that—with each passing year—more students are returning to school and graduating from the Daylight/Twilight Program.

- In 2002–03, about one in four Trenton students who graduated took the traditional Grade 11 exam, the High School Proficiency Assessment. Most of the remaining graduates that year took the alternative test, the Special Review Assessment. In the other Abbott districts, about half of the class of 2002–03 graduated by passing the traditional exam.
- Participation in college entrance exams has varied a great deal from year to year in Trenton. In 2001–02 and 2002–03, more than half of Trenton's seniors took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Average student performance on

Endnotes

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

School Facilities Construction

- As of September 2004, 10 out of Trenton's 24 school construction projects were in the pipeline toward completion: three were in design and seven were in construction.
- The Trenton Public Schools did a good job at eliciting community input during the first-round long-range facilities planning process and in the subsequent process of bringing projects to completion.
- Trenton's Facilities Advisory Board is one of the very few in the Abbott districts that continues to meet and function.
- The progress made in Trenton in moving school construction projects forward is marked by good cooperation between the district and the city government. The mayor and city council have helped the district to identify and acquire suitable properties for school construction.
- Even with community input and cooperation with the city, Trenton confronts some barriers to progress in its school construction efforts. The school district has had some difficulty securing land for playgrounds and parking lots.
- Parents have expressed concern about the need for remediation by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection of the former Roebling steel cable factory.

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.
- **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 schools 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.

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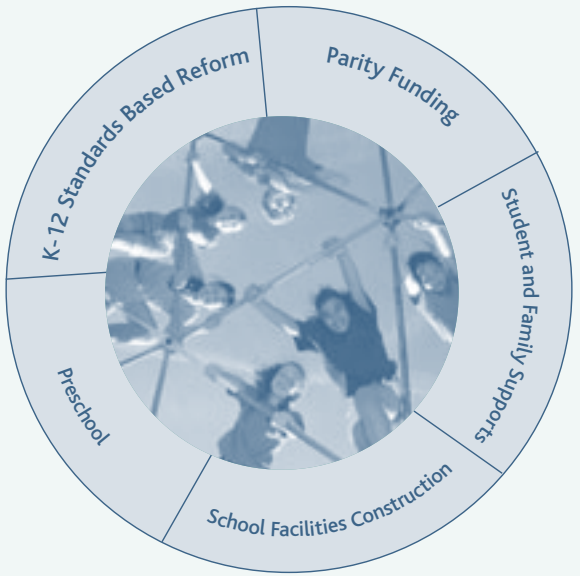
Introduction

Unlike anywhere else in the nation, in New Jersey, the poorest urban school districts and the wealthiest suburbs have the same funding to support a general public education. Young people in our state's urban districts are also entitled to a broad range of remedies.

Introduction

FIGURE | A

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



These include:

- 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
- An array of programs and services to help students come to school ready to learn and succeed in school.

Urban school districts did not always receive the same resources as their peers, and could not afford to support the programs and services needed to help students thrive in school. These benefits were won as a result of the efforts of advocates, parents, educational professionals, and the urban schoolchildren, represented by lawyers in a series of lawsuits before the New Jersey Supreme Court, collectively known as *Abbott v. Burke*, or simply "Abbott." The main goal of the resulting reforms is to ensure a high-quality education for urban public school students and to close the achievement gap between them and their suburban peers.

The Abbott reforms began in earnest in 1997 when the state equalized school funding between the wealthiest suburbs and the poorest cities. Local planning for state-financed school facilities construction started in 1998. In 1999, Abbott elementary schools started implementing Whole School Reform, Abbott districts first applied to the state for funding to support supplemental programs, and high-quality preschool first became available. All of the reforms envisioned in Abbott are now under way across the state.[2]

The Abbott Indicators Project

Under Abbott, there are means to improve New Jersey's urban schools. The challenge now is to ensure that the children get the education to which they are entitled. The Education Law Center started the Abbott Indicators Project with this concern in mind. To ensure that all students achieve at high levels, and that money is spent with their educational needs as the top priority, it is essential to develop a way for policy makers, parents,

community members and the public at large to gauge the progress of reform. The specific goals and action steps of the Abbott Indicators Project are as follows:

Goal 1: Inform stakeholders about the status of school improvement efforts and student outcomes. We need a way to know what the schools are doing well and where more progress needs to be made. The indicators in this report are similar to the dials and lights on the dashboard of a car. They help readers understand what is working and what might need closer attention.

- The Education Law Center identified questions that stakeholders have about schools and developed a set of indicators to address these questions.
- We gathered and analyzed indicator information and summarized it in this and three other Abbott Indicators Reports—one each in Camden, Newark, and Union City.
- District staff and school-community stakeholders were invited to participate in a review of the draft report. We incorporated their input wherever possible. Reviewers were invited to submit additional comments and recommendations. Any comments they submitted appear in an Appendix to this report.
- We are issuing two versions of the Abbott Indicators Reports. This technical report contains the findings from all indicators analyses with additional contextual information and appendices. A shorter summary version contains a briefer introduction to the report and the key findings on a subset of indicators.

Goal 2: Engage stakeholders in exploring and discussing what is working and what still needs to be done. Like dashboard lights, the indicators provide some but not all of the answers. School and community stakeholders need to ask more questions and engage in conversations about what the schools are doing to support student learning.

- The Education Law Center will work with community members in each of the four cities to hold meetings to discuss issues raised in the report and ask more questions.
- We will help to establish a climate in which school and community stakeholders can talk together constructively and do a closer inspection where needed.
- The discussions will focus on what the schools are doing well so that they can be encouraged to continue the good work. They will also examine areas where the schools could do better.

To ensure that all students achieve at high levels, it is essential to develop a way for stakeholders to gauge the progress of reform.

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Goal 3: Develop and put strategies into action to address report findings. Knowledge is only helpful if we use it to take the steps needed to support school improvement.

- The Education Law Center will support district and community partners as they prioritize among the findings to identify strengths that will need to be supported and areas of concern that can be addressed.
- We will then assist them in working together to select and adopt effective strategies to address strengths and weaknesses.
- A timeline will be set when stakeholders can get together to review the progress made.

Goal 4: Establish a system of accountability practices that local education stakeholders can use in years to come. These actions need to continue on a regular basis to elevate the dialogue about schools and support student learning. The final goal of the Abbott Indicators Project is to help school districts and their communities put these practices into action in the years to come.

- Education Law Center will work with district and community stakeholders to plan ways to continue information gathering, school-community conversations, strategic planning, and follow-through.

The Report

The purpose of this report is to inform everyone who cares about public education in Trenton about what the schools have done to support student learning to date. The report is intended for a wide audience to serve as an information, advocacy, and planning tool.

In this report, we focus on how the district implements the elements of effective schooling within the context of New Jersey's Abbott reforms, the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and the state's academic standards. Public education is not a completely local matter, however. The New Jersey Department of Education has specific responsibilities under the law and plays a critical role in how the law gets translated into action. The state has varied its implementation and enforcement of urban school reform in New Jersey—as administrations have replaced one another and even within administrations. Throughout this report, we note specific instances where such changes have affected district practices.

Introduction

These shifting winds have surely affected New Jersey's Abbott districts. But they have not affected Abbott districts in the same way. School districts have different community characteristics, local political contexts of their own, and strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, districts make different programmatic choices, and have different student outcomes. In this report, we highlight the unique local circumstances and choices. School-community conversations that follow also will focus primarily on these local issues.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into five sections. In this introduction we present a brief overview of *Abbott v. Burke*, the Abbott Indicators Project, and the general approach of the report. Section 1 includes a profile of the community served by the school district and of the students attending the schools. Sections 2 through 4 are organized by Abbott remedy: preschool, K-12 education (including standards-based reform and additional supports for students and families), and school facilities construction. All of the remedies work together to ensure a seamless plan for school improvement; we present them separately because each has its own distinctive logic and legal framework.

In Sections 2 (The Preschool Program) and 3 (K-12 Education), we present the indicators within a framework of the elements of effective schooling.[3] The core elements of effective schooling are:

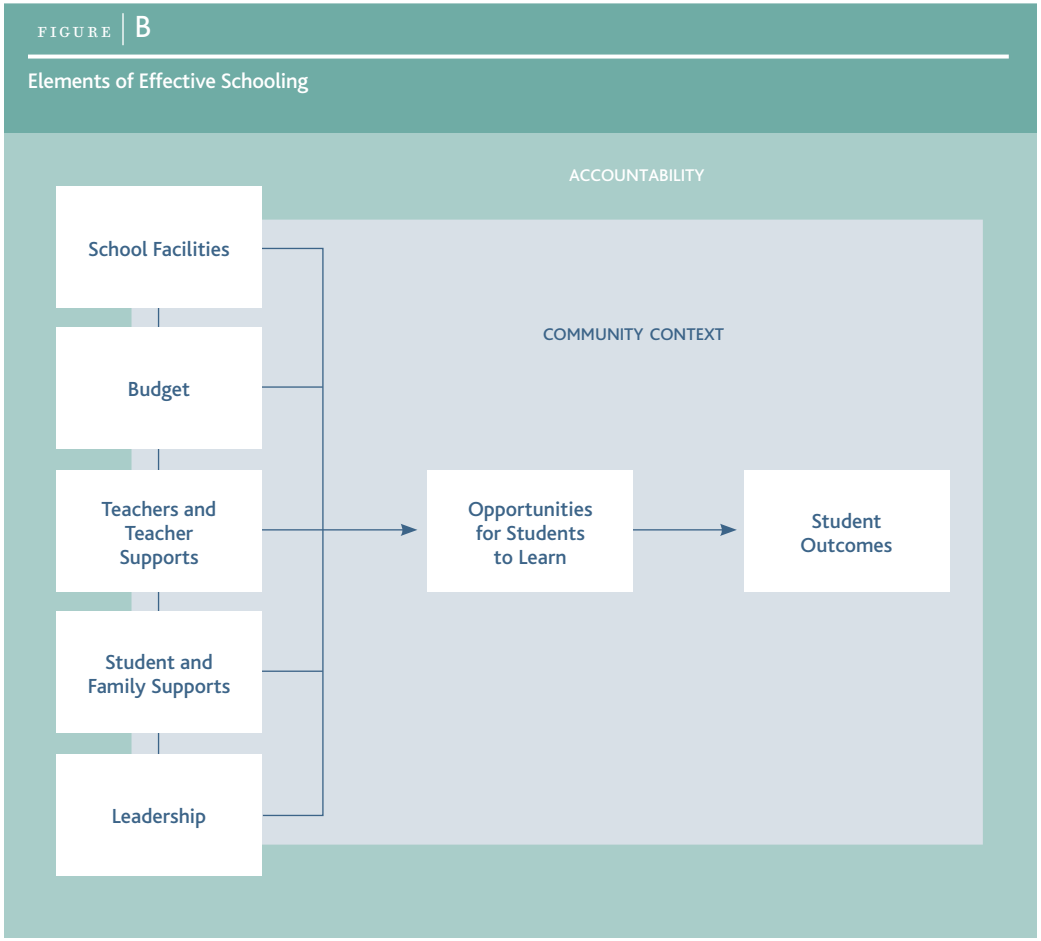
- **Student and Family Supports:** To ensure that all students come to school ready to learn and are equipped to succeed in school, additional supports must be available to meet the unique needs of students and their families;
- **Teacher Qualifications and Supports:** Teachers need to be well-prepared and supported;
- **Budget:** The district must have enough revenue to support a high-quality education;
- **School Facilities Construction:** School facilities must be healthy, safe, and educationally adequate; and
- **Leadership:** School and district leadership should be informed, inclusive, and effective.

All of these interlocking features must be in place and functioning well to ensure that there are:

Introduction

FIGURE | B

Elements of Effective Schooling



↗ **Opportunities for Students to Learn:** Opportunities for student learning should be effective, developmentally appropriate, aligned to state standards, varied, and enriched.

These elements—and the indicators selected to measure them—are the gauge by which we can assess a school district's progress to date. The elements of effective schooling are also conditions and characteristics that we can change for the better.

At the end of Sections 2 and 3, we present a range of student outcomes. As Figure B suggests, student well-being and academic success are the end products of all of the elements of effective schooling. We urge readers to view the student outcomes in light of what is presented about the full range of school district practices.

Section 4, School Facilities Construction, contains information about the district's first-round long-range facilities plans, planning process, and progress to date on state-supported school facilities projects.

Introduction

The Indicators

Indicators Project staff and colleagues at the Education Law Center worked with a committee of education experts to select a wish list of indicators. We selected indicators that would help to answer a range of questions that stakeholders have about the elements of effective schooling. Presented in this report are all of the indicators we were able to collect that were of sufficiently high quality and enabled comparisons with other districts, over time, or both.

The indicators are comprehensive but by no means exhaustive. We have included all of the information collected that was reliable and valid. We could not answer all of the questions that education stakeholders have about schooling, however. We recognize and regret that some readers will find some of their most pressing questions unanswered. A complete list of the Abbott indicators appears in an Appendix to this report.

As the indicators are introduced throughout this report, we present:

- Any *requirements* or *standards* under Abbott, or other state or federal law;
- A brief description of its importance to educational effectiveness;
- Where applicable, *any current debates* about its role or importance; and finally
- Indicators findings.

Reading the Tables and Charts

All indicators findings are summarized in the text of this report. Many are also presented in tables or charts. Most tables and charts show trends over time, comparisons between district groupings, or both.

Time trends. Trends over time are clearly labeled in the charts and explained in the text. The length of the trend varies from indicator to indicator depending on the available data. We always included all of the years for which we had reliable data. In all cases, the latest year of data that we report is the last year of data we have. For example, 2002–03 is the most recent year for achievement test results. Statewide 2003–04 results became available weeks before this report was completed, but there was not enough time to include them.

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Student well-being and academic success are the end products of all the elements of effective schooling.

We invited the districts to submit letters with their updated results. We encourage readers to read the letter(s) and compare all of the data in this report with new information that becomes available.

District groupings. Unless otherwise noted, we compare indicator results for the district—Camden, Newark, Trenton, or Union City, in their respective reports—with results for all *other* Abbott districts, the wealthiest suburban districts, and the state.

For these reports, the Abbott districts include the 30 school districts that have received the court-ordered remedies since 1997–98 (see Appendix). A 31st district, Salem, became an Abbott district in Spring 2003–04, but is not included among the Abbott districts.

Differences in resources, educational quality, and student performance between Abbott districts and the wealthiest New Jersey suburbs were central to the *Abbott v. Burke* lawsuits and rulings, so we compare Trenton and other Abbott districts to these school districts on several indicators. In New Jersey, school districts are rated by the New Jersey Department of Education into eight "district factor groups" (DFGs), ranging from A to J. The wealthiest towns are classified as I and J districts; most Abbott districts are classified as DFG A or B. DFGs are based on Census information about the following characteristics of each school district: 1) adult educational attainment level, 2) adult occupation, 3) population density, 4) income, 5) unemployment, and 6) poverty. Throughout this report, we refer to these school districts interchangeably as the "wealthiest suburbs," "most successful suburban districts," and the "I and J" districts.

After the pilot district, the other Abbotts, and the wealthiest suburbs, the final comparison made in this report is to statewide averages. All public school districts—except vocational, educational services and join-

ture commissions, and charter schools—are included in statewide averages.

Due to space considerations, most indicator findings are reported at the district or district grouping level. In recognition that readers may be interested in a single school or how conditions vary from school to school, we have collected, analyzed, and prepared a number of school-level tables and charts when appropriate information was available. The Education Law Center will make these available to school boards, district and school staff, and other groups representing community stakeholders.

Data definitions. The figures and charts in this report present summary statistics for each district grouping described above. The method we used to summarize the findings is generally indicated in the tables and charts. Detailed data sources and definitions of terms are included in an Appendix to this report.

Data collection and analysis. A summary of data collection and analysis methods is contained in an Appendix to this report.

Summaries

Key indicator findings are summarized in the Executive Summary and at the end of the report sections. Sections 2 and 3 contain text and table summaries—Section 4 includes a text summary only. Summary tables include the subset of indicators that have measurable standards or requirements under Abbott or other state or federal law. Summary tables list these requirements along with the status of the district on each.

Endnotes

2. More information about *Abbott v. Burke* is available at www.edlawcenter.org.

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

1

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. In this section, we present indicators of community distress that inform the elements of effective schooling.

1 The Community and Students

FIGURE | 1.1

Conditions of Living and Learning in Trenton

Municipal Characteristics	Trenton	New Jersey
Population	85,258	8,414,350
Female Head of Household Families With Children 17 and Under	45%	18%
Highest Educational Attainment of Adults 25 and Over		
Less Than High School Diploma	38%	18%
Diploma or GED	32%	29%
Some College	21%	23%
Bachelor's Degree	6%	19%
Graduate or Professional Degree	3%	11%
Labor Force Participation	57%	64%
Unemployment Rate	11%	6%
Median Household Income	$31,074	$55,146
Population Below Poverty Level	21%	8%
Population 17 and Under Below Poverty Level	27%	11%
Rent-income Ratio	28%	26%
Renter-occupied Housing	55%	34%
Vacant Housing	13%	7%
Violent Crime Rate (Per 1,000)	17.3	3.8

SOURCE | Uniform Crime Report, 2002; 2000 US Census.

Trenton, the capital of New Jersey, has a land area of less than eight square miles and a population of about 85,000. Figure 1.1 shows the gap between Trenton and the state average on several indicators. For example, fewer adults are in the labor force and unemployment is about twice as high in Trenton as in the state as a whole. Household income is also a great deal lower: more than $20,000 less than the state median. More than one in five adults and more than one in four children under the age of 17 lived below the poverty level in 2000.

Although many single mothers are economically successful, a large percentage of female-headed family households remains a strong indicator of community poverty. Figure 1.1 shows that 45 percent of Trenton's families are led by single mothers compared to 18 percent statewide. Almost two in five Trenton adults have not earned a high school diploma. As parents, high school dropouts may be less trusting of schools and have fewer of their own academic skills to support their children's learning. Finally, exposure

to violence can have negative effects on child and youth mental health. It also increases their risk of being victims of violent crime. At 17.3 per thousand, the violent crime rate in Trenton is more than four times higher than it is throughout the state on average.

The students who attend the public schools reflect the families who live in Trenton. Their unique characteristics 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 Trenton's children and youth—such as bilingual programs and nutrition programs—also have different budget needs.

About three in five Trenton students (61%) are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, compared to just about one in four (26%) throughout the state (Figure 1.2). Six percent of Trenton students are English language learners, fewer than the other Abbott districts, but slightly more than the state on average (Figure 1.2). As in many of New Jersey's poorest cities, most of Trenton's students are children of color: 67 percent are Black and 29 percent are Latino/a.

Families move between neighborhoods and into and out of cities, so some amount of student mobility is unavoidable. Students who move between districts or schools often have to "catch up" with their classmates and teachers must spend time to bring them up to date. When many children move into and out of a district, it can disrupt educational progress and affect student learning and test scores. In Trenton, student mobility is high with 17 percent of all students moving into or out of their school during the school year. Actual student mobility may be even higher, because districts may not count individual students leaving and returning to the same school several times throughout the year as multiple incidents.

Programs that meet the needs of Trenton's children—such as bilingual and nutrition programs—have different budget requirements.

1 The Community And The Students

FIGURE | 1.2

Characteristics of Students in Trenton

	Trenton	All Other Abbott Districts	I and J Districts	New Jersey
Total Enrollment	14,322			
Eligible for Free-/Reduced-price Lunch	60.5%	68.9%	3.3%	26.2%
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	66.9%	40.6%	4.4%	17.1%
Latino/a	28.6%	42.9%	3.6%	17.1%
White	3.8%	13.3%	80.3%	58.5%
Asian	0.6%	3.0%	11.5%	7.1%
Native American	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	5.5%	11.9%	1.5%	4.8%
Students with Disabilities (IEP)	12.7%	12.5%	12.0%	13.1%
Student Mobility Rate	17.4%	23.1%	5.2%	12.2%

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

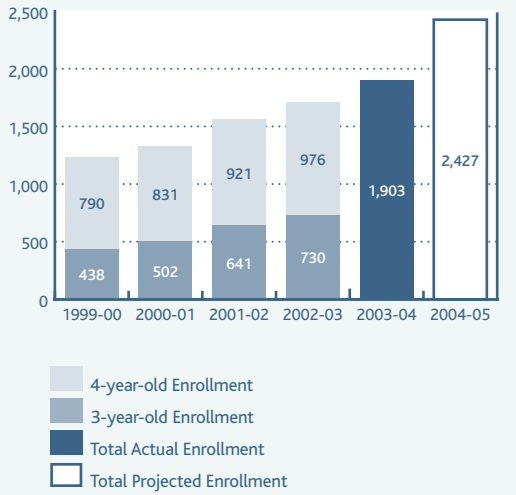
2

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.

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.1

Preschool Enrollment: Trenton, 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.

The major features of the Abbott preschool mandate are:

- Six-hour school day, 180 days a year;
- Provisions for full-day, full-year wrap-around child care services;[4]
- 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.[5]

Opportunities for Students to Learn

Program Enrollment

To meet Abbott requirements, all districts must serve at least 90 percent of their eligible preschool populations by 2005–06. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show the strides made by the district toward serving its community's three- and four-year-olds. Trenton preschools served 1,903 children in 2003–04, or 79 percent of the estimated number of three-and four-year-olds living in the city. Trenton is expected to serve the whole eligible population in 2004–05. The two major obstacles to universal enrollment for all school districts are: 1) finding and informing hard-to-reach parents of three-and four-year-olds; and 2) identifying and upgrading space and facilities. Trenton's outreach efforts are discussed below; preschool facilities are discussed in Section 4.

Program Setting

Abbott districts can operate their own preschool programs or enter into contracts with private providers and/or Head Start programs. There are two types of Head Start programs: Enhanced Head Start, the program under which existing Head Start seats are upgraded to meet Abbott standards; and Expanded Head Start, the program serving

2 The Preschool Program

children previously not enrolled in the Federal Head Start program.

In 2004–05, Trenton Public Schools contracted with one Head Start program in 10 locations and 28 other private providers in 35 locations. The district also runs 14 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 programs. Between the 1999–00 and 2002–03 school years, the percentage of children served in community programs has remained between 74 and 80 percent. According to a community member who reviewed this report, Trenton has a collaborative relationship with community providers, compared to many other Abbott districts in the state that do not work with community providers as viable partners in their preschool programs.

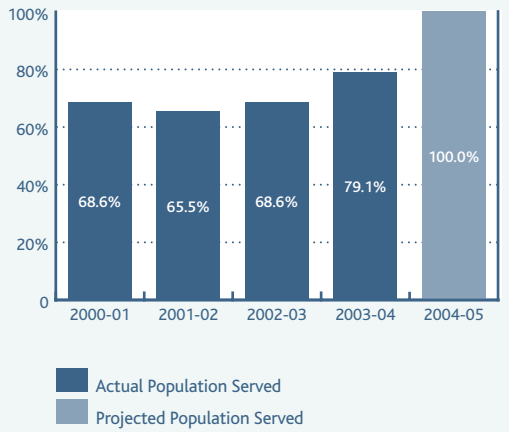
Recruitment and Outreach

If districts are to reach the Abbott goal of 90 percent enrollment, they need to identify unserved families and obstacles to enrollment and then conduct intensive outreach and recruitment efforts. Some promising methods for reaching parents of three-and four-year-olds include: door-to-door visits; distributing informational brochures in places that families with young children frequent, such as churches, neighborhood centers, and pediatricians; placing public service announcements on local television, newspapers, and public transportation; and hanging banners on the preschool buildings. It is important that outreach materials and communications be clear and culturally sensitive.

Our findings suggest that Trenton is successful at informing parents and recruiting students. In February 2004, district staff reported that 1,967 of the district's 2,002 slots were filled (98% capacity). The Trenton preschool program has been advertised on the local radio station and on local cable Channel 19. The *Trenton Times* prints free public service announcements listing all district- and community-run preschool programs. The district sends flyers home with all children enrolled in Kindergarten to Grade 12, and to

FIGURE 2.2

Preschool Population Served: Trenton, 2000–01 to 2004–05



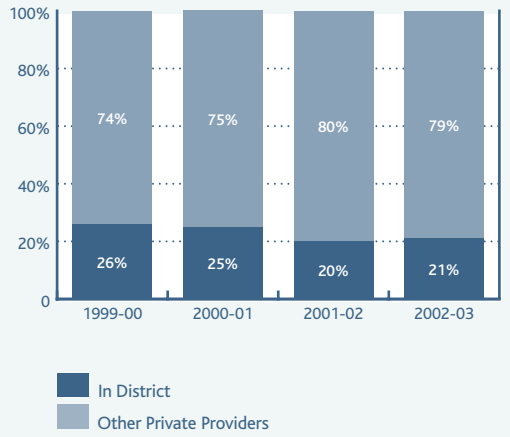
NOTE: The 2001–02 eligible preschool population is an average of the eligible population in 2000–01 and 2002–03

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

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.3

Preschool Enrollment by Provider Type: Trenton, 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.

local churches and businesses. The district website also provides information about the preschool program and how to enroll.

A community member who reviewed this report commended the district on doing an excellent job with preschool recruitment and outreach. This reviewer believed that enrollment would have increased even more quickly if the district had posted information at the many neighborhood clinics that provide services for low-income mothers and children. These parents may not have had access to cable television or newspapers where the program has been more widely advertised.

Registration for the upcoming school year begins on the first Saturday in May. Children registered during this period are typically assigned to a program near their homes. Following the initial registration period, the district has rolling admissions until May 1st of the next year. Parents who want to register their children during rolling admissions receive a list of programs with available seats. These parents can then decide where they will enroll their children.

Programs for Children with Disabilities

Federal and state laws guide the education of individuals with disabilities.[6] The law requires that children with disabilities be educated in the "least restrictive environment." This means that, to the maximum extent possible, students are educated in the school they would have attended if they did not have a disability, and participate in academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities with students who do not have disabilities. The general education classroom is the preferred placement for children with disabilities; however, school districts must also offer a range of alternative services for students who cannot be educated in the general education classroom for part or all of the day. The law also states that children with disabilities should only be placed in separate classes or schools, or removed from the general education classroom when the nature or severity of the disability prevents them from being educated in the general education classroom, even with the use of supplemental aids and services.

2 The Preschool Program

Identification of preschoolers with disabilities. Children suspected of having a disability can be identified prior to enrolling in preschool. Early Childhood nurses screen all children referred to one of the district's two Preschool Child Study Teams. The teams consist of a school psychologist, social worker, and learning disabilities teacher-consultant. Evaluation results shape the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that specifies the child's needs for special education and related services, and determines the setting where the child will be educated. A community member who reviewed this report observed that the private preschool providers may not be as well equipped to identify and respond to the needs of preschoolers with disabilities as the district-run programs.

Educational environment. All preschoolers with disabilities in Trenton attend one of three district-run programs (Grant, P.J. Hill, or Rivera) or the Step Ahead program sponsored by ARC-Mercer. District staff told us that Step Ahead also enrolls general education students in an effort to be an inclusive environment. Local parents and advocates indicated that, despite Step Ahead's efforts at providing inclusion programs, only special education students attend the program now.

The law requires schools and districts to provide children with disabilities with appropriate educational experiences and quality services that are tailored to their individual needs. While the law does not specify a target percentage of children who should be in general education classrooms, it does state that children with disabilities must be educated in inclusive, rather than separate settings for as much time as possible. According to a report released by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, the state of New Jersey lags behind the nation in the percentage of preschoolers with disabilities educated in an inclusionary setting. In 2002, about one in four (22%) New Jersey preschoolers with disabilities was placed in general education classrooms, compared to 35 percent nationwide. In light of the state norm, we might expect to see similar educational placements in Trenton and the other Abbott districts.[7]

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.4

Educational Environment of Preschoolers with Disabilities: Trenton, 2003–04 (N=61)

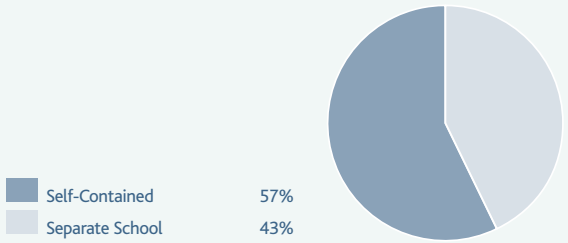
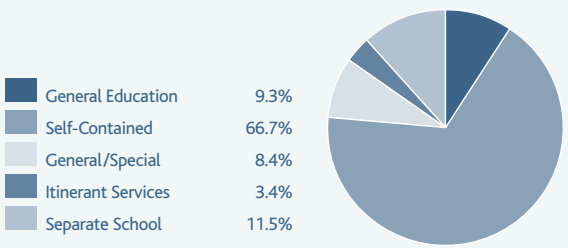


FIGURE 2.5

Educational Environment of Preschoolers with Disabilities: All Other Abott Districts, 2003–04



*Home and residential placements, less than one percent.

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 2003–2004.

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show the percent of preschool children with disabilities in various educational environments—in Trenton and all other Abbott districts, respectively. In 2003–04, 57 percent of Trenton's 61 preschoolers with disabilities were in self-contained (special education) classrooms, compared to 67 percent of their peers in the other Abbott districts. The data suggest that none of Trenton's preschoolers with disabilities were placed in "inclusion programs" (general education settings). According to district reports, the remaining 43 percent of preschoolers with disabilities were taught in "separate" schools outside of the school district. We suspect that the Trenton Public Schools reported the children at Step Ahead as attending a "separate school."

The district had plans to initiate two preschool intervention and referral teams in 2005–06. Intervention and referral teams use a joint case management model to assist children and their families and reduce the number of referrals to Child Study Teams. Each planned team will consist of a master teacher, two social workers, a speech specialist, and a learning disabilities teacher consultant.

Program Content

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.

Curriculum. Specialists in early childhood education debate if it is better to have a single curriculum across a district or if providers should be allowed to select their own curricula. On one hand, a single curriculum ensures that students in a district with high student mobility like Trenton will receive the same program no matter where they move. Professional development is also easier to provide when there is a uniform curriculum. On the other hand, uniformity is not as important as using research-based, developmentally

2 The Preschool Program

appropriate programs that provide enough teacher support to ensure quality instruction. Program and teacher buy-in are also important to ensure good implementation. Below, we describe the approach taken by district and other private provider programs in Trenton.

The Trenton Early Childhood Program was established in 1994, several years before universal Abbott preschool was required by the New Jersey Supreme Court. Since that time, the district has used the Kellogg Five Star Curriculum. Organized by theme, Kellogg is a flexible and hands-on curriculum. As a supplement to Kellogg, the district also uses the Abecedarian model, a research-based early intervention program developed by the University of North Carolina. The program addresses children's health and social service needs through case management.

Private provider programs can choose their own curricula. Some are using Kellogg while others use Creative and High/Scope.[8] Early childhood staff indicated that the results of the district's first assessment showed a need for a more uniform approach across the district. In response to this need, all preschool classrooms in Trenton are slated to begin using a revised version of the Kellogg Five Star curriculum by July 2005.

Curriculum review. District and program staff review Kellogg and Abecedarian every year. Kindergarten teachers used to take part in this process, but are no longer involved due to limited funding. The district also looks at how well preschool programs use their curricula. The Supervisor of Early Childhood Education uses the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS)[9] to make sure that all programs using Kellogg are implementing it well. Programs implementing Creative use an instrument that comes with the curriculum to assess instructional quality.

The transition into Kindergarten. The transition from preschool to Kindergarten can be stressful for young children as they leave a familiar, comfortable setting for one that is new and different. Successful transition is most likely to happen when children have been prepared ahead of time, parents have been involved in the process,

The law requires schools and districts to provide children with disabilities with educational experiences and quality services that are tailored to their needs.

2 The Preschool Program

and preschool and Kindergarten teachers communicate on a regular basis. Below, we compare best practices in preschool-Kindergarten transition with transition activities in Trenton.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides preschool programs with four recommendations to guide transition efforts: 1) ensure program continuity; 2) maintain ongoing communication and cooperation among staff in sending and receiving programs; 3) prepare children for transition; and 4) involve parents in transition planning.

The district reports that it is planning for the development of formal procedures to guide the transition from preschool to Kindergarten. Currently, transition consists of student screening and joint professional development for preschool and Kindergarten teachers. Trenton preschool teachers administer the Brigance Preschool Screen[10] to determine student readiness for Kindergarten. If a child does poorly on this test, the district follows up with the Denver Developmental Screen. Kindergarten teachers have the chance to review the scores of the Denver Developmental Screen[11] and also receive student readiness reports that provide a profile of each student on a variety of skills.

In previous years, Trenton teachers were able meet two to four times per year for joint professional development and grade-level meetings. District staff explained that preschool and Kindergarten teachers no longer have the opportunity to meet to discuss transition issues.

A community member who reviewed this report observed that preschool to Kindergarten transition is more seamless for the preschoolers enrolled in district-run programs. That is, transition practices that occur in the district do not occur as frequently within community provider settings.

Student and Family Supports

Health services. Health services are provided to Trenton preschool students and their families through the district's nursing program. The program's five nurses make sure that

all children have up-to-date immunizations and are screened for developmental delays and auditory and vision difficulties. Testing for asthma and lead poisoning are available as well. Nurses develop individualized health care plans for children with special needs, and help parents get health insurance and find local health care providers. Health education workshops are held for parents and program staff; and four times per year, health and safety programs are conducted for students.

Through the Family and Child Educational Services (FACES) program, a social worker refers children for mental health services and follows up to make sure children attend their appointments. A pediatric neurologist and a pediatric psychiatrist are also available to assess children for physical, social, and behavioral difficulties. Two community members who reviewed this report observed that preschoolers in the district-run programs have good access to health services. According to them, health and social services are not as accessible to preschoolers in the community provider settings.

Transportation. Most students are placed in preschool programs located in their neighborhoods so transportation services are not needed. Only those preschool students with disabilities attending the Step Ahead program are provided with transportation.

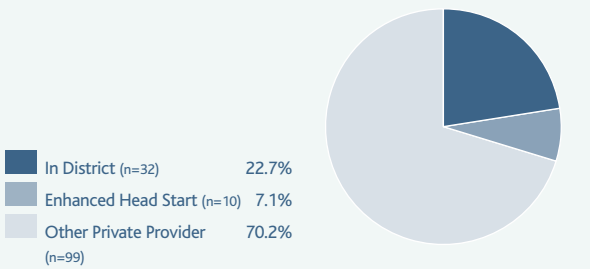
Program Quality

The New Jersey Department of Education formed the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC), a group of university-based preschool specialists, to conduct ongoing research on program quality. In 2002–03, the state funded ELIC to assess 310 Abbott preschool classrooms throughout New Jersey. ELIC rated these classrooms on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R). Although the Trenton preschool program took part in the ELIC study, we do not present the findings here, because too few Trenton preschool classrooms were included to enable anyone to draw conclusions about the district's program quality. All New Jersey

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.6

Preschool Teachers by Provider Type: Trenton, 2004–05



SOURCE | Trenton Public Schools, 2004–05

districts with a public preschool program are required to undergo self-evaluation, using a guide called the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) developed by the Office of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education. Districts used it for the first time in 2003–04. The results are intended for use in planning the district's programs. The program quality assessment is one important section of the SAVS. Although the state encourages districts to use tools like the ECERS-R, it is not required.

ELIC staff we spoke with said that they have been working with district master teachers (called education program specialists in Trenton) on the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), along with the Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA) and the Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI) to assess instructional quality.[12] They also said that more program quality data will become available in 2005. We think that the best 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.

Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

As expected, a majority of Trenton's preschool teachers work in other private provider programs that contract with the school district. In 2004–05, there were 141 preschool teachers: seven percent were in Head Start; 70 percent in other private provider programs; and 23 percent in Trenton public school buildings.

Educational Attainment of Preschool Teachers

All Abbott preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree. This standard applied immediately to teachers in district-run programs. Teachers in community programs who needed fewer than 30 credits were eligible for an extension until September 2006. Head Start teachers have four years from the date when their program first contracted with the Abbott district to complete these requirements.

Postsecondary training can equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in the classroom. We present information about the educational attainment of Abbott preschool teachers as a proxy for teacher preparedness and because Abbott requires all preschool teachers to have undergraduate degrees. We present the findings by provider type so that we can see how well teachers in different settings have progressed toward meeting the degree requirement. Figure 2.7 shows that all 141 Trenton preschool teachers (100%) had earned their four-year college or graduate degrees by 2004–05.

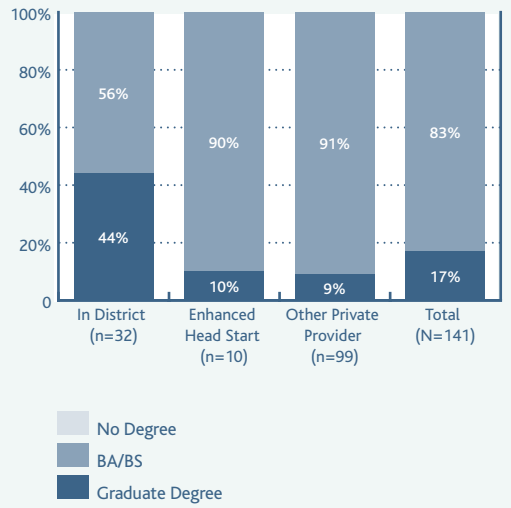
Preschool Teacher Certification

In addition to earning a bachelor's degree, Abbott preschool teachers must also be certified.[13] The New Jersey Department of Education considers the preschool through Grade 3 certification (P-3) to be the standard 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. Teachers with N-8 and special education certificates are not required to obtain the specialized education and training in early childhood education that the P-3 certification process provides.

A community member who reviewed this report observed differences between the state's early childhood and elementary grades certification requirements. First, teachers with grandfathered certification (N-8) have not necessarily been exposed to knowledge

FIGURE 2.7

Preschool Teacher Educational Attainment by Provider Type: Trenton, 2004–05

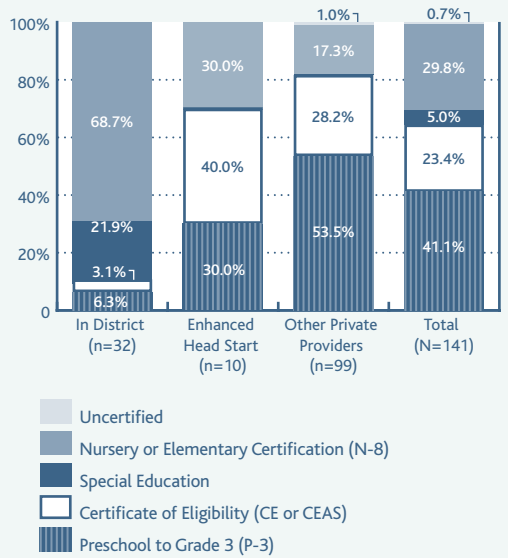


SOURCE Trenton Public Schools, 2004–05

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.8

Preschool Teacher Certification by Provider Type: Trenton, 2004–05



SOURCE | Trenton Public Schools, 2004–05

about early childhood development that is provided to candidates who have attended early childhood teacher education programs in recent years. Second, the state requires elementary school teachers to pass a test to attain elementary grades certification, while preschool teachers are not required to do so to attain P-3 certification.

Figure 2.8 shows the status of the Trenton preschool program on the road toward 100-percent teacher certification. In 2004–05, all but one of Trenton's 141 preschool teachers had fulfilled the Abbott certification requirement. Overall, 65 percent of the teachers had provisional (CE or CEAS) or preschool to Grade 3 (P-3) certification; 30 percent had N-8 certification; and five percent were special education certified. Among the 32 teachers working in district-run programs, three percent had provisional certification, six percent had P-3, 69 percent had N-8, and 22 percent were special education certified. Of the 99 teachers in other private provider programs, 82 percent had earned at least provisional early childhood certification and most of these teachers had already earned full P-3 certification. Seven of the 10 Head Start teachers had earned at least provisional early childhood certification; the remaining three Head Start teachers had N-8 certification.

According to district records for the 2004–05 school year, all special education-certified teachers were teaching in self-contained classrooms. However, some self-contained special education classrooms were not taught by special education-certified teachers.

Preschool Teacher Experience

Figure 2.9 shows how long teachers in Trenton's preschool program have been in their current positions. Overall, Trenton's preschool teachers spent 4.5 years on the job, as of October 2004. The 32 teachers in district-run programs had the longest tenure with 12.7 years on average. The 10 Enhanced Head Start teachers had 4.5 years and the 99 teachers in other private provider programs had about two years.

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 New Jersey 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. Here, we present the average preschool teacher salary in Trenton by provider type to compare salaries paid in these settings. There should be no systematic difference by provider type because all providers should have access to applicant pools of equivalent size and quality and because Abbott preschool teachers do equivalent work regardless of setting.

The average preschool teacher salary in Trenton is $47,797 for 2004–05. On average, teachers in district-run programs earned higher salaries ($58,086) than those in other private provider programs ($37,556) or Head Start ($37,055). The difference in salary may be because teachers in the district-run programs had more years in their current positions.

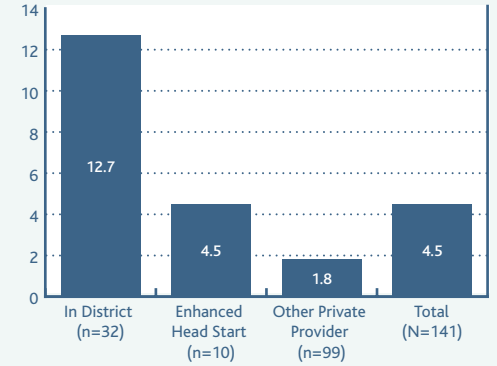
Performance Evaluation

Even the best teachers benefit from informed peer and supervisor feedback. Such feedback and direction is even more important to ensure that less experienced and less skilled teachers do a better job. Some of this feedback can happen on an informal basis. But some should be part of a more formal procedure known in many professions as "performance evaluation."

In Trenton district-run programs, preschool teachers are evaluated and observed by the Supervisor of Early Childhood Education. We learned that since most preschool teachers are tenured, evaluations typically involve reviewing teachers' progress on their Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) goals.[14] Retired principals are contracted by the district to

FIGURE 2.9

Average Preschool Teacher Time Spent in Current Position: Trenton, 2004–05

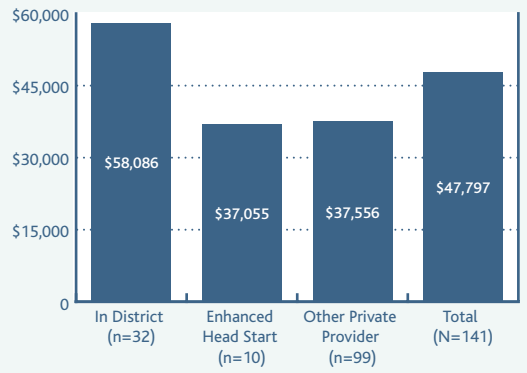


SOURCE Trenton Public Schools, 2003–04

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.10

Average Preschool Teacher Salary: Trenton, 2003–04



SOURCE | Trenton Public Schools, 2003–04

evaluate teachers in private provider programs and conduct the evaluations needed by newer teachers to earn certification.

Professional Development

In addition to feedback, teachers also benefit from opportunities to continue learning through activities such as outside conferences, in-school workshops, weekly teacher meetings, and coaching and mentoring from peers and supervisors. In these sessions, teachers share experiences and exchange ideas with colleagues; improve their teaching skills; and learn about current issues in education. No matter how many years of experience they have, teachers must be willing to update their knowledge and skills in order to keep up with the changing times. When teachers take part in ongoing high-quality staff development focused on instruction, classroom practice improves.

The Trenton Public Schools sponsors a three-day early childhood educational workshop for its preschool and Kindergarten teachers. Preschool teachers in district-run programs may also receive professional development from the developer of the Whole School Reform model being implemented in their schools. (For more information about Whole School Reform, see the K–12 Education section below.)

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.

Figure 2.11 and 2.12 show the amount of preschool aid received by Trenton and all other Abbott districts in 2002–03 and 2003–04. In 2002–03, Trenton received a total of $10,331 per preschooler, $5,915 from ECPA, and $4,416 from PSEA. Trenton's preschool program received more dollars per-

preschooler than did the average of all other Abbott districts that year. Trenton's preschool funding increased to $12,183 per preschooler in 2003–04, higher than in the other Abbott districts in that year as well.

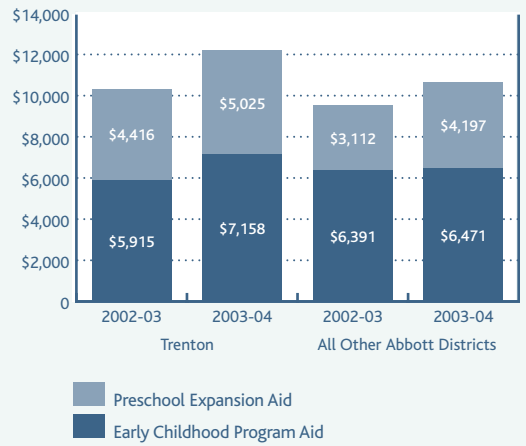
Preschool Leadership

State regulations require each Abbott school district to organize and convene 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.

Prior to 2003–04, the Trenton Public Schools had an early childhood advisory board that took part in developing Trenton's first-round Long Range Facilities Plan (see Section 4). The advisory board was not involved in

FIGURE 2.11

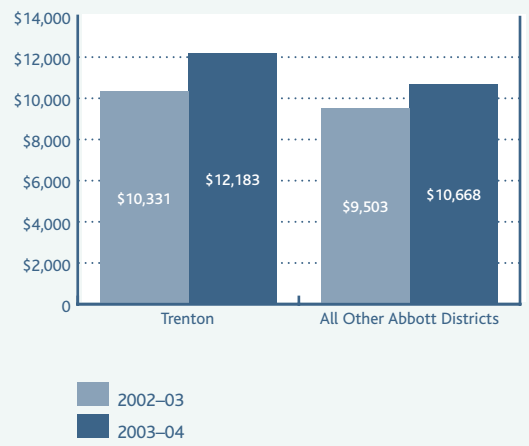
Per Student Preschool Aid by Source: Trenton and All Other Abbott Districts, 2002–03 and 2003–04



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

FIGURE 2.12

Per Student Preschool Aid: Trenton 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

developing plans or budgets for the district's preschool program.

In 2003–04, the district established an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC) to replace the advisory board. The ECEAC is made up of district early childhood staff, a parent, and staff members from Step Ahead (ARC-Mercer), Head Start, and other private provider programs. Also on the council are representatives from the New Jersey Departments of Education and Human Services. The new ECEAC meets monthly and provides input in the development of long-term operational plans and budgets to make sure they reflect the needs of Trenton's early childhood stakeholders.

Preschool Student Outcomes

We turn now to the outcomes of the Abbott preschool program to ask if the elements we have discussed so far—student and family characteristics, program scope and curriculum, teacher qualifications and supports, and leadership—have worked together to improve student learning among the district's three-and four-year-olds. 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. The Trenton preschool program was part of a study conducted by the Early Learning Improvement Consortium to assess the language development of preschoolers. The results are not presented here because too few children were assessed to accurately reflect preschoolers' language development in the district overall.

In 2003–04 the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education began training teachers in a few Abbott districts to use the "Early Language Assessment System." The system will help preschool teachers tailor their instruction to children's needs. It is not yet clear if it can be used to assess how well preschoolers are learning on a district-by-district or statewide basis. Early childhood education specialists are reluctant

2 The Preschool Program

to do widespread testing of young children; however, we need to strike a balance between these concerns and the need to know exactly how well the programs are serving Abbott preschoolers. Outcome measures are needed to help stakeholders identify programs that work and those that need more assistance.

The Status of Preschool: A Summary

We conclude this section by presenting key findings in two ways. First, we present an overview of the progress made to date and the challenges that lie ahead for Trenton's Abbott Preschool Program. We then present a summary table showing the status of the program on a smaller set of indicators alongside relevant standards or requirements under Abbott or other state or federal law.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

- By 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to enroll 90 percent of their eligible populations of three-and four-year-olds. The Trenton preschool program is on its way to meeting the state's 2005–06 enrollment requirements. The program served 79 percent of the eligible population in 2003–04 and was expected to serve all eligible children in 2004–05.
- 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. More than half of Trenton's 61 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms. The remaining 43 percent were enrolled in a separate school. The data suggest that the district reported students enrolled at the Step Ahead Program as attending a separate school. According to a community member who reviewed this report, Step Ahead serves only children with disabilities despite its efforts to develop an inclusionary program. If so, all of Trenton's preschoolers with disabilities are educated in self-contained classrooms.
- Currently, Trenton's preschool providers use a variety of curricula. In 2005, the district plans to institute a uniform, research-based approach across program locations. As of the date of this writing, the new curriculum had not been selected.
- More data on program quality—such as the results of reliable measures like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised are needed in all Abbott districts so that we can understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by their preschool programs.

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.13

Abbott Preschool Program: Benchmark Status In Trenton

Benchmark	Status
District teachers required to have bachelor's degree	Met
Teachers in community provider programs have until September 2006 to earn a bachelor's degree	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with the district to earn a bachelor's degree	Met
District teachers required to have certification	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with the district to earn certification	Met

Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

- In 2004–05, all preschool teachers working in the district or private provider programs had earned their four-year degrees as required under Abbott.
- Preschool teachers were on their way to meeting the Abbott certification requirement. In 2004–05, all but one teacher in all of the programs had earned at least provisional certification.
- Special education certified teachers only taught in self-contained special education classrooms in 2004–05. However, there were no special education certified teachers at Step Ahead, where some preschoolers with disabilities were enrolled.
- In Trenton, the average preschool teacher salary was $47,797. On average, preschool teachers in district-run programs earned $20,000 more than teachers in any other type of provider setting. Teachers working in the district's programs had more years of schooling and spent more years in their current positions on average than their counterparts in the other provider settings.
- Preschool and Kindergarten teachers did not have common planning time when they could coordinate their approaches and plan for student transition.

Budget

- At $12,183 per preschooler in 2003–04, Trenton's preschool aid was comparable to the district's combined education budget for Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Preschool Student Outcomes

- Public preschool programs in New Jersey do not yet generate consistent and reliable information that will help us to understand how well preschoolers 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

4. 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 the mandated before-and after-school "wraparound" care and care during the summer to provide a ten-hour, 245-day per year program.

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

6. Federal laws guiding the educational environment of people with disabilities include: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (amended in 2004) 20 U.S.C.§ 1400, et seq; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) 29 U.S.C. §794; and less directly, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 42 U.S.C. § 2131, et seq. State regulation is New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:14, and state statute is New Jersey Statutes Annotated 18A:46.

7. Below, we report the 2003–04 educational environment of three- and four-year-olds in Trenton and the other Abbott districts. The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities report includes children ages three through five in 2002.

8. The Creative curriculum, developed by Teaching Associates in Washington DC, aims to help children become enthusiastic learners. Children enrolled in a Creative class learn through play, and for the most part, at their own pace. Curriculum activities are geared toward helping children reach goals related to their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. High/Scope is based on the ideas of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget and views children as active learners. A central principle is that children learn best from activities that they plan, carry out, and then think about afterwards. Children are encouraged to take part in a range of experiences that help them to make choices, solve problems, and actively contribute to their own development.

9. The SAVS was developed by the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education to help districts conduct an appraisal of their preschool programs. It is intended to highlight strengths and areas needing improvement, and inform the district's program planning. Districts received and used the SAVS for the first time in 2003–04.

10. The Brigance Preschool Screen measures children's language, motor, social-emotional, and early learning skills. Administered to three-and four-year-olds, the Brigance can be used to identify children who should be referred for a more in-depth evaluation; and to help determine the most appropriate initial placement. It is available in English and Spanish.

11. There are two versions of the Denver. One relies on parent report, and tests the development of children from birth to age five. Version II directly tests children in the same age range. Depending on the score a child gets, the tester classifies him or her as "within normal range," "suspect," or "delayed." Both tests have been criticized for failing to predict developmental delays and speech and language disabilities; and for creating false positives in which students with normal development have been incorrectly classified as delayed. Practitioners like the screen because it can be administered quickly and can be helpful when used with sound clinical judgment.

12. The Supports for Early Literacy (SELA) is used to examine classroom practices that support children's early language and literacy skills. The Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI) assesses the materials and teaching strategies used to support and enhance children's math skills.

13. 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.

14. A Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) is a document that outlines the content of teacher's professional development. It includes both district and individual professional development experiences. Goals and activities may be modified throughout the calendar year to meet emerging needs of the staff.

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.

3

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FIGURE | 3.1

Trenton Schools, Grade Structure, and Enrollment: 2003–04

School Name	Grade Range		Enrollment
Cadwalader	Pk	G5	290
Grant	Pk	G5	513
Gregory	Pk	G5	432
P.J. Hill	Pk	G5	482
Jefferson	Pk	G5	364
Parker	Pk	G5	390
Robbins	Pk	G5	523
Paul Robeson	Pk	G5	404
Stokes	Pk	G5	344
Mott	Pk	G6	371
Washington	Pk	G6	333
Wilson	Pk	G6	370
Monument	Pk	G7	349
Luis Munoz-Rivera	Pk	G8	425
Franklin	Kg	G5	383
Harrison	Kg	G5	188
Columbus	Kg	G8	218
Joyce Kilmer	Kg	G8	398
Grace A Dunn Middle	G6	G8	850
Hedgepeth-Williams Middle	G6	G8	529
Arthur Holland Middle	G6	G8	432
Martin Luther King Middle	G6	G8	373
Daylight/Twilight High	G9	G12	767
Trenton Central High	G9	G12	2,705

SOURCE | Fall Survey, 2003–04

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.

These elements are very similar to the "elements of effective schooling" we discuss throughout this report. Education stakeholders had these ingredients in mind when they developed Abbott. Each component will be described in greater detail throughout this section.

In 2003–04, Trenton housed 12,433 K-12 students in 24 public schools (not including children enrolled in private preschool programs). Among the schools serving Trenton's young people through Grade 8, there were seven different grade configurations. Fourteen schools had preschool classrooms; nine of those schools spanned to Grade 5 and one to Grade 8. There were two schools serving children in Kindergarten to Grade 5 and two served Kindergarten to Grade 8. Trenton also had four middle schools (Grade 6 to Grade 8) and two (an alternative and a comprehensive) high schools.

Three community reviewers expressed several concerns about the district's K-8 schools, which formerly served students in the elementary grades only: 1) the facilities were not adequately adapted to accommodate the new grade structure; 2) elementary grade teachers were shifted to the middle grades without adequate additional training; and 3) children graduating from these schools may have had more difficulty transitioning into the high school environment.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

Whole School Reform

When Abbott first began, every elementary school was required to select a Whole School Reform model.[15] Whole School Reform is an all-around approach to improve student

learning and achievement. All models are not alike, but many have characteristics in common. In general, Whole School Reform models: 1) give decision-making authority to school-based teams that are representative of the district and the neighborhood; 2) provide help and training to schools by external experts; and 3) specify supports for teachers, students, and parents, including what the district can do to lead school improvement efforts. The New Jersey Department of Education chose Success for All as the primary model for Abbott schools because they thought it had the best track record for urban school improvement. Abbott schools were free to choose one of five other models: the Comer School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, Coalition for Essential Schools, Community for Learning, and Modern Red Schoolhouse.[16] Schools could propose other models, including ones that they or their district had developed. These models had to be approved by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Over the years, state support and enforcement of the Whole School Reform requirement has varied. Recently, the state has outlined ways for high-performing schools to opt out of their Whole School Reform models. There is also a way for the New Jersey Department of Education to require that low-performing schools use alternate approaches.

In this section, we review how Trenton responded to Abbott's Whole School Reform requirement and what models it chose. As of 2003–04, there were still seven Whole School Reform models being used in the district. The models used were: Community For Learning/Adaptive Learning Environment Model (in six schools), Success for All (5), Co-Nect (3), Accelerated Schools (3), Modern Red School House (3), Comer School Development Program (2), and Coalition of Essential Schools (1).

Research on Whole School Reform highlights two important factors to ensure successful model implementation: developer support and teacher buy-in. District staff

(continued on page 40)

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Community For Learning/Adaptive Learning Environments Model (CFL/ALEM)

Margaret Wang (Temple University), developer of Community For Learning, recognized that each student has different learning needs that can be met in a variety of educational environments. The main goal of the program is to promote high student achievement by linking schools with resources and expertise in other settings such as homes, libraries, institutes of higher education and social services agencies. Adaptive Learning Environments Model, the instructional component of Community For Learning, enables teachers to tailor instruction to the needs of individual students; every student has an individualized learning plan. ALEM also encourages teachers to work with students individually and in small-and whole-group instruction, depending on the task. CFL/ALEM schools are required to have a full-time facilitator to implement the program and a School Council Leadership Team; each district is required to have a part-time staff member to coordinate among Community For Learning schools and with community social service agencies.

Accelerated Schools

The Accelerated Schools developer (Henry Levin) believed that too many urban schools lacked challenging curricula and high expectations for their students. Schools using this model offer all students the kind of curricula and instructional approaches typically used with gifted-and-talented children. School-based teams work together to make every classroom a "powerful learning" environment, where students and teachers think creatively, explore interests, and achieve. The model is not prescribed: instead, it offers a process and philosophy that will help schools develop their own programs. The philosophy is based on unity of purpose, empowerment and responsibility, and building on strengths. The "inquiry process" helps schools and community partners analyze their problems, take actions to make improvements, and assess the results.

Modern Red School House

Modern Red School House, appropriate for Kindergarten through Grade 12, was created to increase student achievement through the development of an instructional program driven by state standards. The goal of the model is also to establish school governance practices that encourage all stakeholders to support school improvement efforts. Modern Red School House establishes a three-year relationship with each school and provides an average of 25 on-site professional development days each year. These trainings ensure that instruction is aligned within the school to meet and eventually exceed student achievement levels required by the state and/or district. Schools are required to have leadership teams and task forces to oversee school reform: all staff members must participate on at least one. Parents and community representatives also serve on these task forces.

Success For All/Roots & Wings

Success for All/Roots & Wings created by Robert Slavin, Nancy Madden, and a team of developers at Johns Hopkins University, is designed to boost the basic skills achievement of all students while building problem solving skills, creativity, and critical thinking. The purpose of the model is to create well-structured curricular and instructional approaches for all core academic subjects, preschool to Grade 6, using research-based principles of instruction, assessment, classroom management, motivation, and professional development. Success for All schools have a full-time facilitator to help implement the program, a family support team to improve community and parent involvement, and a school-based advisory team that advises the principal on general direction and goals and evaluates school climate. Many of the elements of Success for All—such as intensive early literacy, tutoring for elementary grades students who are not reading on grade level, and family support teams—are required under Abbott, even in schools that do not adopt this model. The Roots & Wings version of the program adds to the original, reading-only model added instructional components in math, social studies, and science.

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report that Trenton schools encountered variation in the amount and quality of support developers could provide to schools. Some developers were better than others and some schools were better at getting the support they needed. A community reviewer also noted that some school principals selected their school models themselves instead of eliciting votes from school staff and stakeholders as required under Abbott.

Of the six schools we visited in Spring 2004, two were using Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environment Model (CFL/ALEM), and one each used Success For All, Modern Red School House, Coalition for Essential Schools, and Accelerated Schools.

As of fall 2004, the district no longer maintained a contract with CFL/ALEM. The schools that had adopted the CFL/ALEM model had selected it for different reasons. Like other schools in the district, Gregory Elementary School had been implementing CFL/ALEM before Abbott because the school was identified as needing improvement. When Whole School Reform was mandated, the district suggested that Gregory continue to use this model. Staff at Gregory reported that they were compelled to continue with CFL/ALEM although they had wanted to switch models. When we visited the school in spring 2004, the school was planning to identify a new model.

Martin Luther King Elementary selected CFL/ALEM because staff agreed that teachers needed to work more collaboratively in small learning communities rather than separate departments in the various content areas. They liked that the model provided the structure needed to reorganize the school without requiring them to follow a specific curriculum; and would help develop a shared sense of responsibility across teachers, administrators, and support staff. Nevertheless, staff reported that the school needs to adopt a new model with a greater emphasis on math and literacy instruction.

Staff from Parker Elementary chose Success For All because they believed that it would address the needs of their students, who were mostly English language learners

or special needs students. They liked that Success For All/Roots & Wings had a focus on reading and math; required frequent assessment of student progress; provided reading and math facilitators; and offered professional development. A community reviewer noted, however, that some schools in the district initially selected the Success For All model *without* Roots & Wings, the added components that addressed math, social studies, and science instruction. This reviewer believed that the delayed adoption of Roots & Wings in other schools compromised academic progress in subject areas other than language arts literacy.

Rivera Elementary School staff selected Modern Red School House because they felt it was the only model that provided clear strategies on helping students meet the state standards; it also provided professional development for teachers and SLC members.

Washington Elementary chose the Accelerated Schools Program because it was consistent with: 1) the school's management style of decision-making from the bottom-up; 2) their belief that all children are gifted and can learn and that every staff member is an expert in something. The school first adopted the original version of Accelerated Schools but after five years felt that the program was not meeting their needs. They switched to a new version of the model, Accelerated Schools Plus that was more data and results-focused and addressed issues of accountability. The school organizational structure remained the same. Trenton Central High School selected Coalition For Essential Schools because it offered facilitators to provide coaching and modeling for teachers. Unfortunately, these positions were eliminated in 2003–04.

District leadership reports that Trenton schools were strong and early implementers of the Abbott Whole School Reform requirement. Along with several community members who reviewed this report, leadership believes that school-based model adoption had several unintended, negative effects on student learning. The reviewers observed that teachers and students who moved between schools had to adapt to new methods of teach-

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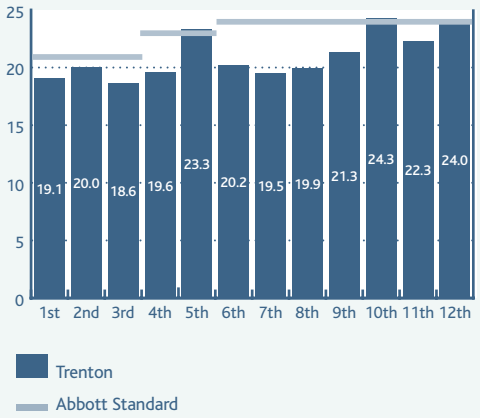
FIGURE 3.2

Average Class Size by Grade: Trenton, 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 2002–03

ing and learning, which delayed academic progress within the district overall. District leadership observed that model variation complicated district efforts to offer schools instructionally-focused, curricular leadership. They also note that recent research evidence demonstrates an uneven record of effectiveness among the models recommended by the New Jersey Department of Education. Beginning in 2003–04, the district began moving toward a more uniform approach to Whole School Reform, with the intention of using models with the strongest research evidence of academic improvement.

Class Size

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

Figure 3.2 shows the average class size by grade in Trenton compared to the Abbott standards. In the most recent year for which we have information, average Trenton class sizes were slightly larger than the Abbott standard in Grades 5, 10, and 12. Class sizes in all of the other grades were smaller than their respective standards.

Figure 3.3 shows a comparison of elementary school class sizes by district grouping from 1994–95 to 2002–03. Elementary school class sizes across the state and in the wealthiest districts have stayed at about 20 students between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Meanwhile, elementary school class sizes in the Abbott districts other than Trenton decreased from 21 to just less than 19. Average class sizes in Trenton were about 20 children per class in

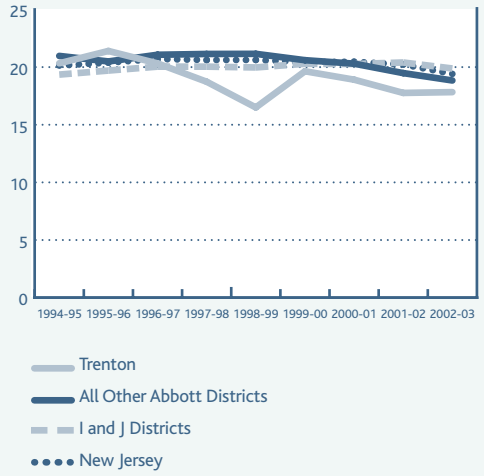
1994–95, dropped to 16.5 in 1999–00, and leveled back out to about 18 in 2002–03.

Why did class size change in Trenton's elementary schools? Changes in classroom space, number of teachers, and enrollment could explain the class size trends. Figure 3.4 shows that elementary school enrollment decreased from 1994–95 to 1999–00 and leveled off in the remaining years. Class size reductions may be partly explained by declining enrollment. But, the class size increase in 1999–00 is not explained by changes in enrollment.

Trenton's secondary school class sizes were at about 12 students in 1994–95 and rose to about 24 students in 2002–03, larger than in any other district grouping. Do enrollment patterns explain the changes in high school class sizes in Trenton? Figure 3.6 shows that Trenton's high school enrollment grew 24 percent between 1994–95 and 2002–03. (The Daylight/Twilight School opened in 1999–00, likely causing some enrollment growth that year.) Enrollment changes in Trenton's high schools may partly explain the overall class size increases.

FIGURE 3.3

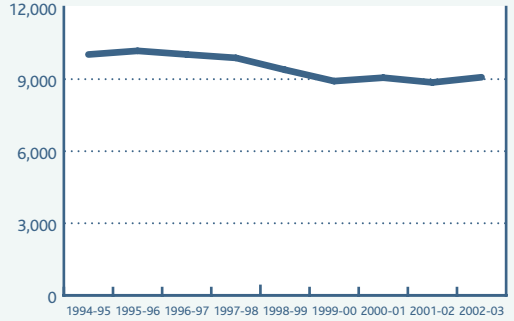
Elementary School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.4

Elementary School Enrollment: Trenton, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

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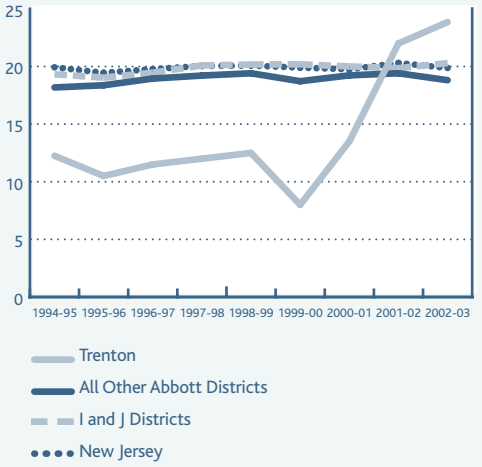
FIGURE | 3.5

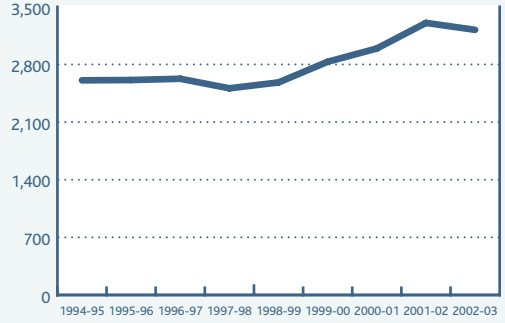
High School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.6

High School Enrollment: Trenton, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

Programs for Students with Disabilities

Federal and state laws guide the education of individuals with disabilities.[17] The law requires that children with disabilities be educated in the "least restrictive environment." This means that, to the maximum extent possible, students are educated in the school they would have attended if they did not have a disability, and participate in academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities with students who do not have disabilities. The general education classroom is the preferred placement for children with disabilities; however, school districts must also offer a range of alternative services for students who cannot be educated in the general education classroom for part or all of the day. The law also states that children with disabilities should only be placed in separate classes or schools, or removed from the general education classroom when the nature or severity of the disability prevents them from being educated in the general education classroom, even with the use of supplemental aids and services.

The law requires schools and districts to provide children with appropriate educational experiences and quality services that are tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be provided in inclusive, rather than separate settings. Below, we discuss the settings where Trenton's special needs students are educated.

Of the four district groupings we analyzed, Trenton had the greatest percentage of special education students attending separate schools: 28 percent compared with 13 percent in other Abbott districts and less than 10 percent in the I and J districts and the state average (Figure 3.7).[18] Only 20 percent of Trenton special education students attended a "very inclusionary" setting (spending 80% or more of their day with the general education population), while nearly 30 percent were in inclusionary classrooms in the other 29 Abbott districts. The percentage of students in "very inclusionary" settings was even greater in the I and J districts and the state overall.

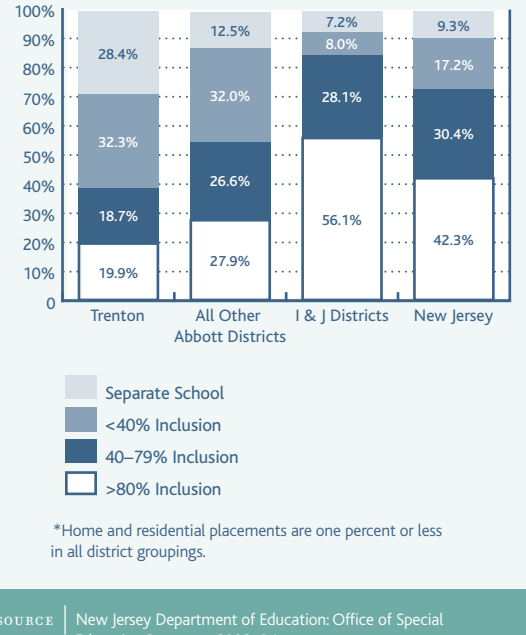
Similar to the other Abbott districts, Trenton had more than one in three students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms for most of their school day (spending less than 40% of the day in general education classrooms)—a much greater percentage than throughout the state on average (17%). A community member who reviewed this report shared some of the difficulties she has had in ensuring that her child with disabilities had adequate supports in a general education setting. The discussion that ensued highlighted the need to identify and address barriers to inclusion that underlie the findings shown in Figure 3.7.

Curriculum

In 1996, New Jersey was among the first states to adopt curriculum standards, called the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). The CCCS describe what students should know and be able to do in nine content areas at each grade level from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and upon high school graduation. The content areas are: career education and

FIGURE 3.7

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



*Home and residential placements are one percent or less in all district groupings.

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

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Nationwide, students of color are underrepresented in college admissions.

consumer, family, and life skills; comprehensive health and physical education; language arts literacy; mathematics; science; social studies; technology; visual and performing arts; and world languages. The CCCS define a "thorough and efficient education," to which all New Jersey residents are entitled under the State Constitution.

In Trenton, during the first years of Abbott, principals and School Leadership Committees (SLC) were mainly responsible for curriculum development and selection. The district office provided schools with specific guidelines on curriculum development. With the exception of two schools that designed their own reading curricula, most only followed the district guidelines.

District policy required curricula be reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle to ensure that they were current and aligned with the CCCS. Content area supervisors (in language arts, math, social studies, and science) took part in this process; however, those positions were eliminated in 2002–03, leaving schools to do this on their own. In the fall of 2004, plans were under way to hire district administrators who would have content area supervision.

In New Jersey, as in many states, there is a great deal of pressure for school districts to allocate as much of their revenues as possible toward direct instruction and away from administrative functions. The community members who reviewed this report expressed concern over the added district positions, yet appreciated the need for centralized curriculum leadership in Trenton. Their discussion underscored the difficulty of finding a proper balance between administrative streamlining and providing sufficient instructional leadership.

In 2003–04, the district released a Five-Year Curriculum Management Plan outlining guidelines for future K-12 curriculum planning, development and review activities. According to the plan, three teams of people would participate in the curriculum development process. Vertical management teams (made up of teachers from all grade levels) would provide input on the content to be

included in the curriculum for each subject area. Curriculum writing teams would use a district-approved template to write the curriculum for each content area or course. The curriculum management coordinating committee would oversee and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the curriculum development process. Instructional supervisors and resource teachers would also take part in the work of the three teams ensuring that each curriculum is consistent with state content standards, district goals and objectives, and graduation requirements.

As of fall 2004, Trenton began district-wide implementation of math curricula that had been selected after a meeting involving teaching staff from throughout the district. TERC Investigations is used in Kindergarten through Grade 5 and Connected Math is used in Grades 6 through 8. TERC, developed by researchers in Cambridge, Massachusetts, engages students in activities and encourages them to develop problem-solving strategies and work cooperatively. Students write, draw, and talk about math; and use manipulatives, calculators, and computers. Connected Math was developed through a collaboration of several universities that was funded by the National Science Foundation. The curriculum is built around mathematical problems that help students understand concepts and skills in numbers, geometry, measurement, algebra, probability, and statistics. The goal of Connected Math is to help students and teachers develop mathematical knowledge, understanding, and skill, as well as an awareness and appreciation of the connections between mathematical concepts and between mathematics and other disciplines.

College preparatory classes. Nationwide, high school students of color are underrepresented in college admissions. One reason might be a lack of opportunity to learn challenging material in high school. Trenton Central High School offers an honors program that includes advanced placement (AP) classes. Courses are offered as blocks within the high school's small learning communities. The grades of AP and honors courses receive a weight of 1.1 when calculating students' grade

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point averages. Advanced placement courses offered at Trenton Central High School include: Biology, Calculus AB, Chemistry, Literature and Composition, Physics, and United States History. Honors classes include: Algebra I and II, Biology and Life Science, Chemistry, Current Issues, Earth and Space Science, French I and II, Geometry, Literature I–IV, Physics, Spanish I–IV, Trigonometry, and US History I and II.

We compared Trenton's honors and AP course offerings to those in Princeton, a nearby "I" district. Trenton offers 19 courses compared to Princeton's 26. Princeton offered additional honors courses in Computer Science and Pre-Calculus. Princeton students also take AP courses in Art History, Computer Science, Environmental Science, European History, French, Government and Politics, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Music Theory, Spanish Language, Statistics, and Studio Art.

Programs for English Language Learners

The district runs six centers that offer bilingual instruction for English language learners in preschool through Grade 12: four centers serve students from 14 schools in preschool through Grade 5, another center at Dunn Middle School serves students in Grades 6 through 8, and a full program of bilingual instruction is offered at Trenton Central High School. There is an additional center at Daylight/Twilight High School that serves adult students.

Upon registration, each student in the district completes a survey to determine his or her home language. Students who speak a language other than English are recommended for English fluency testing administered by an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. All referrals to bilingual/ESL programs require parental consent. Transportation to a program out of the student's neighborhood is arranged by the district.

There are three levels of service within Trenton's bilingual/ESL program based on the number of students demonstrating need. A

full-time bilingual program serves Spanish-speaking students; a high-intensity, part-time ESL program serves French-Creole speaking students; and a part-time, "pull-out" ESL program serves students who speak other languages, such as Polish, Vietnamese, or Korean. There is also a bilingual special education program for English language learners in need of special support services.

All students in bilingual and ESL programs are assessed regularly to determine their progress in attaining English language skills. In addition, English language learners must participate in the statewide standardized tests under the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. English language learners must satisfy the same curriculum and testing requirements as their English-speaking peers to earn a high school diploma. English language learners who enter New Jersey schools after Grade 9 may take the alternative Grade 11 assessment (Special Review Assessment or SRA) in their native language; however, these students must also pass an English fluency exam to graduate from high school.

Student and Family Supports

Abbott Overview

Under Abbott, the New Jersey Supreme Court requires the State to fund and implement "supplemental programs" in the Abbott districts. The purpose of these programs is to address the disadvantages experienced by young people who grow up in poor cities.

There are two kinds of "supplemental" programs under Abbott. Some programs are required. Required programs include:

- Full-day Kindergarten;
- Intensive early literacy;
- Parent involvement;
- Class size limits;
- Health and social service referral;
- Access to technology;
- Alternative education and dropout prevention;
- Early math instruction;
- Professional development;
- Violence prevention and school security; and
- School-to-work and college transition.

The purpose of Abbott supplemental programs is to address the disadvantages experienced by young people who grow up in poor cities.

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Funding to support others is available if a school or district can show that the students need them. Programs that are available, if needed, are:

- On-site social and health services;
- Literacy supports for schools not using Success for All;
- After-school instructional programs;
- Summer instructional programs;
- Nutrition programs;
- Exemplary music, art, and special education; and
- School-based management and budgeting.

We were able to gather information on supplemental programs and services by visiting schools and by reviewing budgets and other documents. We did not catalog all of the supplemental programs in Trenton or the other Abbott districts, nor did we assess their quality. Although there is a real need to know if students are receiving needed services, such extensive study was beyond the scope of our project. In this section we discuss the type of supplemental programs available to the young people attending Trenton's public schools. If a program is not listed below, it does not mean that it is not available: only that we did not gather information about it to include in this report.

Full-Day Kindergarten

Children who attend full-day Kindergarten learn more reading and math than those in half-day classes. Children in small Kindergarten classes learn more than those in medium-sized or large classes. The research shows that children from low-income families learn more in smaller classes that are led by a teacher and supported by an instructional aide. All students enrolled in Kindergarten in an Abbott district are entitled to a full day of school in a class that is no larger than 21 children and taught by a teacher and an instructional aide. A Trenton community member noted that Kindergarten class sizes should be no larger than 15 students to provide an easier transition for preschoolers.

All of Trenton's Kindergarten classes have been full day at least as early as 1998–99, as have the majority throughout the state. The findings below show the average size of

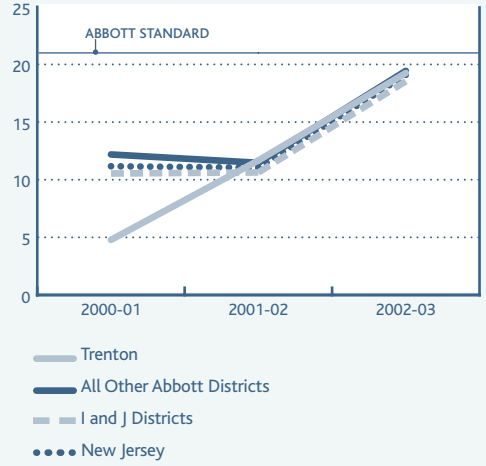
its Kindergarten classes from 2000–01 to 2002–03 compared to all other Abbotts, the wealthiest districts, and the state average. The findings reveal—for every district grouping we analyzed—Kindergarten class sizes were much smaller than the Abbott standard of 21 and rose to close to the maximum class size by 2002–03. Trenton's Kindergarten class size was 11.7 in 2000–01 and 19.3 in 2002–03. The average Kindergarten class size in all other Abbott districts was 11.5 in 2000–01 and 19.4 in 2002–03.

These findings suggest a combination of possible factors at work that appear to be affecting Kindergarten class sizes across the state: districts have limited classroom space for Kindergarten, a growing Kindergarten enrollment throughout the state, and/or districts have either dropped Kindergarten teacher staff lines or not hired more as enrollment has grown. Figure 3.9 shows the cumulative percent changes in Kindergarten enrollment for Trenton, all other Abbott districts, and the state from 1998–99 to 2003–04. We use cumulative percent change because it allows us to compare district groupings of unequal sizes and illustrates the actual enrollment trend over time including all of the ups and downs in between. Reading left to right, the points show the cumulative percent change in Kindergarten enrollment since 1998–99. The first point shows the percent change between 1998–99 and 1999–00, the second includes the change from the previous year plus the change between 1999–00 and 2000–01, and so on.

Trenton's Kindergarten enrollment declined from 1998–99 to 2001–02. In 2002–03, enrollment turned around and by 2003–04 it almost made up for the drop in previous years. These findings suggest that increased Kindergarten class sizes are at least partly due to increased enrollment.

FIGURE 3.8

Kindergarten Average Class Size by District Grouping, 2000–01 to 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 2000–01 to 2002–03

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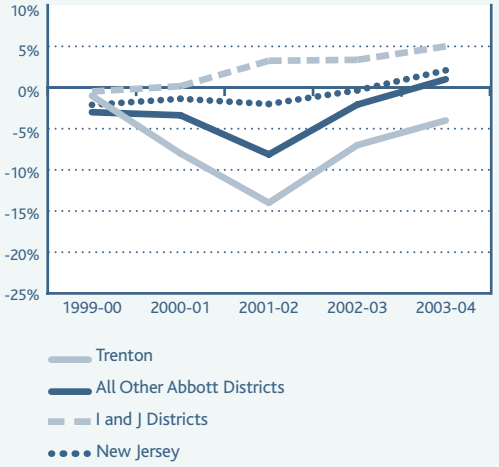
FIGURE | 3.9

Cumulative Percent Change in Kindergarten Enrollment by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2003–04



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03; Fall Survey 2003–04

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 grades students not reading at grade level must receive small group tutoring.

Each of the four elementary schools we visited in 2003–04 had some form of literacy tutoring for students who were not reading on grade level. However, they all offered tutoring to some, but not all of the students who needed it. Gregory students in Grades 1 and 2 received one-on-one tutoring from program staff from the Newgrange Educational Outreach Program of Princeton. CFL/ALEM, the school's Whole School Reform model includes small-group tutoring for students in Grades 4 and 5. Parker and Washington offered tutoring to students in Grades 1 through 3. Rivera School only provided literacy tutoring to special education students in Grades 4 and 5 in inclusion programs. All of the schools cited staffing or budget limits as the reason they did not have the complete tutoring programs required under Abbott.

Parent Involvement

Emerging research suggests that children with parents who are engaged in their *learning* are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, 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 (referred

to by various school-specific titles, including family liaison) and parent representation on its SLC.

One of the most visible districtwide parent involvement efforts in Trenton is the DADS program, in operation since 2002–03. Trenton DADS are volunteers who tutor and mentor students and provide safe passage to and from school in neighborhoods where there have been violent incidents. DADS also visit schools daily and recruit other parents to participate in school activities.

Trenton has not had a formal districtwide parent committee in recent years, but intends to re-establish one in 2005–06. The district will encourage the new parent committee to affiliate with the National Network of Partnership Schools that can provide resources to support and foster meaningful parent involvement. Even without a formal districtwide parent committee, the district has sent 30–40 parents to attend the convention of district parent advisory councils every year.

According to the district, most schools have parent-teacher organizations and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) funds are allocated to support them every year. Schools use NCLB funds to provide refreshments, childcare, and informational resources for parent meetings.

Community members who reviewed this report observed two obstacles to parent involvement in Trenton. First, they reported a shortage of parent training in the district. One reviewer attributed the shortage to a layoff of parent-community coordinators at the end of the 2003–04 school year. Other reviewers explained that some parent-community coordinators are less effective than they might be because they are asked to do multiple tasks outside of their official job responsibilities. Second, reviewers observed that some school staff and officials do not communicate effectively with families with cultural backgrounds that are different from their own. Research shows that schools that effectively involve parents show respect for cultural differences and engage diverse families.

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Identifying Student Needs in Trenton

At one school we visited, the principal spoke at great length about how students in his school needed services beyond what many consider to be within the normal scope of services offered in public schools. The principal and teachers have encountered students with parents who are on drugs, in prison, or who are abusive. They have helped students access services for serious medical needs that have been severely neglected. Identification, intervention, and referral procedures are thoroughly integrated into every staff member's roles and responsibilities every day. For example, every morning, the principal and several teachers scan every student as they walk through the door. They carefully observe whether each child changed clothes since yesterday and if they appear hurt or bruised. They also ask the children if they ate breakfast.

Health and Social Services

Referral and coordination. Under Abbott, schools should have staff that connect parents, caregivers, and children with needed health and social services. The goals of this staff are: 1) to ensure that the children are able to come to school every day prepared to learn and succeed; and 2) to reduce time taken out by teachers to address students' nonacademic problems. Aside from connecting families to neighborhood services, staff should provide counseling and educational services. At the very least, elementary schools are required to have a "Family Support Team," made up of a nurse, social worker, counselor, parent-community coordinator, and the Whole School Reform instructional facilitator. At middle and high schools, the parent-community coordinator and health and social service coordinator do the job of the Family Support Team.

Of the six schools that we visited, five had teams that were responsible for identifying health and social service needs, and making referrals for students to community agencies. They also communicate information about student health and well-being to the School Leadership Council (SLC) for them to include school-wide programs to address students' needs in school plans and budgets. Depending on the school, they are known as either the "Family Support Team," "Student Support Team," or "Social Service Team." Each is made up of at least the guidance counselor, school nurse, and social worker. At Parker, Rivera, and Washington Elementary Schools, Pupil Assistance Committees (PAC) meetings are used to discuss students identified by teachers as having academic or behavioral problems, and outline strategies that could be implemented before referring the student to the Child Study Team (CST). Guidance counselors, teachers, and the social worker participate on the PAC. Trenton High School did not have a health and social services coordinator as required under Abbott. School staff told us that the social worker and school nurse are responsible for identifying student needs.

On-site services. In addition to health services, Trenton's schools provide a number of programs to promote student social and emotional well-being. Rivera Elementary staff participate in the CARES program which aims to give every student at least one caring adult they can reach out to at school. Teachers volunteer to talk, listen, and work with students above and beyond their regular teaching responsibilities. Martin Luther King Middle School uses the Positive Schools Initiative (PSI), a model from the May Institute in Boston, which trains staff on the use of positive behavioral interventions and instructional practices. The goal of this program is to improve instruction and discipline, particularly with students in special education. The school also has a Substance Abuse Counselor (SAC) who provides individual counseling to students.

At Trenton High School, eleventh graders can participate in a peer leadership program offered by the Princeton Center for Leadership Training. Using a character education model, students are trained to work with ninth graders on issues affecting their lives in and out of school. Student pairs continue working together as tenth and twelfth graders. As part of TEAM-PEP, students in the eleventh grade can also talk with their peers about health and nutrition issues. The school also has a Substance Abuse Counselor (SAC) who counsels students and conducts presentations as needed.

Access to Technology

Abbott districts are required to have at least one media specialist and one technology coordinator 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. There should be no more than five students to each computer in each school throughout the district.

Below, we show the number of students to every computer in Trenton, the other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts in the state, and statewide. Figure 3.10 shows that—after

Abbott districts are also required to identify and provide services to students who are at risk of dropping out.

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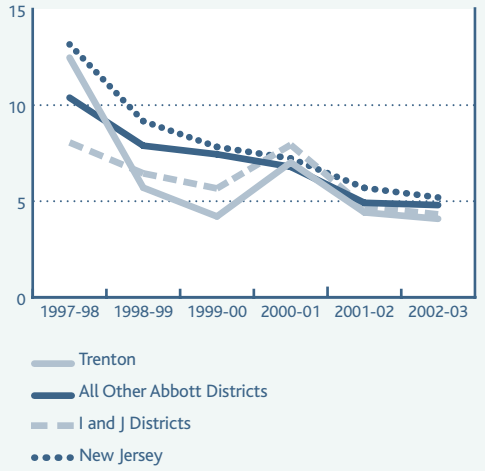
FIGURE | 3.10

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



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1997–98 to 2002–03

1997–98, Trenton students had easier access to computers than their peers in other district groupings. There were 12.4 students to each computer in 1997–98 and 4.1 students to each computer in 2002–03. Across the other Abbott districts during the same time period, student access to computers also improved. The average number of students to each computer decreased steadily from 10.3 to 4.8 in the other Abbott districts, better (lower) than the recommended standard of 5 students to each computer. Student access to computers also improved throughout the state and in the wealthiest districts.

Alternative Education

Abbott districts are also required to identify and provide services to students at risk of failing and dropping out as soon as possible to prevent those negative outcomes. At a minimum, the districts should provide alternative programs for young people in middle and high school, and be adequately staffed with dropout prevention specialists.

Daylight/Twilight High School serves Trenton students ages 16 and older that have dropped out of school or who are over age for their grade. About one-third of the students are adults who did not finish high school. The school has four sites: the original Bellevue Avenue location and three other satellites throughout the city. The program, originally modeled after University City High School in Philadelphia, offers courses in all of the core content areas; and elective credits in community service, work-study, and life experience. There are three school shifts throughout the day to accommodate students who work and/or take care of children. Each school session is 10 weeks long making it possible for students to begin at almost at any time during the year.

A key feature of the Daylight/Twilight program is its support system for students. Students experiencing problems of any kind meet with an administrator as soon as possible. By the end of the school day, each student meets with his or her lead teachers and appropriate subject area teachers in a discussion

intended to eliminate issues and concerns. If needed, parents or caregivers are invited for a third session with administrators, teachers, and the student. The district believes that this support process is at the heart of Daylight/Twilight's success in retaining students in school and improving their academic and social/emotional progress.

Trenton operated a small middle school alternative program in 2002–03, but it was discontinued. As of 2004–05, there was no alternative education program for middle school students in the district.

College and Work Transition Programs

High schools in Abbott districts are also required to provide programs to help students transition to their chosen pathways after graduation. These programs should help students: 1) explore their interests and strengths; 2) improve their skills and prepare for responsible self-reliance in adulthood; and 3) prepare for college admissions and/or employment applications.

Trenton has a multi-pronged school-to-career program consisting of both school- and work-based learning, and activities to connect the two types of experiences. School-based learning exposes students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 to a variety of careers through in-class instruction, field trips to places of business, and employer visits to the school. Work-based learning consists of internships and mentoring or shadowing programs. Internship sponsors include city and state agencies, colleges and universities, and private businesses. Connecting activities occur in the Career Resource Center at Trenton Central High School and include matching students to appropriate internships and supplementing work-related learning in the classroom. At the Resource Center, students can develop career portfolios and resumes, and take part in career interest surveys and skills assessments. Resource Center staff also assist students with resumes and job applications.

Trenton Central High School is organized into eight "small learning communities" to provide greater personalization and, through

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elective courses, expose students to the skills and knowledge needed within a career area. The small learning communities are: applied engineering and science; business, computer, and technology; creative arts; hotel, restaurant, and tourism; law, justice, and public service; media and technology; medical arts; and education and global studies. According to the district, special needs students are integrated into small learning communities with additional supports as directed by their individualized education programs.

In addition to traditional academic counseling and application assistance, Trenton Central High School provides a range of services to help students prepare for college including classes for college entrance exams, college tours, on-and off-site college fairs, financial aid planning, and parent workshops. Each winter, students in their first year at nearby colleges come to Trenton Central to talk with seniors about their experiences at college.

After-School Programs

District and school staff told us that many after-school programs were cancelled in 2003–04 in response to delays in receiving supplemental program aid from the state. Among the six schools that we visited, some programs focused on academics while others were recreational or a combination of both. Gregory and Rivera Elementary schools provided tutoring; Washington had a homework club before-and after-school and a class where students learned domestic skills. Martin Luther King Middle School offered baseball, soccer, track, basketball, and swimming programs. Trenton Central High School provided tutoring, an SAT prep course, health classes; and a variety of sports programs and social and academic clubs. Parker Elementary did not have an after-school program. The Trenton Department of Recreation also sponsors activities such as tennis and swimming after school, in the evenings, and on Saturdays.

Summer Programs

The district has a summer program that provides students who have earned failing grades with another chance to earn credits for one or two courses. Program centers are located in each ward of the city. Some elementary schools also give students assignments to complete over the summer. In the fall, the work is collected and graded; students who receive a grade of C or better are invited to participate in a pizza or dance party. Assignments are also given to students during the winter break.

Trenton Central High School students can take remedial courses in the core subjects. The school also has a band camp, and hosts the Summer Bridge program to help students transition from the eighth to ninth grade.

Art and Music

Supplemental funding is available for schools that show the need for exemplary art and music programs. We briefly review below, the art and music programs at the schools we visited, who taught them, and where they were held. Ideally, we would like to see instruction take place in rooms that are dedicated to these subjects and taught by specialists in the subject matter.

All six schools we visited had music and art programs. At Rivera Elementary School, art specialists teach in the art room, computer lab, and library. Music is taught in a separate music room. Students participate in an arts education program sponsored by TEDI (formerly National Dance Institute) where they learn to dance and also learn math through movement and dance. The school also has its own drum major line and runs an annual talent show.

Martin Luther King Middle School has two music rooms for general and choral music, a room for instrumental music, and a piano lab. General art is taught in a dedicated art room; a specialty art group for painting, printmaking, and pottery is also offered. Trenton High School has three music classrooms, and specialized classrooms for visual arts, theater, and pottery. Washington Elementary students received music and art instruction in class-

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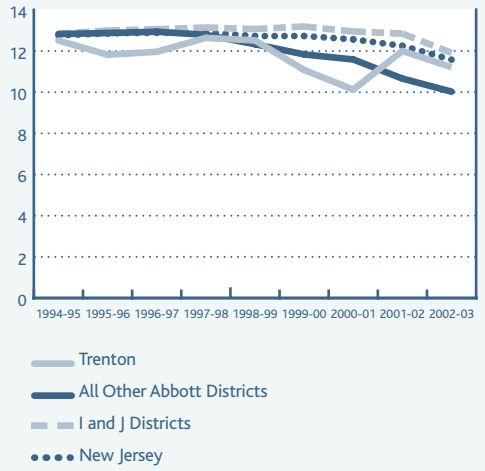
FIGURE 3.11

Student–Teacher Ratio by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

rooms dedicated to those subjects. Students at Gregory Elementary receive art instruction once per week in a separate art room. Their music teacher travels from classroom to classroom. At Parker Elementary School, specialized teachers who travel from classroom to classroom provide art and music instruction.

K-12 Teacher Qualifications and Supports

There are no wholly adequate ways to assess teaching quality without observing instruction and talking to teachers, parents, and children. These methods were beyond the scope of this project, so we offer information about the number and qualifications of teachers, the training available to them, and information about how their colleagues and the district help them to do the best job they can do.

Student-Teacher Ratio

Student-teacher ratios are different from class size. With class size we can see how many children are in the classroom on average, while student-teacher ratios show the relationship between the total number of certificated faculty and total enrollment. Student-teacher ratios may be smaller than class sizes if classes are team-taught, or if specialized faculty are present in the classrooms—such as reading specialists, or bilingual or special education aides.

Figure 3.11 shows that the student-teacher ratio improved in Trenton and the other Abbott districts between 1994–95 and 2002–03. There were fewer or the same number of students to each faculty member in Trenton than in the other Abbott districts until 2001–02. In 2002–03, Trenton's student-teacher ratio was better (lower) than the state average and I and J districts.

Faculty Attendance

Teachers who like their jobs, are involved in decision-making at school, and believe that their schools support their efforts are absent from the job less often. The quality of a school's environment plays a big part in explaining teacher stress, and therefore teacher attendance. Teachers say that student

misbehavior and even the change involved in school reform contribute to stress and burnout. Of course, personal circumstances, such as health and family responsibilities, also account for some teacher absence. Next we examine faculty attendance rates in Trenton, compared to other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state as a whole.

Figure 3.12 shows a positive statewide trend in faculty attendance between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Faculty attendance in all other Abbott districts has tracked the statewide average pretty closely throughout the period shown. Trenton faculty attendance has gone up and down, however, from a low of 87 percent in 1999–00 to a high of 95 percent in 2001–02.

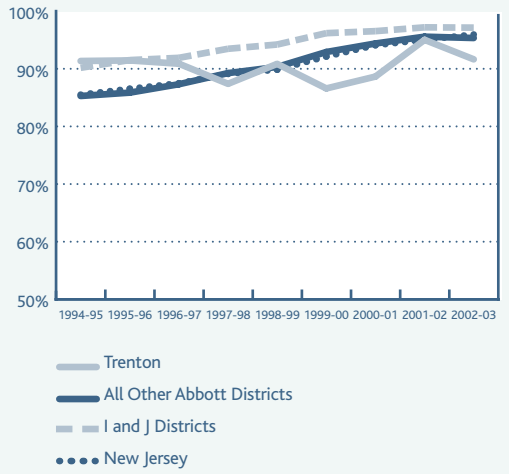
Highly Qualified Teachers

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.[19] The requirements of becoming highly qualified under federal law vary depending 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 amount 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.

Figures 3.13 and 3.14 show the percentage of highly qualified teachers in Trenton, the wealthiest districts, and the state average for elementary and secondary schools respectively. Reading left to right, the three sets of grouped bars show the percent who are highly qualified in at least *one* subject, the percent who are highly qualified in *all* core subjects,

FIGURE 3.12

Faculty Attendance by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

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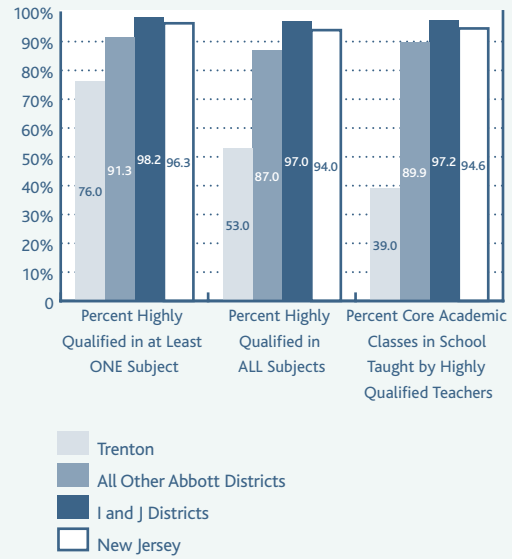
FIGURE | 3.13

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



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

and the percent of core subject area *classes* taught by a highly qualified teacher.

All districts must submit a "highly qualified teacher" report. Many districts, including Trenton, had difficulty compiling the information needed to fulfill this reporting requirement. In Trenton, the district attempted to collect the needed information from the schools. Schools were to survey teachers and transmit updated information to the district office. Because of uneven compliance with this request, district staff needed to find another way to comply with the federal reporting requirement. In the end, district staff compiled the needed information from human resources files which may have lacked up-to-date information. The Trenton report review team believed that this occurred as a result of intradistrict communication problems. After confirming that the following information was what the district had submitted, the reviewers concluded that it should be viewed—despite its potential problems—because of its importance as a proxy for teaching quality.

The vast majority of teachers in the state are highly qualified, but Trenton had the lowest percentage of highly qualified teachers among the district groupings we examined. Three out of four (76%) Trenton elementary school teachers were highly qualified in at least *one* subject and slightly more than half (53%) were highly qualified in *all* of the core subjects they taught.

There was a real gap between Trenton and the other district groupings in the percent of *classes* taught by highly qualified teachers. Thirty-nine percent of Trenton's core elementary school classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, compared to about 90 percent in the other Abbott districts and even more in the other district groupings. There are two reasons we might see a difference between the percent of highly qualified *teachers* on the one hand and the percent of *classes* taught by them on the other. The percent of classes may be lower if highly qualified teachers have lighter course loads. Also, teachers may be asked to teach subjects other than the ones they are highly qualified for. In

Trenton, either the highly qualified teachers teach fewer classes or are assigned to teach other subjects.

Figure 3.14 shows the same information about teachers in Trenton's two high schools, although the results reveal a very different pattern. Fewer than half of Trenton's high school teachers were highly qualified in at least *one* subject; however, 80 percent of the core academic *classes* were taught by highly qualified teachers. These findings suggest that the highly qualified teachers taught the majority of core subject area classes in the high schools. All other Abbott districts faired relatively well in comparison with the I and J districts and the state average on all three measures of teacher qualifications.

Staffing Patterns

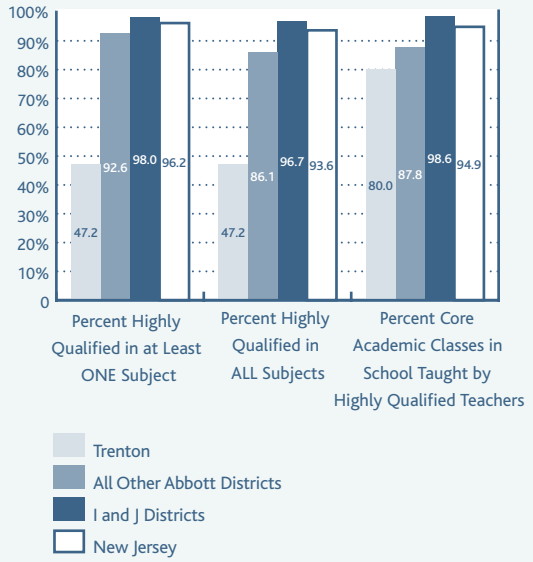
Abbott districts electronically submit their school-by-school staffing plans to the New Jersey Department of Education each year. We present the districts' submissions as estimates of the true number of staff that are employed. These numbers do not reflect any new hires or layoffs that occurred after the data were reported by the district to the state.

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. Below, we compare Trenton and the other Abbott districts on the percent of schools with each required position in 2002–03 and 2003–04. Findings are shown separately for schools serving students in the elementary grades, students in Grades 6 through 12, and all schools.

Under Abbott, children in Grades 1 through 6 who are not reading at grade level are entitled to tutoring sessions. Each school should have teacher-tutors to provide one-on-one tutoring to students in Grades 1 through 3 and small-group tutoring to students in Grades 4 through 6. Abbott elementary schools should also have an instructional facilitator to coordinate Whole School Reform efforts and act as a mentor and information resource to his or her teacher-colleagues. Finally, each elementary school should have a

FIGURE 3.14

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



SOURCE Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

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FIGURE | 3.15

Percent of Schools with Required Abbott Staff Positions: Trenton and All Other Abbott Districts, 2002–03 to 2003–04

	Trenton		All Other Abbott Districts	
Elementary Schools Staff	2002–03	2003–04	2002–03	2003–04
Instructional Facilitator	100.0%	100.0%	97.1%	94.9%
Social Worker	55.6%	33.3%	70.5%	70.8%
Teacher Tutor	100.0%	100.0%	20.2%	36.9%
All Positions	55.6%	33.3%	18.3%	33.7%

	Trenton		All Other Abbott Districts	
Middle and High Schools Staff	2002–03	2003–04	2002–03	2003–04
Attendance/Dropout Prevention Officer	40.0%	40.0%	49.8%	52.4%
Health-Social Service Coordinator	40.0%	20.0%	34.3%	38.0%
All Positions	30.0%	0.0%	25.0%	26.3%

	Trenton		All Other Abbott Districts	
All Schools Staff	2002–03	2003–04	2002–03	2003–04
Family Liaison (Parent-Community Coordinator)	54.2%	83.3%	69.3%	70.3%
Guidance Counselor	95.8%	100.0%	93.7%	93.2%
Librarian/Media Specialist	95.8%	95.8%	89.1%	90.8%
Nurse/Health Specialist	95.8%	95.8%	97.3%	97.1%
Security Officer	95.8%	100.0%	87.7%	88.4%
Technology Coordinator	87.5%	91.7%	82.1%	86.0%
All Positions	45.8%	75.0%	58.0%	55.8%

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

social worker to work as an integral part of the Family Support Team coordinating supportive services for students.

Figure 3.15 shows that 56 percent of the Trenton schools serving students in the elementary grades had all of the required staffing positions in 2002–03 and one in three did so in 2003–04. All Trenton elementary schools employed instructional facilitators and teacher tutors in both years. Although this is positive news, none of the six schools we visited in 2003–04 had the full tutoring program for students in Grades 1 through 6 as envisioned under Abbott (see Early Literacy, above). Trenton had better compliance with the elementary school staffing requirements than the other Abbott districts in 2002–03, but about the same relatively low level of compliance in 2003–04.

Abbott requires each school serving middle and high school-age students to have two staff positions: dropout prevention coordinator and health and social services coordinator. Dropout prevention coordinators work with staff, parents, and students to identify stu-

dents at risk of dropping out and intervene by referring students to needed services. Health and social service coordinators ensure that students get the services they need to come to school ready to learn, benefit from instruction, and succeed in school.

Compared to Trenton's elementary schools, fewer schools serving students in Grades 6 through 12 had the staff required under Abbott (Figure 3.15). In 2003–04, 40 percent had at least one dropout prevention officer, 20 percent had at least one health and social service coordinator, and no Trenton schools employed staff in both required positions. In the other Abbott districts, about one half of the middle and high schools had dropout prevention coordinators and about one third had health and social service coordinators in both years.

Figure 3.15 also lists the positions that every Abbott school should have—regardless of grade level—and compares Trenton's compliance with all of the other Abbott districts. In 2002–03, almost all of Trenton's schools had each of the positions required under Abbott but less than half had all of the required positions staffed. The percent of schools employing some of the staff positions increased in 2003–04, including: family liaisons, guidance counselors, security officers, and technology coordinators. Three quarters of the Trenton schools had all of the required staff positions in 2003–04. More than half of the schools in the other Abbott districts were in compliance with the full staffing requirements in both years.

Professional Development

Regardless of experience, teachers can benefit from opportunities to update their knowledge and sharpen their skills. Most importantly, instructional practice tends to improve when teachers are provided with the supports they need to work effectively in the classroom. Below, we present the types of professional development offered to Trenton's K-12 teachers.

For teachers. In Trenton, two full days are allotted for professional development activities. Every teacher also has three hours and twenty minutes per week for individual

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preparation and team planning. Staff development also takes place during the weekly team meetings.

In 2003–04, teachers attended in-service workshops and outside conferences given by institutions such as Rutgers, Rowan and Rider Universities; the New Jersey Institute of Technology; and Reading First program.20 Teachers also received training on Connected Mathematics, the district's new math curriculum. The Newgrange Educational Outreach Program of Princeton provides elementary schools in the district with a staff member who models reading lessons for teachers in the early grades. Whole School Reform model developers used to provide most of the district's professional development but this has decreased in recent years. District staff told us that Success For All is one of the only models that continues to offer training opportunities, and reading and math facilitators for teachers.

Teachers have other opportunities for professional development outside of regular school hours. There is an optional two-week summer session where teachers review and discuss school data, and receive training in instructional practices. In 2003, 85 percent of teachers participated in this program. The district also has an online masters program; and every staff member is reimbursed for workshops they attend or coursework they complete.

School and district staff told us that ideas for professional development come from a number of sources: annual school needs assessments; teacher performance evaluations; feedback from district staff; and reviews of school data including student test scores, attendance, and discipline.

For principals. The Superintendent holds monthly "Roundtable" sessions for principals. These meetings are run like courses with the Superintendent conducting lectures, and assigning readings and papers to write. As a group, the principals analyze school data, and talk about issues around leadership, curriculum, and instruction. Consultants are also brought in to present. The principals we spoke with reported that these sessions have

been helpful, and serve as a model of how to provide professional development for their own staff. Principal retreats are also held at the beginning of the school year.

K-12 Budget

Overview

Up to this point, we have explored the characteristics of Trenton and its children, and what schools and district offices do to provide children with a sound public education. Of course, schools and districts need money to pay for most of the elements of effective schooling we have discussed. An adequate budget is, in itself, another essential element of effective schooling.

Unlike any other state in the nation, New Jersey ensures that the poorest urban school districts have enough money to provide children in preschool through Grade 12 with a sound public education. In this section, we describe the fiscal conditions in New Jersey's cities that resulted in a school funding gap between its urban and suburban districts. We then recount efforts led by New Jersey residents to help close that gap. Finally, we explore how these efforts have affected the money that is available to Trenton and other school districts throughout the state to support public education.

Fiscal Distress

Trenton, like several cities in the United States, entered into a state of fiscal distress in the mid-to late-20th Century. A pattern of urban decline was marked by a loss of private-sector employers and residents at the upper end of the income scale. Job and resident losses continued in a downward spiral that resulted in decreasing property values and local tax revenues.

Neighborhoods in these cities began to experience the all-too-common symptoms of urban distress, including unemployment, high crime, and public health problems. Compared to those who left, the lower-income residents who remained placed a greater demand on public services such as public assistance, law enforcement, and subsidized

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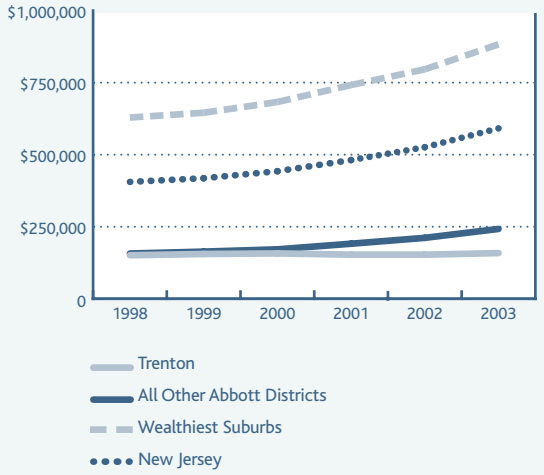
FIGURE | 3.16

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



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

health care and housing. State and federal money that helped cities meet the increased demand for these services decreased over the same time period and did not make up for the lost local revenues.

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. In New Jersey, public education is supported in large part by local taxes.[21] When property tax revenues decline, cities have less money to pay for education.

Figure 3.16 compares the property wealth in Trenton, the other Abbott cities, the wealthiest suburbs in the state, and the state over all. Because local taxes are based on property values, property wealth is a good indicator of the availability of money for education and other services provided by New Jersey's towns and cities.[22,23]

The most striking feature of Figure 3.16 is the enormous gap in property wealth between Trenton and the other Abbott cities on the one hand and the wealthiest (I and J) suburbs on the other. In 1998, per student property values were four times higher in the wealthy suburbs ($628,955) than in Trenton ($151,076). Property values rose by 46 percent across the state between 1998 and 2003, but by only four percent in Trenton. By 2003, the I and J districts had five times more property wealth per student ($882,773) than Trenton ($158,468). Even the state average of nearly $600,000 of property wealth per student was almost four times higher than Trenton in the same year.

Strapped for money to pay for services, distressed cities could either increase their property wealth or raise local tax rates. It would not be an easy task to reverse the process of decline and replace lost property wealth. As a result, many cities were forced to raise their taxes, even though higher taxes might prevent potential residents and employers from moving in.

Figure 3.17 compares the total tax rates[24] in Trenton with those found in the other Abbott cities, the wealthiest suburbs, and across the state. Trenton's total tax rate was 3.7 in 1998, much higher than in the wealthiest suburbs

the same year (2.2) or the 3.0 maximum recommended by two commissions created to study local taxes in New Jersey. On average, local tax rates have declined by 11 percent throughout the state, in contrast to a five percent rise in Trenton. By 2003, Trenton's total tax rate was 3.8, higher than the statewide average of 2.3 or the 2.8 rate in all of the other Abbott districts, and double the tax rate of 1.9 in the I and J districts that same year.

School Finance

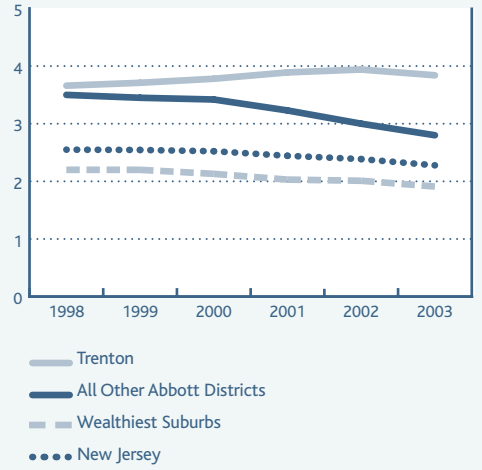
Abbott districts receive two kinds of state aid in addition to funding available to other school districts in New Jersey. The first type, Abbott Parity Aid, ensures that Abbott districts have as much money per student to support a general education as the most successful suburban districts in the state. Abbott Parity Aid has been distributed to Abbott districts every year since 1997–98. Abbott districts must apply to the state to receive a second type of state aid, which we call Additional Abbott Aid. Along with other state and federal funding, Additional Abbott Aid supports programs and services such as intensive early literacy, full-day Kindergarten, on-site school clinics, and after-school and nutrition programs.[25]

In this section, we examine the resources that Trenton has had to support its educational program for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. General education funding and supplemental programs funding are presented separately below.

General education funding. As a result of property wealth differences and New Jersey's heavy reliance on the property tax to fund public schools, a large funding gap opened between New Jersey's urban and suburban school districts. By 1989, New Jersey's low-income communities had $1,500 less per student in general education funding.[26] Although the State Constitution grants the right to a "thorough and efficient" education, the reality was that students in low-income, urban districts did not receive the same educational resources as their suburban peers. From the 1970s onward, education stakeholders throughout the state fought for the rights of

FIGURE 3.17

Average Equalized Tax Rate by District Grouping, 1998–2003



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

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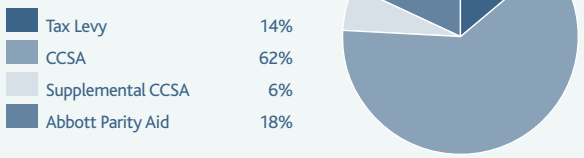
FIGURE | 3.18

General Education Funding by Source: Trenton, 2003–04



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–03 to 2003–04

children in urban school districts to have the same resources as their peers. The lawsuits, known collectively as *Abbott v. Burke*, were integral to this effort.

In 1996, the state legislature enacted the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act of 1996 (CEIFA) to restructure the state's school finance system. CEIFA provided several forms of state aid that are still distributed to school districts to this day. Core Curriculum Standards Aid (CCSA) was intended to make up the difference between what school districts could afford and what the state—at the time—considered to be an adequate level of school funding to support a thorough and efficient education. Some districts also receive Supplemental CCSA to ease their local tax burdens. A third type of funding that comes from CEIFA, Stabilization Aid, goes to districts that might otherwise lose too much CCSA from year to year because of enrollment changes.

In a groundbreaking Abbott decision, the New Jersey Supreme Court found the school funding solution under CEIFA to be unconstitutional. The justices said that the cost of education in the poorest urban districts should be determined by what successful districts spend and identified the wealthiest suburban (I and J) districts as their standard. Since 1997–98, Abbott Parity Aid makes up the difference between what these urban districts could afford (plus CCSA) and what the wealthiest districts actually spent on average.[27]

Figure 3.18 shows the sources of funding for Trenton's schools in 2003–04. Fourteen percent of the district's general education revenue came from local taxes. Trenton drew the largest portion (62%) from Core Curriculum Standards Aid. Eighteen percent of the money that the Trenton Public Schools had to spend came from the state in the form of Abbott Parity Aid.

We now compare what Trenton had to spend on general education in 2003–04 with the amounts in the other Abbott districts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts, and the state average (Figure 3.19). (The figures have all been divided by the resident enrollment in each category to provide per student amounts.) In

2002–03, Trenton schools received $9,756 per student on average, about the same as the other Abbott districts ($9,835) and the most successful suburbs ($9,973). All district groupings had an increase in per student funding in 2003–04, when Trenton received $10,265 per student. Again, this amount is about the same as the average of the other Abbott districts and the I and J districts, respectively.

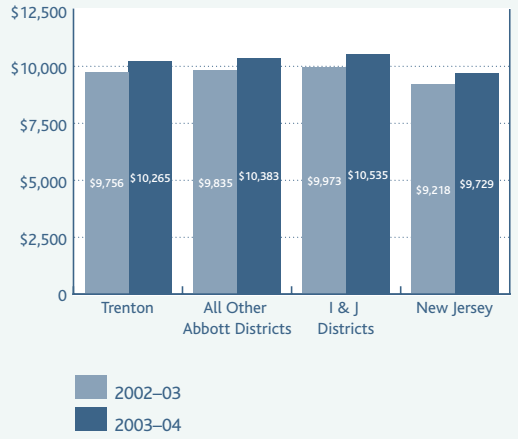
Figure 3.19 shows that Abbott Parity Aid, in combination with other state aid, now provides the Abbott districts with a per-student general education budget on par with the wealthiest suburban school districts. We turn now to school taxes, the portion of local taxes that pays for public education. Like the total tax rate, a school tax rate is expressed as a fraction of the assessed property value. An important benefit of the Abbott decisions was to allow the urban districts to freeze locally-supported school spending at the 1997 level. If property values rise and school spending is frozen, then school tax rates should drop in proportion.

We have shown (Figure 3.16) that Trenton's property wealth increased a little between 1998 and 2003. As expected, Trenton's school tax rates declined by very little (Figure 3.20). In 1998, Trenton homeowners paid $1.21 in school taxes for every $100 of assessed property value, a lower rate than in the wealthiest suburbs (1.31), the other Abbott cities (1.33) or across the state on average (1.4). Between 1998 and 2003, property values increased a great deal more in the other district groupings and their school tax rates fell more dramatically. Trenton's school tax rates fell by only two percent during this time period, less sharply than in the other Abbott cities (30%), the wealthiest suburbs (10%), and statewide (8%). By 2003, the school tax rate Trenton was 1.18, higher than in the other Abbott cities (0.96), about the same as in the wealthiest suburbs (1.17), but lower than the state average (1.28).

Supplemental programs funding. To be ready and successful learners, the children and youth of Trenton have unique needs for

FIGURE 3.19

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

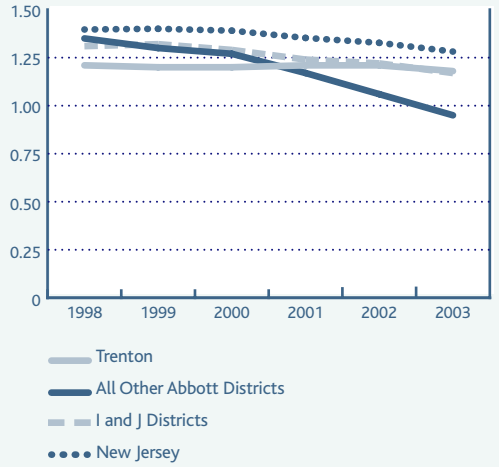


SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–03 to 2003–04

3 K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.20

Average School Tax Rate by District Grouping, 1998–2003



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

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. DEPA 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 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.

How did the Trenton Public Schools support its supplemental programs and how much money did it have? In 2003–04, Trenton had a total of $2,424 per student to support its supplemental programs (Figures 3.21 and 3.22). Trenton had more supplemental program aid per student than did the other Abbott districts ($1,949). Trenton received a larger portion of its supplemental program aid from Additional Abbott Aid than the other districts.[28]

When we spoke with staff in spring 2004, the district was waiting to see if the New Jersey Department of Education would allocate the approved Additional Abbott Aid for the 2003–04 school year. The district had stopped spending on everything except essential instructional services: after-school

programs were cut, as was teacher overtime pay. The district was concerned that if the appeals were not successful, they would have to make additional cuts, and possibly lay off staff. In the end, the New Jersey Supreme Court required the New Jersey Department of Education to pay the district.

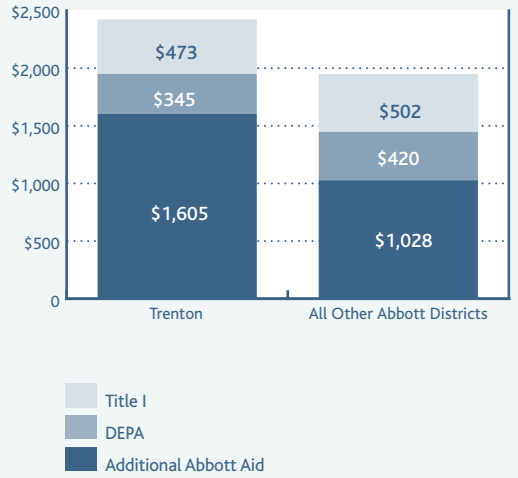
Whatever Trenton received from the state in the form of Additional Abbott Parity Aid, we know now that it was transferred to the district months after it was needed. All in all, we still want to know how the 2003–04 levels of supplemental funding compare with the previous year. Figure 3.22 shows that the amount of money the district had to support supplemental programs actually decreased by $147 per student or by about six percent. Supplemental funding was more stable in the other Abbott districts that lost, on average, $44 per student between 2002–03 and 2003–04.

Abbott Parity Aid supports only the "first half" of the required full day of Kindergarten. The remaining money (the "second half" of the day) must come from Additional Abbott Aid. Trenton Public Schools needed about $6 million of Additional Abbott Aid to cover the cost of the second half-day of Kindergarten. The district received $24.2 million in Additional Abbott Aid that year leaving $18 million to support the full array of supplemental programs intended for low-income children.

The New Jersey Department of Education did not fully fund any district's 2004–05 request for Additional Abbott Aid. Nineteen school districts appealed the state's decision. The Trenton Public Schools requested about $32 million and the Department of Education initially approved $25.9 million of its request. After an appeal, Trenton and the state negotiated a settlement that resulted in about $31.1 million to support Trenton's supplemental programs.

FIGURE 3.21

Per Student Supplemental Program Aid by Source: Trenton and All Other Abbott Districts, 2003–04



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–03 to 2003–04

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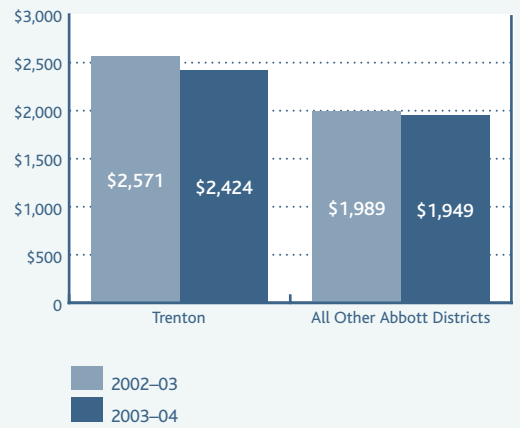
FIGURE 3.22

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



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002–03 to 2003–04

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 the neighborhood. 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. Typically, SLC membership includes the principal, teachers, non-instructional staff, parents, community representatives and the Whole School Reform facilitator. Sometimes the SLC includes students. Some SLC members are elected by the groups they represent, such as staff and parents. The principal appoints community representatives from a broad and diverse candidate pool. SLC members serve at least two years with staggered terms. The SLC 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 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. The following types of training should be made available to SLC members by the district or the New Jersey Department of Education: SLC member roles and responsibilities, budgeting and planning, needs assessment, state and federal laws and regulations, the CCCS, personnel functions, and programs for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Representation on SLCs varies from school to school in Trenton. Typically, they are made up of the required members listed above, although one chair admitted that there has never been parent representation on her

committee. Of the six schools we visited, all of their SLCs were organized into subcommittees or task forces. Each smaller group addressed organizational issues such as budgeting, curriculum, testing, professional development, and community involvement. All six participated in the budgeting and three-year planning process. These two tasks were informed by the collection and review of data such as student test scores and grades; and feedback from teacher, parent, and student surveys. This information also helped staff identify goals for the coming year, needed programs and services, and professional development opportunities for teachers, all of which are aligned with the school's three-year plan.

Along with the other Abbott districts, Trenton used school-based budgeting in the early years of Abbott. Early 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 Abbott districts, control over budgeting and planning moved away from the schools and returned to the district office in 2002–03. Since then, budgeting has begun with the district's business administrator, who sets school budgets based on state templates, previous spending levels and a cost-of-living increase. The district's business administrator sends a copy of each school's budget to its SLC for review and modification. Any SLC request over the allowance must be reviewed for approval by the district office. 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.

Of the SLC representatives we spoke with in six Trenton schools, five had the opportunity to vote in support of their schools' plans and budgets as required under Abbott. The SLC members we spoke with also told us that they received little professional development in 2003–04: some presentations were given

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on assessment requirements and standards and newly elected members received orientations on SLC responsibilities. SLC members at Rivera Elementary receive leadership training two to three times per year through Modern Red Schoolhouse, their Whole School Reform model developer.

One SLC representative talked about how difficult it has been to find out who is responsible at the district office and the New Jersey Department of Education for providing SLCs with professional development. SLC members felt they needed the most guidance with budgeting, curriculum, and team building. Another person expressed frustration with the conflicting messages SLCs often receive from district officials about the budgeting process: program staff encourage them to propose needed programs in their plans and budgets, but budget staff often tell them that the funding is not available. As a result, most requests for added funding for new staff positions are denied.

Abbott Advisory Council

The Abbott Advisory Council (AAC), formerly known as the district Whole School Reform Steering Committee is a joint steering committee for whole school reform, represented by district and community representatives. The responsibilities of the Abbott Advisory Council are to: 1) review the district's policies and procedures that implement the Abbott reforms; 2) review the district's three-year operational plan and annual modifications prior to submission for board approval; and 3) assess efforts to improve teaching and learning in the district, celebrate successes, and identify ways to overcome obstacles that may exist.

Each Abbott district should have an Abbott Advisory Council. In violation of current state regulations, Trenton did not have an Abbott Advisory Council as of September 2004. The Superintendent reports that the Trenton Board of Education serves in this capacity. Two community reviewers observed that the district used to have a very active steering committee; however, it is no longer functioning.

K-12 Student Outcomes

Years ago, educational success was mostly determined by student, family, and neighborhood characteristics. As education stakeholders, our job is to ensure that this is no longer true. The educational success of our children is a product of things we can change for the better: opportunities for students to learn; staff to teach students, and supports for that staff; financial resources to work with; the educational environment; and the leadership and planning at the school, district, and state levels to guide the whole process.

The Abbott remedies were intended to support efforts of schools, districts, parents and advocates to improve these elements of effective 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 findings presented in this section in light of the material we have presented up to this point and the material that follows in Section 4 of this report.

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 her as a leading indicator: students can only benefit from opportunities to learn if they attend school regularly. Below, we examine student attendance rates in elementary and high schools separately.

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 (Figure 3.23). Trenton's elementary school student attendance was at 93 percent in 1994–95 and remained at about that level in all years except 2000–01, when it was at about 95 percent. In most years, about

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

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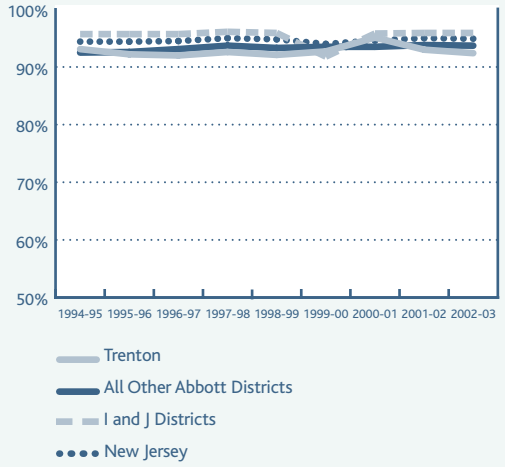
FIGURE 3.23

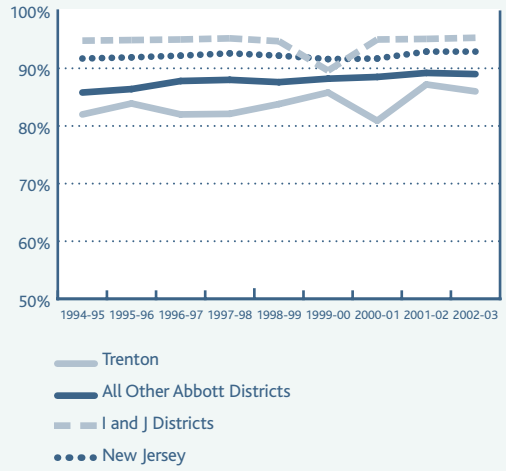
Student Attendance by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.24

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



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

95 percent of elementary students in the I and J districts attended school on any given day.

High school attendance rates were lower across the state when compared to the elementary schools (Figure 3.24). Trenton high school attendance varied from year to year: it was at its lowest in 2000–01 with 81 percent of students attending on an average day; it was at its highest in the following year, with 87 percent attendance. High school attendance was higher in the other Abbott districts and improved from 86 to 89 percent over the years. The high school attendance rate remained at about 92 percent across the state on average. High school attendance was highest in the wealthiest suburbs at about 95 percent, with the exception of 1999–00 when it dropped to 90 percent.

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 | 3.25

Child and Youth Well-Being Indicators: Trenton and New Jersey, 1998–2002

		Trenton				New Jersey	
		Time 1		Time 2		Time 1	Time 2
Indicator	Time Period	NUMBER	PER 1,000	NUMBER	PER 1,000	PER 1,000	PER 1,000
Births to Teens (10–14)	1998–2002	12	3.7	8	2.5	0.6	0.5
Births to Teens (15–19)	1998–2002	329	119.4	252	91.5	34.1	28.8
Child Abuse and Neglect	1998–2002	275	10.4	233	8.8	3.4	4.2

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.

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Measures of child and youth well-being are not part of the information typically collected or reported by school districts. Such information is usually generated by the various state and local agencies charged with the health and welfare of children. We present two citywide indicators of child and youth well-being (Figure 3.25) for Trenton and the State of New Jersey: teen birth and child abuse and neglect rates.

On both critical measures, Trenton compares poorly with the state. Births to teens between the ages of 10 and 14 dropped from 3.7 to 2.5 per thousand girls in this age range. In 1998, about 119 out of a thousand teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 gave birth; this rate dropped to about 92 per thousand in 2002. Although Trenton's teen birth rates dropped in both age groups, the 2002 rates were much higher than they were throughout the state on average. Similarly, Trenton's child abuse rate dropped from about 10 per thousand in 1998 to about nine per thousand in 2002. Even so, Trenton's child abuse rate was double the state rate in 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.

A school is called persistently dangerous if it meets either one of the two following conditions for three consecutive years:

1) Seven or more of the following types of incidents, known as 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) An index rating of 1 or more Category B incidents (calculated by a ratio of the sum of the following incidents over the square root of the

enrollment), including: 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 power to penalize any employee who knowingly falsifies incident reports.[29] The new regulations do not outline what powers the New Jersey Department of Education has to penalize school districts that knowingly falsify reports.

Our second concern involves the role of interpretation. State guidelines urge schools and districts to consider if an incident is indeed an offense or merely "developmentally appropriate behavior." The New Jersey Department of Education trains school district personnel on how to recognize and classify incidents. The system is not yet perfect, however.

We report information from New Jersey's Violence and Vandalism Reporting System despite our concerns for two reasons: 1) because it is the only available statewide information, and 2) because of the critical importance of school safety. Figures 3.26 through 3.29 show the number of Category A offenses and the NCLB (Category B) Index for Trenton, all other Abbotts, the wealthiest districts, and the state from 1999–00 to 2002–03. Under NCLB, the "persistently dangerous" threshold is the same for elementary and high schools. Incident counts and index ratings are reported separately below because the types of incidents that occur in elementary schools tend to differ in nature from those that occur in high schools. Schools serving students

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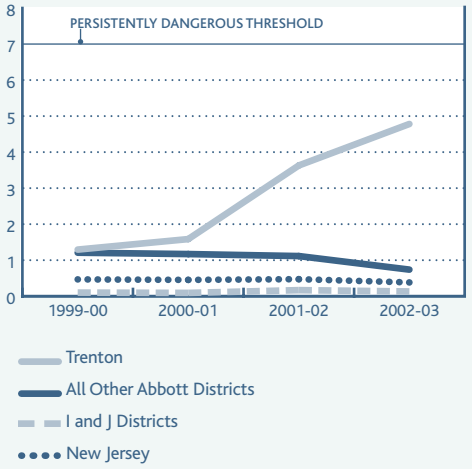
FIGURE 3.26

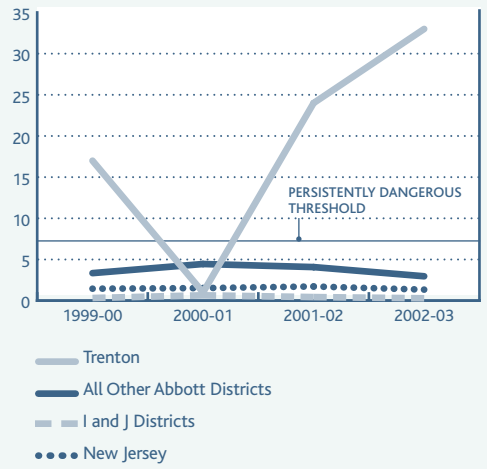
"Category A" Offenses by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.27

"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

in the middle grades are included with the elementary schools.

Figure 3.26 shows the number of Category A offenses that took place in elementary schools between 1999–00 and 2002–03 by district grouping. The bar across the top of the chart shows the level at which, after three consecutive years, a school would be considered persistently dangerous. The most striking finding is that none of the district groupings we analyzed had an average that came anywhere near this level. Trenton's elementary schools had an average of 1.3 incidents in 1999–00 which was comparable to the other Abbott districts. In the next year, the number of Category A incidents increased slightly and rose more steeply in 2001–02 and 2002–03 to 4.8. Elementary schools in all other Abbott districts averaged about 1.2 Category A incidents per year until 2002–03, when the average dropped below 1. Elementary schools in the wealthiest (I and J) districts appear much safer by this measure: they averaged less than one-tenth of an incident per school during the same time period.

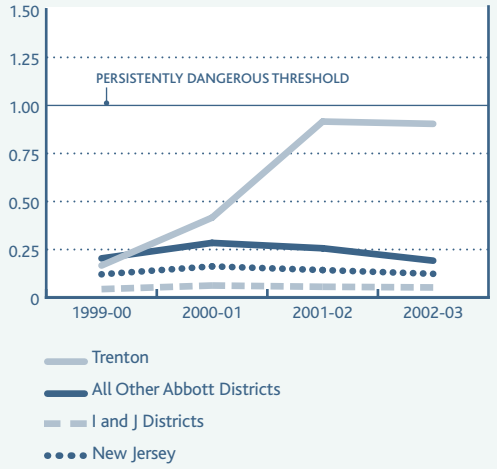
Figure 3.27 shows the number of Category A offenses in the high schools between 1999–00 and 2002–03 by district grouping. (Note that in Figures 3.27 and 3.29, Trenton Central is the only school reporting in 1999–00 through 2001–02; 2002–03 shows an average of Trenton Central and Daylight/Twilight High Schools.) By this measure, Trenton stands out as reporting enough Category A incidents to place it in the persistently dangerous range in three *nonconsecutive* years out of the four years shown. There were 17 Category A incidents in 1999–00, only one in 2000–01, and 24 and 33 incidents in 2001–02 and 2002–03 respectively. High schools in the other Abbott districts averaged between 3 and 4.5 Category A incidents over the entire time period. High schools in the wealthiest districts were the safest by this measure, averaging less than one Category A incident each year during the same time period.

Turning to the Category B index in elementary schools, Figure 3.28 shows a clear increase in the number of these incidents occurring in Trenton. In 1999–00, Trenton elementary schools had an average index at about the state average and far below the persistently dangerous threshold. In 2000–01, the index rose to 0.4, still below the threshold. In 2001–02 and 2002–03 the index rose to about 0.9. In contrast, the average Category B index in the other district groupings has been stable with the wealthiest districts the lowest, the state average slightly above that, and the other Abbott districts just above the others.

Figure 3.29, which shows the Category B index in Trenton high schools, is almost identical to Figure 3.27. In three *nonconsecutive* years of the four years shown, Trenton was above the persistently dangerous threshold by this measure. The Trenton index was 1.1 in 1999–00, 1.8 in 2001–02 and 2.5 in 2002–03 (the three-year threshold is 1.0). In contrast, the other district groupings stayed about the same over the four-year period. The index scores for the high schools in the wealthiest districts stayed at about 0.2, the state average at about 0.3, and the other Abbott districts ranged between 0.4 and 0.5.

FIGURE 3.28

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

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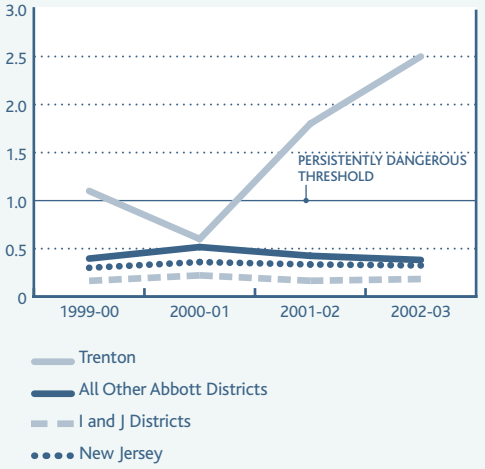
FIGURE 3.29

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

The violence and vandalism findings show Trenton, as a district, at the verge of being classified as persistently dangerous. What is done from this point is critical to the safety of the children and will determine whether schools in the district become subject to the Unsafe School Choice Option set by law.

Given the criticisms of the reporting system we outlined above, we also need to know how accurately the schools are reporting. How much are the gaps between Trenton and the other district groupings we analyzed caused by differences in safety and how much are they caused by differences in the accuracy with which incidents have been reported?

Suspension

Students are suspended from school for reasons usually explained in a district's disciplinary code. Low suspension rates suggest a number of positive things about a district's schools. For example, suspension rates may be low because the students genuinely behave well, they understand and accept the rules, or because the disruptions that occur are addressed without removing students from the classroom. Figures 3.30 and 3.31 show suspension rates in Trenton compared with the other Abbott districts, the I and J districts, and the state average. Disciplinary issues and suspension rates differ between elementary and high schools, so we examine them separately below.[30] Schools serving students in the middle grades are included with the elementary schools.

In 1999–00, Trenton's elementary school suspension rates were high compared to any other district grouping we examined. In every year since, however, the district's rates were similar to the average in all other Abbott districts. In 2002–03, for example, the average elementary school suspension rate was nine percent in Trenton, compared to eight percent in the other Abbott districts and six percent statewide. Suspension rates in the wealthiest districts were low: between one and three percent throughout the same period.

Compared to the elementary school suspension rates, high school rates are higher in every district grouping we examined. Tren-

ton's high school suspension rates have swung between 10 and 20 percent since 1999–00. Average high school suspension rates have remained stable in the 20 percent range in the other Abbott districts and at about 10 percent in the I and J districts.

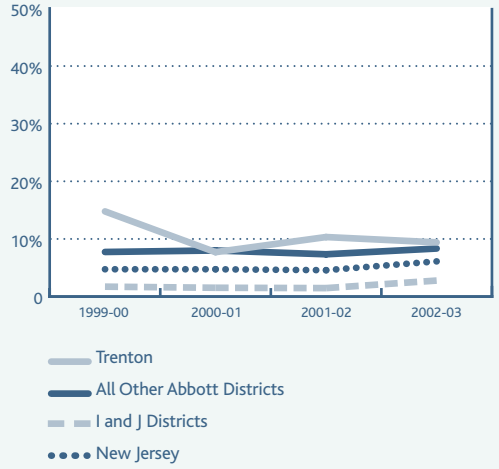
Student Achievement

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires states to have curriculum standards, conduct annual testing, and report test results on a school-by-school basis. An important NCLB goal is for every student to meet state standards by 2013–14, including students in demographic groups that have historically underperformed on standardized tests. Under NCLB, test results must be reported separately for Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White students; students with disabilities; English language learners; and students who are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

In New Jersey, the fourth grade test is called the ASK4 (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge). According to the New Jersey

FIGURE 3.30

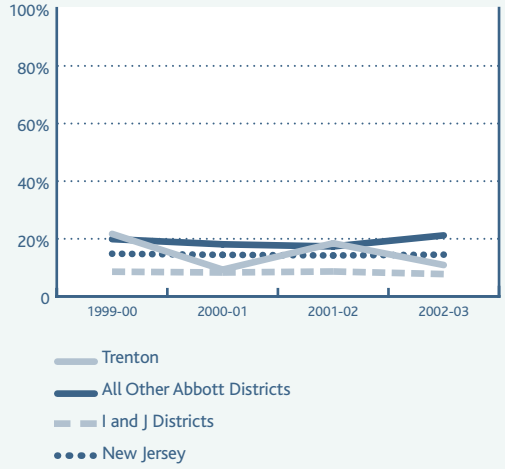
Suspension Rate by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

FIGURE 3.31

Suspension Rate by District Grouping: High Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

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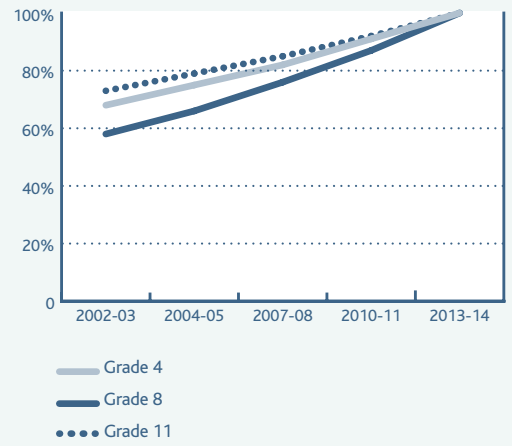
FIGURE 3.32

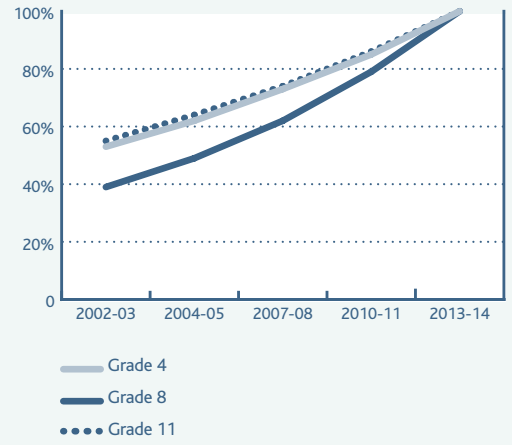
New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Language Arts Literacy



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

FIGURE 3.33

New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Math



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

Department of Education, 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). The HSPT and HSPA are different tests, so results for each are shown separately below.

NCLB also requires states to identify a "target" percentage of students who will pass each test each year. These targets must gradually increase until 2013–14, when every student in every demographic group is expected to pass every test. Under NCLB, a school is making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) only if every group of students meets the state's target in every test. Figures 3.32 and 3.33 show New Jersey's language arts literacy and math targets. Note that the targets start at different levels in 2002–03 and gradually increase to universal pass rates in 2013–14.

With some exceptions, schools with a subgroup that misses an AYP benchmark for two or more years in a row must undertake a series of actions outlined in Figure 3.34.

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 Trenton, all other Abbotts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts in the state, and the state overall. Second, we show the percent of Trenton's general education students scoring within the three proficiency categories over time. Third, we compare Trenton's major student

FIGURE | 3.34

Categories and Action Steps for Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress

Years not Meeting Standards	Category	Action Steps
1	Early Warning	No actions are required under NCLB, but schools and districts should identify areas that need to be improved.
2	School Improvement	Parents are notified and given the option to transfer their children to a school that made AYP. Schools must identify areas needing improvement and work with parents, teachers, and outside experts to develop a plan.
3	School Improvement	Tutoring and other supplemental services must be made available.
4	Corrective Action	School choice and supplemental services are still available. In addition, schools must undertake at least one of a series of corrective actions, including: staff replacement; curriculum adoption; decreased school authority; external consultant to advise the school; extended school day or year; and/or reorganize school governance.
5	Corrective Action	School must develop a plan for alternate school governance. Choice, supplemental services, and other corrective actions still required.
6	Restructuring	Implement alternate school governance developed in year five.

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

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demographic groups according to the percent scoring in the three proficiency categories in 2002–03. Fourth, we present schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2003–04. Finally, in recognition that district averages may mask important differences between schools, we highlight the schools in Trenton that did well on each test and the schools that improved the most over time.

Grade Four: ESPA/NJASK 4. Nationally, reading achievement scores of students in Grade 4 have not improved since 1992.[31] We turn now to examine the results of the language arts literacy test given to Grade 4 New Jersey students with particular interest in changes since the Abbott reforms went into effect. Abbott school funding increased in 1997–98, but 1999–00 was when the first wave of Abbott schools started implementing Whole School Reform.[32] Students tested in 1999–00 experienced one year at most of any instructional improvements brought about by Abbott. In contrast, students tested in 2002–03 could have experienced up to four years of these improvements if they were enrolled in an Abbott school since 1999–00.

Given the potential changes to the instructional program, resources, teaching, and leadership we might expect to see student performance begin to improve over this period. But, we also know that the positive effects of Whole School Reform have taken five or more years to occur in other school districts throughout the country. The interviews we conducted suggest that many Trenton schools thoroughly adopted and implemented Whole School Reform in the months immediately following the requirement. A community member who reviewed this report observed that real gains in Grade 4 test scores cannot be expected until the children who were exposed to two years of high-quality preschool taught by qualified teachers move into the fourth grade. This reviewer noted that it took some time after Abbott preschool began to ensure that all of the Trenton preschool programs used a curriculum that was linked to standards and that teachers were adequately educated and certified. Given these consid-

erations, we turn to the Grade 4 results with moderately positive expectations.

Figure 3.35 displays the average scores in the language arts literacy between 1999–00 and 2002–03 for Trenton schools, all other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state as a whole. The most striking feature of this figure is the increase between 1999–00 and 2000–01 in all of the district groupings we examined. None of the district groupings showed substantial improvements in the average language arts literacy scores in the following two years.

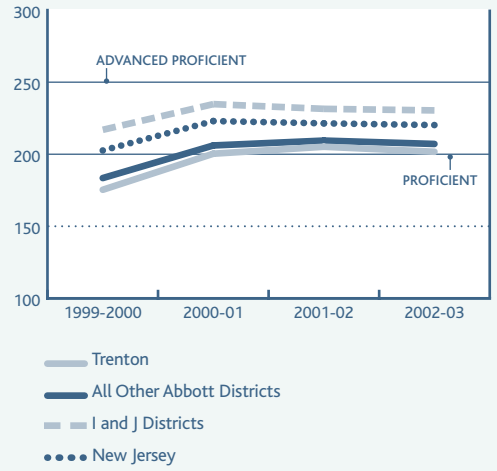
Trenton language arts literacy average scores improved from below proficient (175) in 1999–00 to 202 in 2002–03: a 15 percent rise. Most of this increase occurred between 1999–00 and 2000–01 as it did in most districts throughout the state. The average language arts literacy score for Grade 4 students in the other Abbott districts was slightly higher overall and showed a similar increase from 183 to 207 (13%). Trenton's fourth grade average scores remained below the state average and the average of the I and J districts. The gap between Trenton and the state average has been closing over the years: from a 28-point difference in 1999–00 to an 18-point difference in 2002–03.

Figure 3.36 shows the percent of Trenton's Grade 4 students scoring in the three proficiency categories. The most striking feature of the chart is the increase in the portion of Grade 4 students scoring in the proficient category between 1999–00 and 2000–01.

Next, we present the 2002–03 Grade 4 language arts literacy results for the student demographic groups represented in the district (Figure 3.37).[33, 34] Reading from left to right, we see the percent scoring in the three proficiency ranges among Hispanic, Black, economically disadvantaged, special education, and limited English-proficient student subgroups. (Grade 4 general education results from 2002–03 are shown in Figure 3.36). About half of the Black (47%), Hispanic (50%), and economically disadvantaged (50%) children scored at or above proficient on the test, compared to two in five limited

FIGURE 3.35

Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy 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

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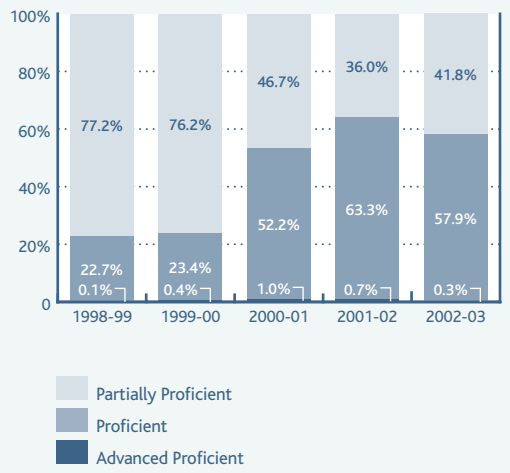
FIGURE | 3.36

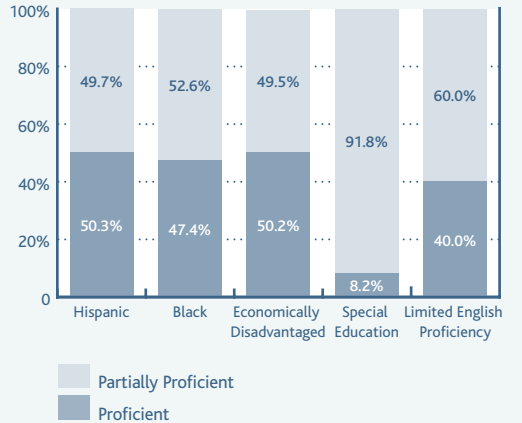
Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Trenton, 1998–99 to 2002–03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1998–99 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2002–03

FIGURE | 3.37

Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



*Advanced Proficient, less than one percent in all student subgroups.

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

English-proficient students (40%), and eight percent of the special education students.

Grade 4 math scores—in Trenton and the other Abbott districts—also have increased, although less than the language arts literacy scores. Trenton's math scores increased by seven percent between 1999–00 and 2002–03 from 182 to 194. Grade 4 math scores improved in Trenton more than in any other district grouping we analyzed. Math scores in the wealthiest districts remained fairly stable during this time period.

Trenton's Grade 4 math scores improved over time because more students scored proficient and advanced proficient with each passing year (Figure 3.39). In 1998–99, 23 percent met the state's standards in math (21% scored in the proficient range and 2% percent scored in the advanced proficient range). In 2002–03, the percentage of students who scored at least proficient rose to 42 percent, including seven percent who scored in the advanced proficient range.

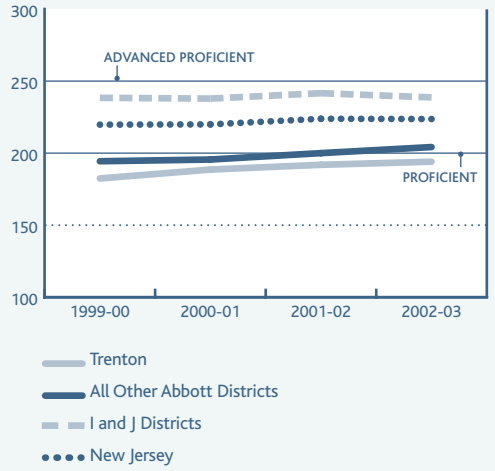
Figure 3.40 shows how performance on the 2002–03 Grade 4 math test varied across

Trenton's student demographic groups. About two in five (41%) Hispanic students scored proficient or better on the Grade 4 math test in 2002–03, compared to 37 percent of students who were economically disadvantaged, and 34 percent of Black students. Twenty-seven percent of limited English proficient students scored at least proficient on the Grade 4 math exam. About a quarter (16%) of Trenton's special education students met the Grade 4 math standards in 2002–03.

Grade 4: AYP. A school must meet many requirements to make Adequate Yearly Progress under federal law. For the 2003–04 Grade 4 exam alone, schools had to meet 40 benchmarks: for each of 10 demographic groups, at least 95 percent of the students had to take the test; 68 percent had to score proficient or better on the language arts literacy exam; and 53 percent had to score proficient or better on the math exam. Figure 3.41 lists the Trenton schools that did not make AYP as a result of student performance on the Grade 4 exam, the number of indicators on which it

FIGURE 3.38

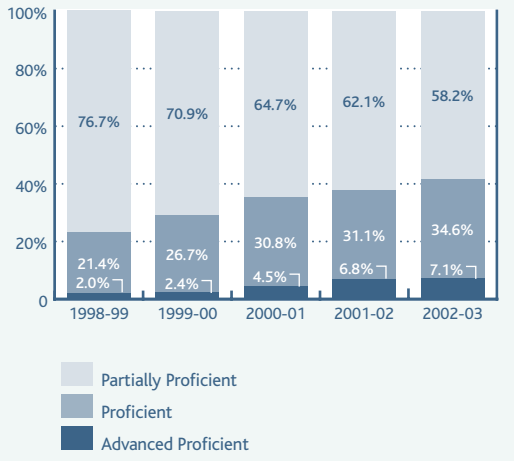
Grade 4 Math Average Score by District Grouping 1999–00 to 2002–03



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 3.39

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



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1998–99 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2002–03

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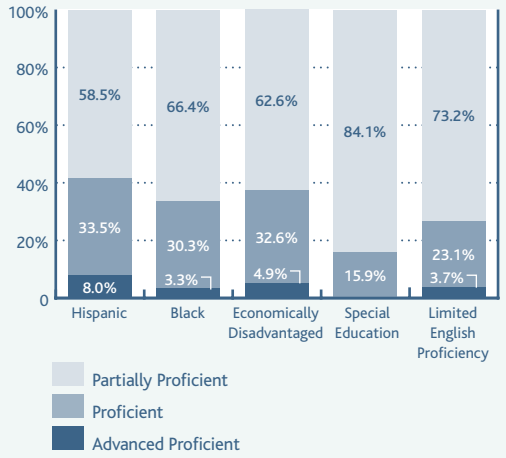
FIGURE 3.40

Grade 4 Math Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.41

Trenton Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 4, 2003–04

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Gregory	6	4
Monument	6	4
P.J. Hill	6	4
Joyce Kilmer	4	3
Rivera	0	3+
Mott	5	2
Stokes	5	2
Grant	3	2
Harrison	2	2
Wilson	2	2
Robbins	1	2
Paul Robeson	7	1
Washington	2	1
Cadwalader	0	1*

SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

\+ AYP Hold: School met NCLB standards that it had missed in previous years.

* Early Warning Hold: School met NCLB standard(s) that it had missed in the previous year.

fell short, and the number of years it did not meet the standard.[35]

Thirteen Trenton schools missed one or more AYP benchmarks on the Grade 4 exam. Robeson and Washington Elementary Schools missed targets for the first time in 2003–04, placing them in the "early warning" category. Schools in this category are not required to take any action under federal law, but should examine any practices that may have been responsible for missing the benchmarks. Grant, Harrison, Mott, Robbins, Stokes, and Wilson Elementary Schools missed targets for the second year in a row, placing them in the "school improvement" category. Parents with children in these six schools may choose to send their children to another public school in the district or a charter school in Trenton.

Kilmer and Rivera Elementary Schools missed AYP targets for the third year in a row. In the third year, schools under "school improvement" must offer supplemental services, such as tutoring, to help low-income, and underperforming students to achieve state standards. Gregory, Hill, and Monu-

ment Elementary Schools fell short of AYP targets for the fourth year in a row, placing them under "corrective action." Under law, these schools must implement school choice, provide supplemental services targeted to improving test performance, *and* undertake at least one of a series of corrective actions listed in Figure 3.34. The schools missing the most AYP benchmarks were Robeson, Gregory, Hill, and Monument; the last three schools are facing corrective action. Jefferson and Cadwalader Schools made "safe harbor," according to federal rules. Each school would have been placed in the early warning category, but they improved low scores by 10 percent or more from the previous year.

AYP results suggest that there may be important differences in test performance *among schools*. In fact, there was a great deal of variation around the district's 58 percent proficiency average in the 2002–03 Grade 4 language arts literacy test. Washington Elementary School was the highest performer with nearly every general education student scoring proficient or better that year. Mott,

Abbott Low- and High-Performing Schools

Under Abbott rules, elementary schools may be classified as low-or high-performing depending on how their students perform on the Grade 4 language arts literacy exam. Schools are classified as "low performing" if half or fewer of the school's general education students score at least proficient on the test. Schools are "high performing" if their pass rates are better than the state average. The New Jersey Department of Education is required to deploy expert teams to review each low-performing school and develop and monitor a school improvement plan. High-performing schools may choose to drop or change their Whole School Reform models. Under Abbott rules, there were three low-performing schools in Trenton in 2003–04: Monument, Columbus, and Jefferson Elementary Schools. There were also three *high*-performing schools: Washington, Franklin, and Grant Elementary Schools.

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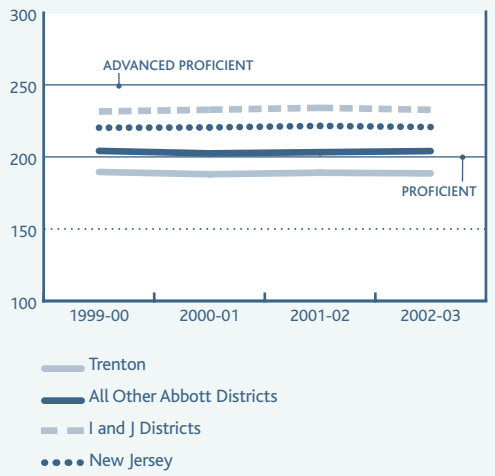
FIGURE | 3.42

Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy 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

Harrison, and Franklin Elementary Schools also surpassed the No Child Left Behind proficiency threshold of 68 percent. On the other hand, in P.J. Hill and Monument Elementary Schools, fewer than 40 percent of the general education students scored at least proficient. Improvement over time is, of course, an indicator that a school is moving in the right direction: Stokes, Grant, and Jefferson Elementary Schools showed the biggest gains in the average scores of general education students on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

Trenton schools also varied widely in the performance of their general education students on the Grade 4 math test. Four schools exceeded the No Child Left Behind threshold of 53 percent: Washington, Grant, Jefferson, and Parker Elementary Schools. Fewer than one in three general education students scored at least proficient on the math test in four schools: P.J. Hill, Gregory, Monument, and Luis Muñoz Rivera Elementary Schools. Grant, Jefferson, Parker, and Stokes showed the biggest gains in the average score of general education students on the Grade 4 math test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

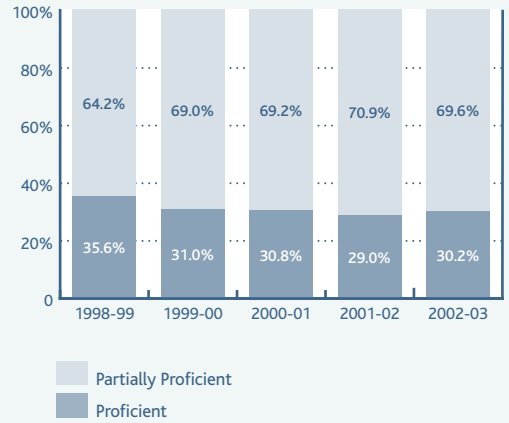
Grade 8: GEPA. Across the nation, reading and math achievement results for Grade 8 have lagged behind those of younger students. There has been no significant improvement in Grade 8 reading between 1992 and 2003; math scores have improved by about five percent during the same time period.[36] In this section, we begin to explore if Abbott reforms have produced achievement results with middle school students. When compared to the array of instructional programs and reforms for elementary school students, however, Abbott has yet to truly provide for students in the middle grades.[37] This relative lack of attention to middle schools is not unique to New Jersey's urban school districts. We expect to see achievement test results in Trenton, the other Abbott districts, and indeed throughout the state that are similar to those found in the nation as a whole.

Average scores on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test show little or no change statewide, nor in any of the district groupings we analyzed (Figure 3.42). Trenton's eighth graders consistently scored below the proficiency level with an average score between 188 and 190. Figure 3.43 shows the stability in Trenton's Grade 8 language arts literacy scores: although 36 percent of the general education students were proficient in 1998–99, the percent of students scoring at least proficient remained about 30 percent between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

Figure 3.44 shows the distribution of 2002–03 Grade 8 language arts literacy scores for students in the various demographic groups in Trenton. About one out of three (32%) White students scored proficient or better on the test, compared with one out of four (24%) Black students, and one out of five (20%) Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students. Only one percent of Trenton's special education students and two percent of limited English proficient students scored at

FIGURE 3.43

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

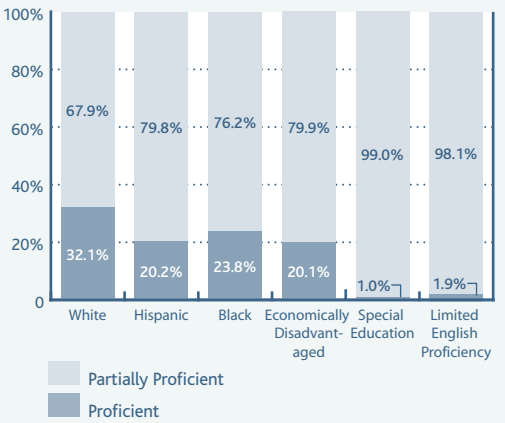


*Advanced Proficient, less than one percent in all years.

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1998–99 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2000–01.

FIGURE 3.44

Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



*Advanced Proficient less than one percent in all student subgroups.

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2002–03

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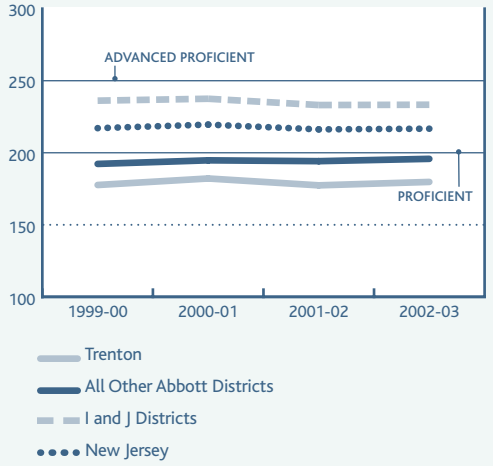
FIGURE 3.45

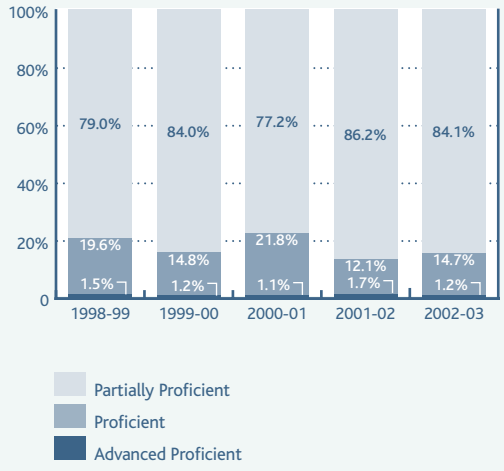
Grade 8 Math Average Score by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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 3.46

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



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1998–99 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2000–01

least proficient on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test.

Like the language arts literacy results shown above, Trenton's Grade 8 math scores did not change much over the years. On average, Trenton students scored 178 in 1999–00 and 180 in 2002–03. Their peers in the other Abbott districts also showed little change over the years, although the scores were somewhat higher than in Trenton. Grade 8 math scores were higher in the state's most successful suburban districts but also remained about the same over the years. Figure 3.46, which shows the distribution of Trenton's Grade 8 math scores, shows little movement of scores across the proficiency ranges during the same time period.

There was some variation in the performance of different student groups on the Grade 8 math test. About one in five (21%) White students in the district scored at least proficient, compared to 11 and 12 percent of Hispanic and Black students, respectively. Nine percent of the economically disadvantaged students and fewer than one percent of the

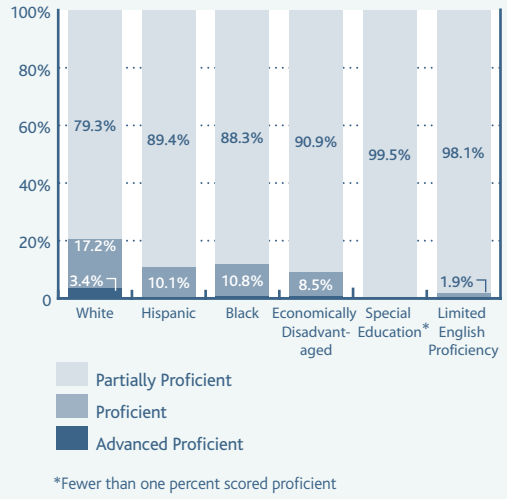
special education students met state standards in math as did two percent of the students with limited English proficiency that year.

Grade 8: AYP. Six Trenton middle schools missed one or more Grade 8 AYP benchmarks in 2003–04. Dunn Middle School missed AYP targets for the second year in a row, placing it in the "school improvement" category. Parents with children enrolled at Dunn may choose to send their children to another public school in the district or a charter school in Trenton. Rivera and Kilmer Schools missed AYP targets for the third year in a row. In the third year, schools under "school improvement" must offer school choice and supplemental services such as tutoring to help low-income, and underperforming students to achieve state standards.

Holland, King, and Hedgepeth Williams Schools fell short of the state's AYP targets for the fourth year in a row, placing them under "corrective action." Under federal law, these schools must implement school choice, provide supplemental services targeted to improving test performance, and undertake at

FIGURE 3.47

Grade 8 Math Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



*Fewer than one percent scored proficient

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2002–03

FIGURE 3.48

Trenton Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 8, 2003–04

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Arthur Holland	13	4
Martin Luther King	12	4
Hedgepeth-Williams	8	4
Joyce Kilmer	0	3
Luis Munoz-Rivera	1	3+
Grace A Dunn	14	2

SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

+ AYP Hold: School met NCLB standards that it had missed in previous years

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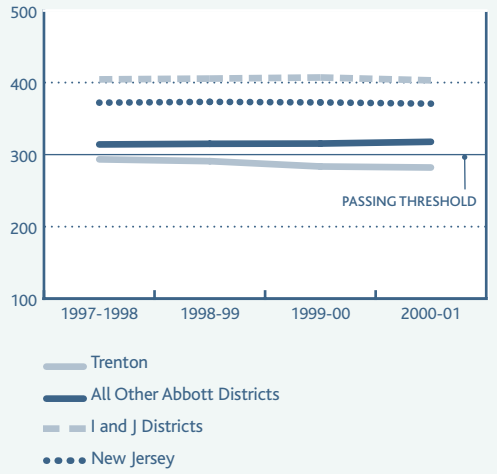
FIGURE 3.49

Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Average Score by District Grouping, 1997–98 to 2000–01



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2000–01

least one of a series of corrective actions listed in Figure 3.34. The schools missing the most AYP benchmarks were Holland with 13 and King with 12.

As these AYP results suggest, performance on the Grade 8 tests varied among Trenton schools. Columbus Elementary School stood out as a high performer in 2002–03, exceeding both No Child Left Behind thresholds. On the other hand, in five schools, fewer than one in three general education students met or exceeded the state standards on the language arts literacy test: Hedgepeth Williams, Grace A. Dunn, Martin Luther King Jr., and Arthur Holland Middle Schools; and Luis Muñoz Rivera Elementary School. Fewer than one in three general education students at these five schools and Joyce Kilmer Elementary School scored at least proficient on the math test. Columbus Elementary School and Grace A. Dunn Middle showed gains in Grade 8 language arts literacy between 1999–00 and 2002–03. The average score of students also improved at Columbus Elementary School and Martin Luther King Jr. and Arthur Holland Middle Schools.

Grade 11: HSPT/HSPA. The United States Department of Education has collected achievement test data from students in Grade 12 since 1990 as part of its National Assessment of Educational Progress. The results of this study reveal little change in the reading or math scores of high school seniors. Along with many other education observers, we suspect that this lack of progress is a result of the relative lack of attention to high schools compared to elementary or even middle schools. To date, the Abbott reforms have not differed from standard educational practice across the state or indeed, nationally. Efforts are currently underway to develop strategies for strengthening middle and high schools in the Abbott districts. To date, however, the Abbott remedies have provided less in the way of real instructional reforms at the middle or high school levels compared to what has been available for younger children. We turn next to the results of the Grade 11 assessments with moderate expectations.

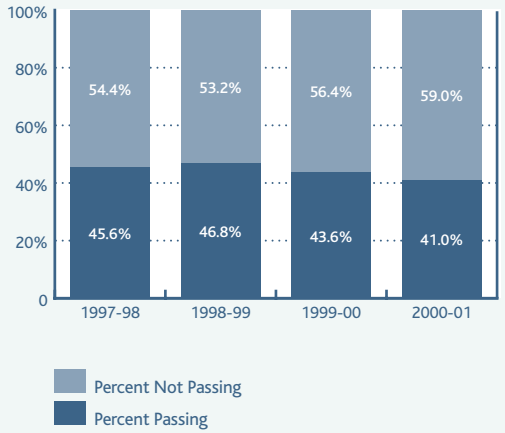
The 11th grade test given throughout the state changed in 2001–02 from the HSPT to the HSPA. HSPT scores ranged from 100 to 500, with 300 as the passing threshold. The HSPA ranges from 100 to 300, with 200 as the proficiency threshold, and 250 as the advanced proficiency threshold. Scores on these two tests are *not* comparable, so we examine them separately below.

Figure 3.49 shows that Trenton's average score on the Grade 11 reading exam decreased from 293 to 282 between 1997–98 and 2000–01. Grade 11 reading scores in the other Abbott districts increased from 314 to 318 during the same period. Despite this gain, there was still a gap of 53 points between the other Abbott districts and the state average in 2000–01. That same year, there was a 89-point difference between the average high school reading scores in Trenton and the state overall. The I and J districts were more than 30 points above the state average on the HSPT.

What trends were behind this drop in Trenton's high school reading scores? Between 1997–98 and 2000–01, a decreasing

FIGURE 3.50

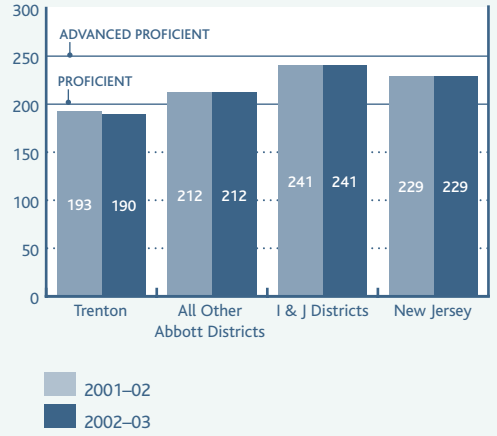
Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Proficiency: Trenton, 1997–98 to 2000–01



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2000–01

FIGURE 3.51

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

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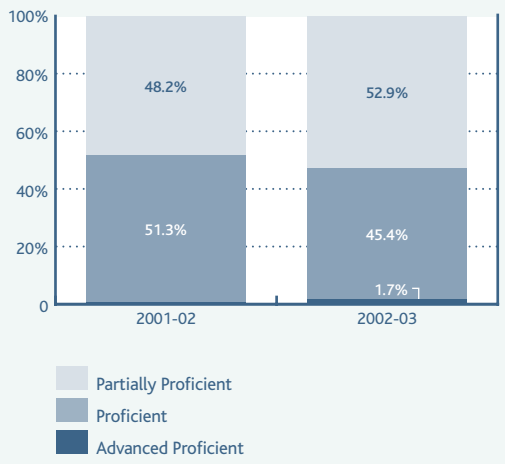
FIGURE 3.52

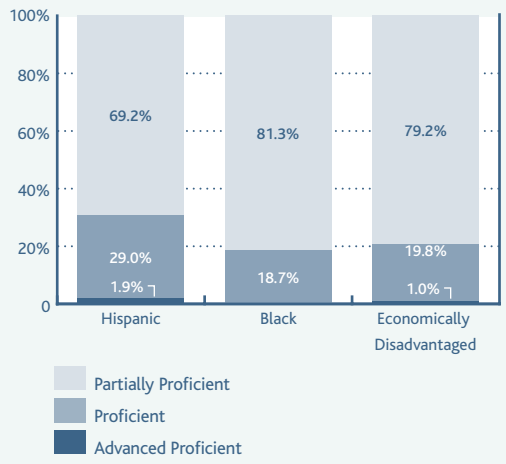
Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Trenton, 2001–02 to 2002–03



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 3.53

Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



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

percentage of Trenton's 11th grade students passed the state's reading test (Figure 3.50). Forty-six percent of Trenton's 11th grade students passed the reading exam in 1997–98, compared to 41 percent in 2000–01.

Figure 3.51 shows the results of the Grade 11 language arts literacy test in 2001–02 and 2002–03. Trenton's average score was below the proficiency threshold in both years. Average scores in the other district groupings remained about the same. In Trenton, about half of the high school juniors who took the test scored proficient or better (Figure 3.52).

Taking a look at the proficiency levels of Trenton's subgroup populations, we find that about one in three (31%) Hispanic students demonstrated proficiency on the state standards for Grade 11 language arts literacy in 2002–03. Nineteen percent of the Black students scored proficient or better on the Grade 11 language arts literacy exam that year as did 20 percent of the students who were economically disadvantaged students.[38]

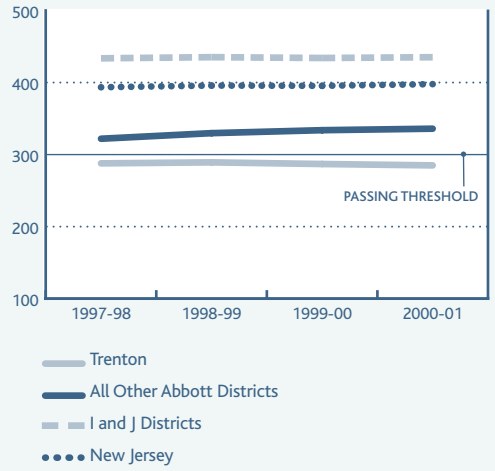
From 1997–98 to 2000–01, Trenton's Grade 11 math scores dropped slightly from 288 to 285, remaining below the passing threshold (Figure 3.54). On average, Grade 11 math scores in the other Abbott districts improved four percent (322 to 336). In 2000–01, there was a substantial gap between the average high school math scores in Trenton and the Abbott districts, as well as the state average.

Figure 3.55 shows that the percent of high school juniors in Trenton who passed the Grade 11 math exam remained stable over time. In 1997–98, 42 percent of the district's 11th graders met state standards in math, compared to 44 percent who passed the test in 2000–01.

In the Grade 11 math exam given in later years, there was very little change in any of the district groupings we examined. Trenton's average score remained stable at below the proficiency threshold. (Math scores in all of the other Abbott districts also remained stable at or just below the proficiency threshold in 2001–02 and 2002–03.) About 22 percent

FIGURE 3.54

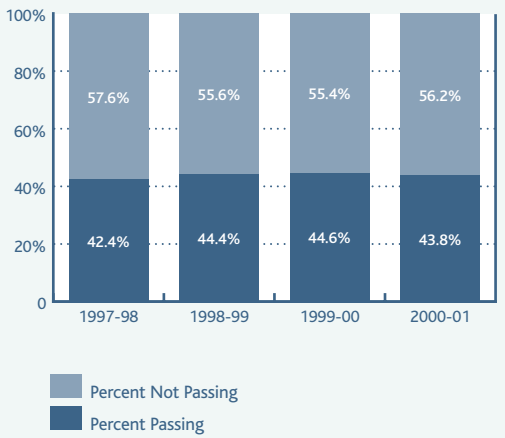
Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Average Score by District Grouping, 1997–98 to 2000–01



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2000–01

FIGURE 3.55

Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Proficiency: Trenton, 1997–98 to 2000–01



SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2000–01

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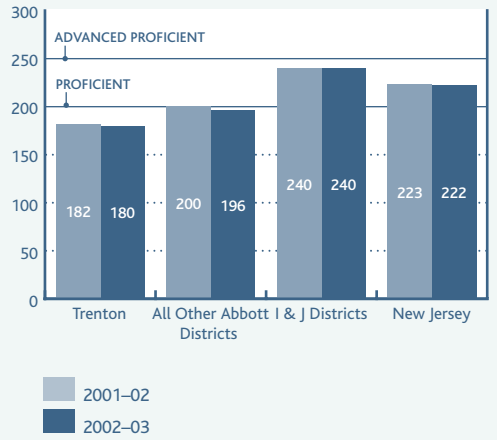
FIGURE 3.56

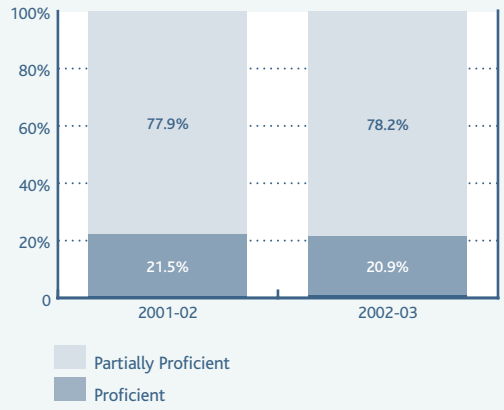
Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Average Score by District Grouping, 2001–02 to 2002–03



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 3.57

Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Proficiency: Trenton, 2001–02 to 2002–03



*Advanced Proficient, less than one percent in both years.

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

of Trenton's 11th grade students passed the Grade 11 math exam in 2001–02 and 2002–03 (Figure 3.57). Students in the other Abbott districts faired somewhat better with just under 50 percent meeting state standards in both years.

The Grade 11 student demographic groups performed about the same on the math exam as they did on the language arts literacy exam in 2002–03 (Figure 3.58). Almost 30 percent of the Hispanic students met state standards that year. About one out of six Black students (16%) and 18 percent of the economically disadvantaged students scored at least proficient on the Grade 11 math exam in 2002–03.

Grade 11: AYP. Both of Trenton's High Schools missed Grade 11 AYP benchmarks in 2003–04. Trenton Central High School missed 11 benchmarks and Daylight/Twilight missed six. This was the second year in a row both schools did not make AYP, placing them in the NCLB "school improvement" category. Under federal law, parents with children enrolled in these schools may choose to send their children to another public school in

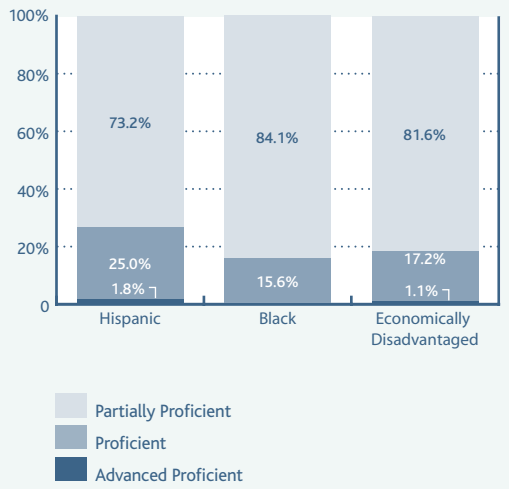
the district or a charter school located within the city of Trenton. There are no other public high schools in the city, and only one charter school that specializes in serving behaviorally disruptive students in grades 9 through 12 (Emily Fisher Charter School of Advanced Studies). NCLB enables parents in such circumstances to send their children outside of the district, but this provision of the law has not yet been used in New Jersey.

Neither Trenton High School nor Daylight/Twilight Alternative Schools Grade 11 general education students met the No Child Left Behind proficiency thresholds in 2002–03. Daylight/Twilight showed gains in the average score of students from the previous year on both tests, however.

Other testing in Trenton. Testing is more than a high-stakes event in the Trenton Public Schools. It is used throughout the year and throughout the district to help teachers understand students' strengths and weaknesses and tailor their instructional methods. Students in the lower grades (Pre-K to 2) are assessed using Dynamic Indicators of Basic

FIGURE 3.58

Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Proficiency by Subgroup: Trenton, 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.59

Trenton Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 11, 2003–04

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Daylight/Twilight	6	2
Trenton Central	11	2

SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, September 2004

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Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).[39] Students are also assessed informally by their teachers through homework, portfolios, and project work, as well as through occasional testing within the curriculum. Schools using the Success for All (SFA) Whole School Reform Model assess student progress every eight weeks. We visited one school (using the Modern Red Schoolhouse Model) that gives students a computer-based test that provides detailed group and individualized reports on reading skills. Teachers in this school use the resulting information to group students for customized instruction and share the results with teachers in the next grade. Trenton Central High School tests literacy skills using the Scholastic Reading Inventory every Fall and Spring.[40]

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, we present graduation as a major indicator of educational success. As we have discussed above, Abbott reforms have not truly addressed instructional programs in the high schools, so we approach these findings with few expectations.

How many students who entered high school four years ago as ninth graders are graduating this year? Unfortunately, without keeping track of each student, it is impossible to answer this question.[41] In fact, up until 2002–03, the New Jersey School Report Card reported the percentage of the current year's 12th grade students who graduated. People who study high school graduation rates nationally have come up with a good way to estimate true graduation rates. They use a measure called the "Cumulative Promotion Index" or the CPI. The CPI is the percentage of 12th graders who graduate this year "adjusted" by an estimate of the school's promotion rates that year. Like any other estimate we could use with the existing data, the CPI does not account for the number of students who leave the district after entering high

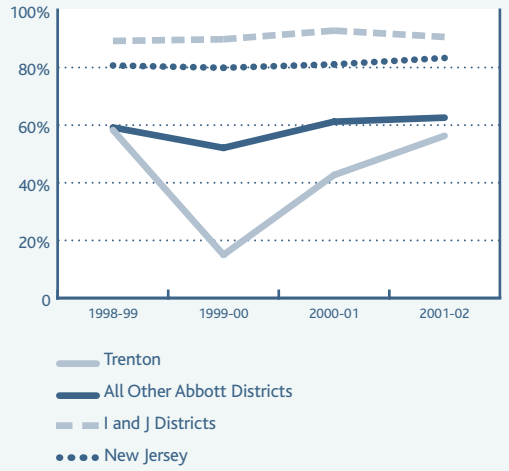
school if they moved or for reasons other than dropping out. It assumes, as do other measures that an equal number of students move into the district as well. We present CPI trends over time as a proxy for a true graduation rate in the absence of better quality data.

Below, we use the CPI to estimate graduation rates for Trenton,[42] all other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state from 1998–99 to 2001–02. Our estimate suggests that just over half (56%) of Trenton's class of 2001–02 graduated from high school—about the same as the estimated percentage three years earlier in 1998–99 (58%). In the interim years, Trenton's cumulative promotion index was a great deal lower. A close inspection of the underlying information revealed consistent enrollment losses between Grades 9 and 10 in Trenton and enrollment gains in the upper grades. By this measure, high schools across the state have graduated about 80 percent of their students and the wealthiest districts have graduated about 90 percent. The cumulative promotion index in the other Abbott districts was 59 percent in 1998–99 and 63 percent in 2001–02. More needs to be done to assess true graduation rates in New Jersey high schools.

The indicator we present here and in other Abbott Indicators Reports estimates how many students graduate from high school in four years. By definition, it does not fully capture increases caused by students who return to school after several years' absence, even if the students go on to graduate. Trenton began its alternative high school program to address its high school dropout rate. The goal of the program is to bring over-age and adult students back to school and help them to earn their diplomas. Indeed, according to district reports, the number of high school graduates has increased in Trenton in each year since the program began. We have included an Appendix memo from the district containing this information so that Trenton stakeholders can consider both indicators: the cumulative promotion index and the number graduates from the district's high schools.

FIGURE 3.60

Cumulative Promotion Index by District Grouping, 1998–99 to 2001–02



SOURCE School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2002–03; Trenton Public Schools, 1998–99 to 2002–03

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New Jersey Special Review Assessment White Paper Excerpt

In a 2003 white paper, the New Jersey Department of Education had this to say about the SRA: The original intent of the Special Review Assessment (SRA) was to provide a way for students who met specific criteria through the Child Study Team in each district to demonstrate proficiency...Over the course of time the SRA was used for students who have limited English proficiency and many special education students. Beginning in 1991...administrative code was changed to include all students who did not pass the HSPT in the SRA program. Thus the program emphasis shifted from an alternate way for specific students to demonstrate proficiency to a program that allowed all students the opportunity. Beginning with introduction of the HSPA in 2002, all students who did not score proficient on one or more tests were included in the SRA process.... The original use [of the] SRA for special education students has been replaced by the increased use of the special education exemption process.

Routes to Graduation

Next, we consider how Trenton's high school seniors showed their readiness to graduate. In New Jersey, students can graduate by passing the traditional Grade 11 test or the alternative test called the Special Review Assessment (SRA).

High school achievement tests are meant to show 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 adequately 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 (SRA).

People disagree about alternative routes to graduation like the SRA. Critics argue that students must master curriculum standards in order to graduate from high school. Supporters praise New Jersey's SRA and argue that states with a single, high-stakes gradua-

tion test have a strong incentive to push those 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.

We provide information below about how students—in Trenton, the other Abbott districts, the I and J districts, and throughout New Jersey—have shown their readiness to graduate. We also examine if the changes in state policy described above had a different affect in Trenton than in other districts throughout the state.

The figures below show the percentage of students graduating after passing the traditional (HSPT/HSPA) and the alternative (SRA) tests, respectively. Figure 3.61 shows that the wealthiest districts consistently had the highest percentage of students graduating by passing the traditional exam, followed by the statewide average. From 1994–95 to 1998–99, Trenton and all other Abbott districts closely track one another with a decreasing percentage of students graduating by passing the traditional exam.

Graduation by passing the traditional test decreased in all four district groupings after 2001–02, the year when general education students who did not pass one or more sections of the HSPA were allowed to graduate by taking the SRA. In 1994–95, 71 percent of Trenton's students graduated by passing the traditional exams; in 2002–03, only 23 percent graduated this way.

Figure 3.62 is almost a mirror image of Figure 3.61, suggesting that most students who did not graduate by passing the traditional HSPT or HSPA had indeed taken the alternative SRA.

College Entrance Exams

Some four-year colleges stopped requiring applicants to submit Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in the past few years. The organization that administers the test recently estimated that as many as 56 percent of all four-year colleges (the remaining 44 percent accept them on an optional basis) and 80 percent

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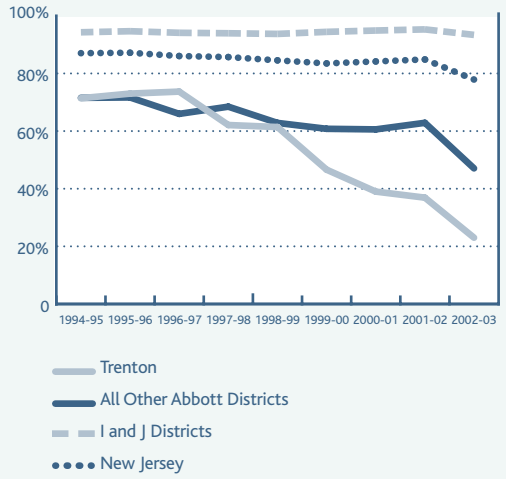
FIGURE 3.61

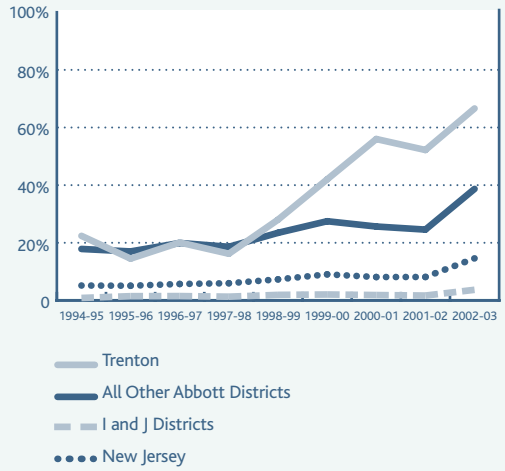
Graduation by Traditional Grade 11 Exam (HSPT/HSPA) by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03; Trenton Public Schools, 1999–00

FIGURE 3.62

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



SOURCE School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03; Trenton Public Schools, 1999–00

of the most competitive colleges in the country still require SAT scores. We examine SAT participation below as an indicator that Trenton's high school seniors have been seriously planning to pursue a four-year college degree.

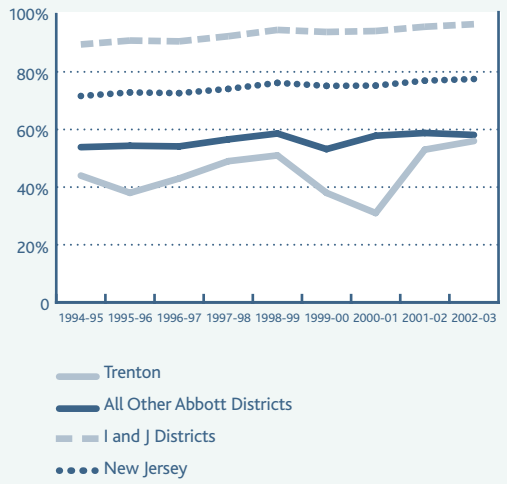
Between 1994–95 and 2001–02, Trenton high school seniors were less likely to take the SAT than their peers in the wealthiest districts, throughout the state, or in the other Abbott districts (Figure 3.63). Between 1994–95 and 1996–97, about 40 percent of Trenton's seniors took the test. In the next two years, half of Trenton's seniors took the SAT, but that percentage dropped steeply to a low of less than one in three in 2001–02. The 2002–03 school year was the best year for Trenton, with 56 percent taking part in college entrance exams, about the same as in the other Abbott districts. The statewide average slowly but steadily increased from 72 to 78 percent SAT participation during this time period. In the wealthiest districts in the state, almost all seniors consistently took the SAT: 90 percent took the test in 1994–95 and 96 percent did so in 2002–03.

Knowing about and taking the SAT are first steps toward college entrance. To be competitive, students must also do well on the test. SAT proponents believe that it predicts success in college. The test is offered in two sections: a verbal and a math test. Scores on each SAT section range from 200 to 800. Nationally, SAT scores have risen very slightly in both the verbal and math portions of the test. Below, we show the how well students—from Trenton, all of the other Abbott districts, the I and J districts, and the state—have done on the verbal (Figure 3.64) and math (Figure 3.65) sections of the SAT between 1994–95 and 2002–03.

Figure 3.64 shows that average verbal SAT scores have remained about the same level between 1994–95 and 2002–03 in all of the district groupings we analyzed. Trenton's verbal SAT scores were slightly lower than scores earned in the other Abbott districts. On average, students in the Abbott districts scored below students throughout the state, and well below the scores achieved by their peers in the wealthiest suburbs.

FIGURE 3.63

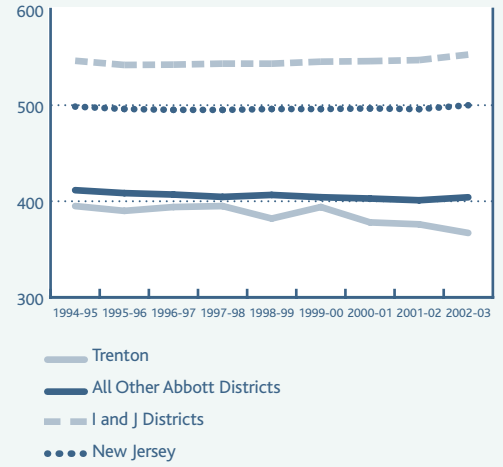
SAT Participation by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.64

SAT Verbal Average Score by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03

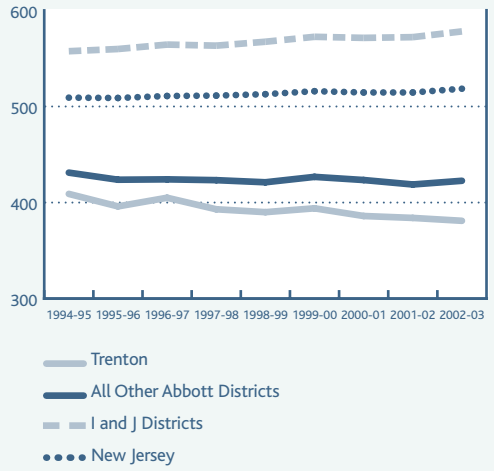


SOURCE School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03

3 K-12 Education

FIGURE 3.65

SAT Math Average Score by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

Students across the state scored higher on the SAT math than on the verbal. In the other Abbott districts and throughout the state, scores remained about the same between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Average math scores in Trenton were 409 in 1994–95 and went down to 381 in 2002–03; SAT math scores in the wealthiest suburbs increased from 558 to 578 during the same time period.

The Status of K-12 Education: A Summary

We conclude this section with an overview of key findings about K-12 public education in Trenton, including standards-based reform and supports for students and families. We first describe the progress that the district has made and the challenges that still remain in each element of effective schooling. We then present a summary table containing findings for the subset of indicators that have specific standards or requirements under Abbott or other state or federal law.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

- Abbott funding has had some immediate, clear effects on conditions in the Trenton schools. Trenton students have had dramatically better access to computers and there are fewer students to every certificated faculty member than in the wealthiest suburbs in the state.
- Research shows that children in the early elementary grades benefit from smaller class sizes. In 2002–03, Trenton'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 Grades 5, 10, and 12 exceeded state standards.
- Trenton has about 2,500 special needs students ages six to 21. Only about one in five students with disabilities goes to school in a "very inclusionary" setting where they are educated with general education students for 80 percent or more of the school day. In Trenton, as in the other Abbott districts, about one in three students with disabilities is in a general education setting for less than 40 percent of the school day, compared to about one in 13 in the wealthiest suburbs.

- The district runs Daylight/Twilight High School, a multi-site program to give dropouts and over-age students ages 16 and older another way to earn a standard academic diploma. The program offers courses in all core content areas; and elective credits in community service, work study, and life experience. A key feature of the program is its support system for students experiencing problems of any kind.
- Staff at the schools we visited told us that testing is more than a high-stakes effort in Trenton. Teachers regularly use assessments to help them understand students' strengths and weaknesses and tailor their instructional methods all year round.
- Trenton Central High School offers many honors and advanced placement courses to help students become more competitive applicants and prepare them for college. We compared Trenton's honors and AP course offerings to those in Princeton, a nearby "I" district. Trenton offers 19 advanced placement courses compared to Princeton's 26.

K-12 Teacher Qualifications and Supports

- In 2003–04, about three out of four Trenton elementary school teachers were highly qualified in at least *one* subject and just over half were highly qualified in *all* of the subjects they taught under the federal definition. The district had the lowest percentage of highly qualified elementary school teachers among the district groupings we examined.
- In 2003–04, fewer than half of the district's high school teachers were highly qualified in *one* or *all* of the core subjects they taught, also the lowest percentage among the district groupings analyzed in this report. However, 80 percent of core subject classes in the high schools were taught by highly qualified teachers.
- Staffing data show that, in 2003–04, all of Trenton's elementary schools had teacher tutors on staff to assist children who were reading below grade level. The schools we visited in Spring 2004 provided tutoring to some, but not all students who needed it.
- Between 2002–03 and 2003–04, there was some change in the extent to which Trenton schools staffed positions that are required under Abbott. More schools had at least one family liaison, guidance counselor, security officer, and technology coordinator. Fewer elementary schools had at least one social worker. Fewer middle and high schools had a health and social service coordinator in 2003–04.

3 K-12 Education

Budget

- Property wealth is an important indicator of local capacity to support its public services including education. The wealthiest suburbs had five times more property wealth per student than in Trenton in 2003. That same year, the state average was four times higher than in Trenton.
- On a per student basis, Trenton and the other Abbott districts have as much money as the most successful suburban districts to support general education. In fact, there has been general education funding equity between the poorest cities and the wealthiest suburbs in New Jersey since 1997–98 when Abbott parity began.
- In 2003–04, Trenton received an additional $2,424 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.
- In 2003–04, Trenton cancelled many of its after-school programs in response to delays in receiving supplemental program funding from the state.
- The New Jersey Department of Education did not fully fund any district's 2004–05 request for Additional Abbott Aid. Nineteen school districts appealed the state's decision. The Trenton Public Schools requested about $32 million and the Department of Education initially approved $25.9 million of its request. After an appeal, Trenton and the state negotiated a settlement that resulted in about $31.1 million to support Trenton's supplemental programs.

K-12 Leadership

- Each Abbott district should have an "Abbott Advisory Council," a steering committee that represents the district and its community stakeholders. The primary responsibilities of the Council are to review district policies and procedures to implement the Abbott reforms. As of September 2004, Trenton did not have a districtwide Abbott Advisory Council.

K-12 Student Outcomes

- The City of Trenton compares poorly with the state on measures of teen birth and child abuse and neglect. Although there has been some improvement on both counts, these rates are still high and much higher than the state average. As a central public institution, 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.
- None of Trenton's schools qualified as persistently dangerous under federal law. Although Trenton Central High School was not considered persistently dangerous, it reported well over the number violent and disruptive incidents—Category A or Category B—to place it in the persistently dangerous range in three *nonconsecutive* years out of the four we reviewed.

3 K-12 Education

- Trenton's fourth graders have made gains in language arts. Trenton's general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores throughout the state, and stayed at about the same level through 2002–03.
- Fourth grade general education math scores improved by seven percent between 1999–00 and 2002–03.
- There was little change in Grade 8 and 11 achievement test results between 2000 and 2003: at both grade levels and in both tests, the district's average scores have remained slightly below the proficiency threshold. 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.
- Trenton's elementary school suspension rates decreased a great deal since 1999–00 when they were higher than any other district grouping we examined. At nine percent in 2002–03, Trenton's elementary school suspension rate was comparable to the average of all other Abbott districts but higher than the average of the wealthiest suburban districts (3%).
- Trenton's high school suspension rates have swung between 10 and 20 percent since 1999–00. High school suspension rates have remained in the 20 percent range in the other Abbott districts and about 10 percent in the I and J districts.
- In New Jersey, there was no official way to estimate graduation rates until recently. In this report, we estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index. Our estimates suggest that 56 percent of the class of 2001–02 graduated from Trenton's high schools, compared to 63 percent in the other Abbott districts, 83 percent across the state, and about 91 percent in the wealthiest suburbs. The cumulative promotion index estimates the percentage of students who graduate from high school in four years. The district reports that—with each passing year—more students are returning to school and graduating from the Daylight/Twilight Program.
- About one in four Trenton students who graduated from high school in 2002–03 did so by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam, the High School Proficiency Assessment. Most of the remaining graduates that year took the alternative test, the Special Review Assessment. In the other Abbott districts, about half of the class of 2002–03 graduated by passing the traditional exam.
- Participation in college entrance exams has varied a great deal from year to year in Trenton. In 2001–02 and 2002–03, more than half of Trenton's seniors took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Average student performance on both tests has decreased to below 400—well below the state average—in 2002–03.

3 K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.66

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

Benchmark	Status
Kindergarten-Grade 3 maximum class size: 21	Met
Grades 4 and 5 maximum class size: 23	Not 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: Cadwalader Jefferson Rivera
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: Joyce Kilmer
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

* 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.

Endnotes

15. The State did not require middle and high schools to adopt Whole School Reform models, because there was not yet sufficient evidence of their effectiveness. The State did recommend the following models, however: Success For All (Preschool to Grade 8), Talent Development (Grades 6 to 8), Turning Points (Grades 6 to 8), High Schools That Work (Grades 9 to 12), and Talent Development High Schools (Grades 9 to 12). In 2004, new regulations were adopted that govern secondary school reform in the Abbott districts.

16. We describe models used in multiple Trenton schools in this report. Other models can be reviewed in greater detail on the Internet. Excellent descriptions of many Whole School Reform models can be found at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's *Catalog of School Reform Models* (http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/index.shtml) or the American Institutes of Research's *Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (http://www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/district_organization/Reform/approach.htm).

17. Federal laws guiding the educational environment of people with disabilities include: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (amended in 2004) 20 U.S.C.§ 1400, et seq; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) 29 U.S.C. §794; and less directly, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 42 U.S.C. § 2131, et seq. State regulation is New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:14, and state statute is New Jersey Statutes Annotated 18A:46.

18. Trenton provided us with the percentage of students placed within or outside of the district by disability. Among disability categories, students ages 6 to 21 with autism and severe cognitive disabilities are the most likely to be sent out of district.

19. 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.

20. Reading First is a nationwide effort to help all students to become successful early readers. The U.S. Department of Education funds states and local school districts develop high-quality reading instruction in Kindergarten through Grade 3. The program is designed to provide professional development for teachers using research-based reading programs; measure student progress through ongoing screening and classroom-based assessment; and identify children at risk of reading failure. Professional development is also provided for special education teachers.

21. In 2002–03—already many years into Abbott parity funding—47 percent of New Jersey school districts' total revenues and 69 percent of their general education revenues were from local taxes.

22. The figures shown in the table (in thousands of dollars) are average, not total, property values per student in each district grouping because a large city with many low-value properties could have the same total property value as a smaller, wealthy suburb.

23. This and all subsequent analyses of tax rates are based on property values that have been "equalized" by the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Division of Taxation to reflect current market values. Tax rates used throughout this section are gross figures: they do not include refunds made through the state's rebate programs. Per student property wealth was calculated by dividing the total equalized property value in each category by the total school enrollment in that category.

24. Tax rates are expressed as a dollar amount for every $100 of assessed property value. In a city with a tax rate of 1.00, a homeowner with a property assessed at $100,000 would pay $1,000 in property taxes.

25. 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).

3 K-12 Education

Endnotes

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

27. In Abbott districts, general education revenues support half-day Kindergarten. Although the other half-day is required under Abbott, it is considered a "Supplemental Program" and is funded by "Additional Abbott Aid," explored below. Preschool is funded separately by the state and is examined in Section 2.

28. The average across all other Abbott districts includes all 29 other Abbott districts, even if they did not apply for Additional Abbott Aid.

29. 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.

30. Indeed, as one community reviewer noted, application of the district's disciplinary code may vary from school to school. A school-by-school analysis of suspension rates in Trenton was not included in this report for space considerations, but is available upon request.

31. United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress,1990–2003.

32. Abbott school funding is described in detail in K-12 Budget section of this report.

33. Results are shown for special education students who took the ASK4, GEPA, and HSPA. The results for students with severe disabilities who took the alternate test are not shown.

34. Students are included in more than one category if appropriate. For example, a student may be categorized by race/ethnicity, language proficiency, special needs, and/or socioeconomic status.

35. A school-by-school listing of missed AYP benchmarks is not included in the report because of space limitations, but is available upon request.

36. United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990–2003.

37. In 2003–04, a statewide work group met and developed recommendations for Abbott middle and high school reform. The group studied successful schools, reform models, and other improvement practices with demonstrated effectiveness at the middle and high school level. The group's recommendations to the Commissioner of Education were adopted in Fall 2004. The regulations require all middle and high schools in Abbott districts to phase in several reforms over the next four school years. The major reforms include: 1) adoption of academic or career–focused curricular themes; 2) formation of small learning communities with greater personalization and adult attention for each student; and 3) implementation of a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum for all students.

38. There were less than 20 limited English proficiency students and less than 35 special education students tested on the HSPA language arts literacy & math exams in 2002–03, and therefore these subgroups are removed from this analysis.

39. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) measure early literacy development. It is a short (one-minute) test that can be used regularly to monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills. The DIBELS is designed to test phonological awareness, alphabetic principles, and fluency with connected text and its results predict later reading proficiency.

40. Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is an interactive, computer-based test of reading levels for students in Grades 1 through 12. The test adjusts to student abilities, providing an assessment in about 20 minutes. The SRI can serve as a pretest at the beginning of the school year, and then again at intervals throughout the year and over time to measure student reading growth. Results also help teachers to adjust their teaching to students' needs. The SRI is also available in print edition.

41. The New Jersey Department of Education also has a major project underway to develop a statewide, student-level database that will address this and many similar questions we have not been able to answer. The project, called NJSMART, is being piloted in 11 districts. If adequately funded, it is expected to "roll out" to the state level in 2005–06.

42. Daylight/Twilight Alternative School graduation data are included for 2000–01 and 2001–02 only.

School Facilities Construction

4

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 several key features.

4 School Facilities Construction

Abbott Overview

Key features of the school facilities construction program are:

- 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.

More than five years after the Abbott school facilities construction program began with the first round of long-range facilities planning, many projects are underway across the state. As this report was being prepared, Abbott districts were in a second round of facilities planning. The second round provides districts with an opportunity to build on the strengths and correct the shortcomings of their first efforts. It is another chance for districts to work with their constituents to build schools that meet the needs of children and encourage the best instructional practices. In this section of the report, we describe the goals, scope, process, and progress of the first-round of facilities planning in Trenton.

The First-Round Long-Range Facilities Plans

The Planning Process

The first step of the Abbott school facilities construction program was to develop a districtwide Long-Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). The New Jersey Department of Education issued guidelines in September 1998 to help school 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;
- Determining deficiencies in every building;
- 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.

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 to 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 enough time to assess their current educational programs. They also did not have the expertise to translate educational practices into new building designs. The New Jersey Department of Education set standards for the numbers and sizes of educational, office, and other noninstructional spaces. These "facilities efficiency standards" (FES) provided very little flexibility for districts to forward innovative designs. Indeed, they served as strict guidelines, rather than the minimum standards the Supreme Court had intended. In sum, the tight time frame, lack of expertise, and rigid standards worked together to undermine the quality of many LRFPs.

Trenton did a great job in preparing a thoughtful, comprehensive planning document for reasons to be described in greater detail below. The district contracted with architects, Clark Caton Hintz, and engineers, Don Todd Associates to help them to develop their LRFP. Trenton Public Schools took the initiative to begin planning well before the state issued its guidelines in 1998.

Figure 4.1 summarizes the school construction projects outlined in Trenton's first-round LRFP. Trenton's LRFP contained 24 projects: including 18 K-12 schools and five early childhood centers. In the initial plan, there were to be 10 new schools constructed, nine existing schools rehabilitated, and five existing facilities to be converted into schools.

FIGURE 4.1

Trenton's First-Round Facilities Plan Overview

	PROJECTS	
	Number	Percent
New Schools	10	41.7%
Rehab/Additions	9	37.5%
Conversion	5	20.8%
Total	**24**	**100.0%**

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

Preschool Facilities Planning

Preschool facilities should be healthy, safe, and adequate to support instruction that meets the state's early childhood Expectations. The Abbott school construction program is intended to improve schools housing students at all grade levels, preschool through Grade 12.

4 School Facilities Construction

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

LRFP guidelines required that districts assess their preschool facilities for educational adequacy. The same assessment was not required for facilities run by community preschool providers. Across the Abbott districts, 70 percent of preschoolers attend private provider programs. In Trenton, 80 percent attend 46 Head Start and other private provider programs. Regardless of the educational quality of these programs, it is important to know if the *facilities* meet Abbott standards. Because they were not assessed in Trenton and indeed in most districts, we do not know if these buildings are adequate.[43]

Under the law, private providers are eligible to receive Abbott school construction funding *only if* they own their facilities. Without state funding, it is more difficult for providers who lease their facilities to make repairs and upgrades to meet Abbott standards or add space to accommodate additional children. In all of the Abbott districts combined, only about one-third (34%) of the community preschool providers own their own facilities. In Trenton, 37 percent own their buildings.[44] Eligibility for funding under the law did not guarantee inclusion in the district's facilities plans, however. Head Start is included in Trenton's LRFP.

Leadership

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 FAB 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 expert 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 districtwide planning, design, and construction of school facilities.

Trenton's FAB is one of the very few in the Abbott districts that continues to meet and function to this day. Members include the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, City Council members, school principals, the district facilities manager, parents, clergy members, citizens, contractors (including small businesses and minority-owned businesses), and representatives from the city, the New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation, the New Jersey Department of Education, and the state-appointed project management firm, Hill International. The FAB meets monthly to present information to the public about proposed new schools and listen to stakeholders' concerns and reports to the Superintendent of Schools on school facilities construction progress. One community member who reviewed this report in draft form observed that FAB meetings in Trenton have not been widely publicized and therefore have not been as well attended by the public as they could have been.

Community and Other Input

Before any plans were committed to paper, the FAB, Superintendent, and board wanted to make sure that local communities would support the projects they proposed. Other districts held meetings in an effort to seek public input. In Trenton, the district and its consultants did much more extensive outreach. As a result of its major investment of time and money, the district feels that Trenton residents are excited about the coming schools and willing to put up with the disruptions until the day when they have much better schools.

Daylight/Twilight High School provides a good example of how hard the district worked to get resident input. Community groups, an architect, and the district's educational facilities consultant held 12 community meetings. Some were well attended; other meetings were not. The district's representatives explained the planning process and asked people to tell them their needs. This is just one example out of the district's 24 projects.

4 School Facilities Construction

For other projects, the SLCs were a major help in getting the word out to the local community. The SLCs contacted local groups to ask for help in organizing presentations. Local groups that hosted meetings represented different constituencies and neighborhoods. SLCs, along with the district's facilities team, also held meetings with students, some of whom were very young. The district's consultant told us a story about how children in Grade 1 spoke with him about a need for bathrooms in the classroom.

A community member who reviewed this report in draft form expressed the belief that parents may not have had as much input in the facilities planning process as they wanted. According to her, SLCs were told about meetings with developers two days before they occurred. In addition, SLCs did not hold elections about proposed plans.

In assessing the district's educational needs, the FAB also sought and used the valuable advice and input from administrators and teachers. In addition to helping to get community input, the SLCs have had significant influence on specific design proposals. The district's early childhood staff has provided input on preschool planning, working directly with the architects on building design and furnishings. The district's technology division provides recommendations about equipment to be installed in new buildings.

Aside from its efforts to seek community input in the planning process, another remarkable feature of Trenton's school facilities construction efforts is the close involvement and support of Trenton's Mayor and City Council. This is especially positive, given the squabbles that have occurred between district offices and city halls in other cities, especially over site acquisition. In Trenton, the Mayor has readily offered information about sites, has set up some of the community meetings, and has even helped the district to buy properties. Trenton's Department of Transportation conducted a study of the district's facilities plans in relation to the city's master plan so that the two can be implemented in

4 School Facilities Construction

Abbott School Facilities Projects: Stages Of Progress

Predevelopment

- NJDOE reviews and approves project for educational adequacy.
- If approved by the NJDOE, SCC hires architects, engineers, and surveys property.
- When property is available at fair market value and suitable for school construction, SCC negotiates purchase and initial design documents are prepared.

In Design

- Architects develop next phase of the design documents and preliminary construction documents.
- NJDOE completes final review and approves cost.
- Architects complete design and construction documents.
- New Jersey Department of Community Affairs reviews construction documents for code compliance.

In Bid For Construction

- Documents for letting bids are approved by the SCC, the Attorney General, and the Department of Treasury.
- Construction firms begin bidding for contract.

In Construction

- Contract is awarded by SCC to one or more firms.
- "Shovels in the ground"—construction begins.
- Upon completion, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs inspects construction and issues Certificate of Occupancy.
- SCC transfers title to district.

Complete

- Staff and students occupy the building.

4 School Facilities Construction

FIGURE | 4.2

Overview of Trenton's Current Projects

School	Type	Estimated Completion
Daylight/Twilight	New Demonstration Project	Unknown
King/Jeff Pre-K-8	New School	April 2005
Roebling Pre-K-8	New School	June 2007
Kilmer Pre-K-8	New School	November 2005
Columbus Pre-K-8	New School	November 2005
Mott Pre-K-8	Addition	September 2004
Parker Pre-K-8	Addition	August 2005
PJ Hill Pre-K-8	Rehab	November 2005
Gregory Pre-K-8	Addition/Rehab	June 2004
Trenton H.S. (1st phase)	Addition/Rehab	June 2009

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

coordination with one another. To date, the city and the district have coordinated their efforts through regular contact and ongoing participation in each other's planning meetings.

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.[44, 45]

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 the FES, and estimates project costs. Once approved by the Department of Education, projects are sent to the SCC for "predevelopment." In general, a project progresses through the following stages: predevelopment, design, in bid for construction, in construction, and finally, complete. The events that occur within each of these stages are outlined in the text box on the previous page.

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

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show that as of September 2004, 10 (42%) of Trenton's 24 projects are already in the pipeline toward completion: three (13%) are in design and seven (29%)

in construction. Out of 532 planned projects across all districts, 105 are in predevelopment (20%), 40 in design (8%), 49 in construction (9%), and 12 completed (2%). Throughout the Abbott districts, 207 or 39 percent of the estimated 532 projects are in the pipeline.

It is important to note that Trenton and Neptune, another Abbott district that has done an equally good job at eliciting community input, have both made great progress in their school facilities construction efforts. The lesson is that community input does not slow the process down; it may actually help to move it along more quickly.

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. The list goes on.

The Trenton Public Schools had some difficulty acquiring land for a few projects, particularly in securing adjacent lands for outdoor play areas and parking lots. The city assisted the district at one school site when it sold the land for a parking lot for a nominal amount. For another project, the district mistakenly did not include a playground and parking lot in its original submission. The New Jersey Department of Education considered these a stand-alone project and did not approve them.

Community reviewers also noted that one of the district's most promising new projects—to be built on the former site of the Roebling steel cable factory—will need to undergo remediation by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection before it is suitable for school construction. Although the standards for passing inspection are as high as for residential occupancy, some parents in the district remain concerned and will need to be convinced of the site's safety.

FIGURE 4.3

Status of Facilities Projects: Trenton & All Other Abbott Districts*

	Trenton		All Other Abbott Districts
	NUMBER	PERCENT	PERCENT
To Be Submitted to NJDOE	14	58.3%	61.3%
Pre-Development	0	0.0%	19.7%
In Design	3	12.5%	7.5%
Construction Contract Awarded	7	29.2%	9.2%
Completed	0	0.0%	2.3%
Total	**24**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

SOURCE Education Law Center communications with New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation, New Jersey Department of Education, and individual districts

* As of September 2004

4 School Facilities Construction

The second round of facilities planning provides districts with an opportunity to build on the strengths and correct the shortcomings of their first efforts.

The Status of School Facilities Construction: A Summary

We conclude this section with an overview of key findings about school facilities construction in Trenton City and describe in more detail the progress that the district has made and the challenges that still remain.

- As of September 2004, 10 out of Trenton's 24 school construction projects were in the pipeline toward completion: three were in design and seven were in construction.
- The Trenton Public Schools did a good job at eliciting community input during the first-round long-range facilities planning process and in the subsequent process of bringing projects to completion.
- Trenton's Facilities Advisory Board is one of the very few in the Abbott districts that continues to meet and function.
- The progress made in Trenton in moving school construction projects forward is marked by good cooperation between the district and the city government. The mayor and city council have helped the district to identify and acquire suitable properties for school construction.
- Even with community input and cooperation with the city, Trenton confronts some barriers to progress in its school construction efforts. The school district has had some difficulty securing land for playgrounds and parking lots.
- Parents have expressed concern about the need for remediation by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection of the former Roebling steel cable factory.

Endnotes

43. The New Jersey Department of Education will require districts to assess all provider buildings in the second-round LRFP process.

44. This data was collected by the New Jersey Department of Education from 2003-04 provider budgets. This figure reflects the 38 Trenton providers who responded to this specific question.

45. 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: Health and safety projects include: roof repairs, window replacement, asbestos removal, and boiler repairs.

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

Appendices

Abbott Indicators List

The following is the list of Abbott indicators in this technical version of the report. The indicators included in the 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**
- **Renter-occupied housing**
- **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**

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 Students to Learn

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)

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-to-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

Abbott Indicators List

- 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**

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 Traditional (HSPA/HSPT) Grade 11 Exam**
  - **Graduation via Alternative (SRA) Grade 11 Exam**
- 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

TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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March 7, 2005

Lesley Hirsch, Project Co-Director
Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D., Project Co-Director
Education Law Center
60 Park Place, Suite 300
Newark, New Jersey 07102

RE: Draft Trenton Abbott Indicators Report

Dear Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Applewhite-Coney:

I very much appreciate the extraordinary work undertaken by your team and the Law Center in attempting to evaluate the impact of the Abbott Urban Education Reform effort in New Jersey. Given the enormous investment the people of New Jersey are making in improving opportunities for students in urban districts and the fact that this effort is nationally significant, I have long been concerned that the New Jersey Department of Education has not conducted a systematic evaluation of Abbott programs since their inception in 1998-99.

I have given the Trenton Abbott indicators report a careful review and have three sets of reservations. The first relates to the policy framework under which the Trenton Public Schools have operated during the six and one half years that we have been implementing Abbott programs. The second relates to the absence of an Abbott secondary school reform policy and the third to specific elements of the report in terms of our work in Trenton and the question whether the tenor and data in the report adequately reflect the progress we have made.

In terms of the policy framework, I think the report and its companion reports need a clear and direct preface that discusses not just the history of Abbott, and particularly of the 1998 decision, but also the components of that decision as they relate to the strategies that New Jersey urban districts were required to implement. Some of those strategies, most particularly the preschool programs for all three and four-year olds, have a very strong research base and are likely to have a long-term, consistent effect on improving the life chances of those children who participate in them. On the other hand, there were required elements of the program, and most particularly the Whole School Reform (or Comprehensive School Reform) element, that have proven over time to be ineffective. The Rand Corporation has recently completed an exhaustive study of over 30 WSR-CSRD models and has determined that only one of them, America's Choice, has established a sufficient evidence-base to demonstrate that it makes a consistent difference for students in urban districts. (It should be noted that when Abbott was initially implemented in the Fall of 1998, America's Choice was not among the models from which districts could select.)

In Trenton schools chose from among the several models the State recommended, depending on which the school management team felt would best address the needs of its students. Over the course of the past six years our evaluation of each of the programs suggests that some of them have been effective in some schools, but none of them have been effective in all of the schools which implemented it. Nevertheless, we were following mandated State policy and regulation, as well as the requirements of a settlement to which the Law Center, but not the districts, was party. My point is that both NJDOE and the Law Center need to accept responsibility in the Abbott Indicators Report for requiring districts to implement strategies which subsequently proved ineffective. We in Trenton are not willing to accept full responsibility for failed strategies when our district did not have the right of determination relative to how schools would go about improving student achievement.

The second problem with the NJDOE and Law Center approach to Abbott urban school reform from 1998 forward is that there has been no strategy or regulation relating to secondary schools, either middle or high schools. Districts and schools have been left on their own because no one could decide what a "research-based" approach might be. This situation has finally been addressed in the Abbott regulations for the 2005-2006 school year. Meanwhile, Trenton has instituted secondary school reforms, including small learning communities and a drop-out recovery program (Daylight/Twilight), that have been extremely effective in increasing high school completion rates.

A related consideration is that in the initial Abbott Regulations, the State, with the Law Center's concurrence, excluded boards of education and central offices from exercising any direct control over the implementation of mandated Abbott programs. Instead, the State Department of Education negotiated directly with schools and their School Management Teams regarding program improvement, school plan preparation and review, and school budgets. Trenton's central office made every effort to assist schools and Department representatives in going through this process, but ultimately the determination as to whether a plan and budget were satisfactory was made by NJDOE, not by the Trenton Public Schools. Again my point is that NJDOE and the Law Center need to accept that where there have been problems regarding improving student achievement, both organizations own a significant part of the responsibility because they were so directly involved in designing the implementation process.

My concerns about the report as it relates specifically to Trenton begin from the failure of the report to acknowledge that Trenton Public Schools have consistently been early implementers in all of the Abbott programs and regulations, ranging from preschool to facilities. For five successive years the district spent a great deal of its central office strategic resource in litigation with NJDOE attempting to get the department to fulfill its obligations under Abbott. The fact that funding was consistently unpredictable and often not determined until shortly before the beginning of the school year meant that even with the best of intentions the district was continually confronted with unpredictable resources and program support. This condition was clearest in Spring in 2003 when NJDOE reduced funding for the district by almost $25 million dollars leading, to layoffs, transfers, program reductions, and other problems which not only diverted central office energy, but also negatively affected employee morale, causing a set of problems that lingered well into the following school year. Despite these circumstances Trenton Public Schools have had sustained improvement in elementary and high school student achievement.

Certainly the Law Center has supported the Trenton Public Schools in its litigation, but unless the Indicators Report discusses the shifting policy frameworks and the organizational contexts dictated by NJDOE, pertinent information is absent from the report.

Within the next few weeks we expect to convene a meeting or meetings with those who attended the preview on February 9 so we can discuss the specific dimensions of the report regarding the Trenton district. Based on those discussions we will send you a more detailed critique.

Sincerely,

James H. Lytle, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JHL/pbw

District and Community Reviewer Letters

TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Central Services Building
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Kelly L. Creque
Director
(609) 656-5445 FAX-(609) 989-2439

MEMORANDUM

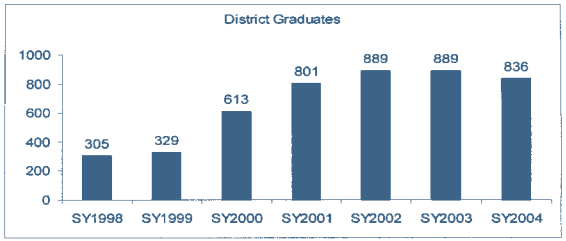
TO: Lesley Hirsch
Co-Director, Abbott Indicators Project

FROM: Kelly L. Creque
Director, Assessment and Accountability

DATE: May 23, 2005

SUBJECT: Graduation Data for Trenton Public Schools for ELC Indicators Report

The chart below reflects the number of graduates that we have reported for each year since 1997-98.



We are proud of the accomplishment of increasing the number of graduates by more than twice the number that graduated in 1998. This summer, the district graduation lists from each year will be reviewed to determine, with finality, the characteristics of each graduating class. I realize that this information could not be included in the Indicators report, but I expect that it will assist the conversations that will follow the release of the report in Trenton.

Copy to: James H. Lytle, Superintendent

List of Abbott Districts

Asbury Park, Monmouth County
Bridgeton, Cumberland County
Burlington City, Burlington County
Camden, Camden County
East Orange, Essex County
Elizabeth, Union County
Garfield, Bergen County
Gloucester City, Camden County
Harrison, Hudson County
Hoboken, Hudson County
Irvington, Essex County
Jersey City, Hudson County
Keansburg, Monmouth County
Long Branch, Monmouth County
Millville, Cumberland County
Neptune Township, Monmouth County
New Brunswick, Middlesex County
Newark, Essex County
Orange, Essex County
Passaic, Passaic County
Paterson, Passaic County
Pemberton Township, Burlington County
Perth Amboy, Middlesex County
Phillipsburg, Warren County
Plainfield, Union County
Pleasantville, Atlantic County
Salem, Salem County*
Trenton, Mercer County
Union City, Hudson County
Vineland, Cumberland
West New York, Hudson County

* Salem became an Abbott district in 2004. It was not included among the Abbott districts in the analyses that appear throughout this report.

Data Collection and Analysis

Project staff collected all indicators data from interviews and secondary data sources. Information sources are identified throughout the report. For interviews, we identify on what type of report our evidence relies: for example, district staff, school staff, or community members. We briefly identify data sources with all tables and charts; another Appendix contains a detailed treatment of data sources and definitions of terms used in the tables and charts.

Interviews. We conducted semi-structured interviews with district and school staff in each of the four pilot districts. In each district, we interviewed the district administrator who oversees curriculum and instruction, business administration, early childhood education, school facilities construction, and—in all but one district—the Superintendent. We also selected a sample of schools in each district representing a range of neighborhoods, grade levels, and academic performance. We visited each school and interviewed the principal and chairperson of the school's leadership team.

Indicators staff took longhand notes during unrecorded interviews, which lasted from 30 minutes (the shortest interview was with the business administrator) to over two hours. We summarized the notes, then organized the summaries by indicator then analyzed them for emerging patterns. Analysis summaries appear throughout the report in narrative form.

Secondary data. We collected a great deal of information presented in this report in electronic and written (paper) formats from various offices in the New Jersey Department of Education, other state agencies, and from the school districts themselves.

Project staff validated and cleaned electronic data before performing analyses. Procedures were used to check and fix missing data, impossible and outlier values, and inappropriate cases.

Data received in paper form were entered in spreadsheets and converted to tables or graphs. Electronic data were analyzed using a statistical software application, and results presented in tables and graphs throughout

Data Validation Procedures: An Example

Our procedures for cleaning the data containing achievement test proficiency rates provide a useful example:

Missing data. The percent of students in any given school who scored in the three proficiency categories should always sum to 100 percent. Because schools are grouped into categories before averaging, it is important that all values—including zeros—be accurately reflected. All appropriate missing values were recoded to zeros.

Inappropriate cases. We also checked the number of students who were tested in each year, grade level, and subgroup against the appropriate enrollment. All cases that had test enrollments exceeding the number enrolled by more than 20 percent were eliminated from the analyses. This method also ensured that we did not include schools that did not enroll students in the appropriate grade.

Data Collection and Analysis

the report. Most findings are the result of straightforward descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions or averages, and are self-explanatory.

Our sources included school-and district-level databases only. To approximate student level findings (e.g., all of the student outcomes and per student revenues), we statistically weighted our data. A simple average across districts would have yielded incorrect results because districts vary in size. For example, an average test score across all of the Abbott districts should not give equal weight to Newark, the district with the largest enrollment, and Burlington City, the Abbott district with the smallest enrollment. Test scores were weighted with test enrollment wherever available. All other student-level findings were weighted using enrollment figures appropriate to the year, grade level, and/or demographic group.

Data Sources and Definitions

1. The Community And Students

Figure 1.1 Conditions of Living and Learning

Female head of household families. The percent of families led by a female head of household with her own children and no spouse.

Highest educational attainment. The percent of adults ages 25 and over by the highest level of school completed.

Labor force participation. The number of nonmilitary people in the labor force as a percent of civilian population ages 16 and over.

Unemployment rate. The number of people ages 16 and over without a job and looking for work, as a percent of the civilian labor force.

Median household income. The income level that divides the household income distribution into two equal parts.

Population below poverty level. The percent of people who earn below the poverty-level income threshold for a family of a specific size and ages of family members.

Population 17 and under below poverty level. The percent of children under age 18 whose family's income is below the poverty-level threshold for a family of that size and ages of the family members.

Rent-income ratio. Gross rent as a percent of household income.

Renter-occupied housing. The percent of occupied housing units that are not owner-occupied.

Violent crime. The rate per 1,000 people who have been arrested for one of the following crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, or motor vehicle theft.

SOURCE: Violent crime is from the Uniform Crime Report, 2002. All other measures are from the 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3.

Figure 1.2 Characteristics of Students in Trenton

Total enrollment consists of all students enrolled in preschool through Grade 12, including students enrolled in Head Start and other private provider preschool programs that are under contract to the district as well as district programs. All other percentages shown in this table are of the number of students enrolled in district-run preschool programs and public Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Eligible for free-/reduced-price lunch. The percent of students whose families fall within 185 percent of the poverty level who are eligible for free-or reduced-price lunch during the school day under the National School Lunch Program.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The percent of students whose native language is not English and who have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language as determined through a language proficiency test.

Data Sources and Definitions

Students with disabilities. The percent of students with an individualized education program (IEP), regardless of placement and program involvement. An IEP contains special instructional activities to meet the goals and objectives of the student.

Immigrant. The percent of students who were not born in any state and have not attended school in any state for more than three full academic years, as defined in Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Homeless. As defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, the percent of students without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Student mobility. The percent of students who entered or left school during the school year.

SOURCE: Free-and reduced-price lunch eligibility and race/ethnicity from the New Jersey Department of Education Fall Survey, 2003–04; Limited English Proficiency, disabilities, and mobility from the New Jersey School Report Card, 2002–03; Immigrant and homeless status from the Trenton Public Schools, 2003–04.

2. The Preschool Program

Figure 2.1 Preschool Enrollment

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education, 2003 District and Provider budgets; New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, Preschool & Kindergarten Early Childhood Program Aid Enrollments, 1999–2004.

Figure 2.2 Preschool Population Served

Eligible preschool population. The number of eligible three-and four-year olds is estimated by the New Jersey Department of Education by doubling the number of students enrolled in the previous year in Grade 1 in a school district's public, charter, and nonpublic schools.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education, 2003 District and Provider budgets; New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, Preschool & Kindergarten Early Childhood Program Aid Enrollments, 1999–2004.

Figure 2.3 Preschool Enrollment by Provider Type

In-district preschool. A preschool program housed in school district buildings.

Enhanced Head Start. The program under which existing Head Start seats are upgraded to meet Abbott standards funded with both state and federal money.

Expanded Head Start. The program serving children in Abbott districts that were not previously enrolled in Federal Head Start, funded entirely with state money.

Other private providers. Preschool programs run by private organizations (other than Head Start) under contract to the school district.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education, 2003 District and Provider budgets; New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, Preschool & Kindergarten Early Childhood Program Aid Enrollments, 1999–2004.

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 Educational Environment of Preschoolers with Disabilities

Educational environment is determined by the level of inclusion in general education classrooms. The following are the settings where preschoolers with disabilities may be educated:

General education. An early childhood setting in a public preschool or Kindergarten, nonpublic nursery school, day care, or preschool with collaborative preschool services. This environment, which includes the general population of students, is regarded as the least restrictive environment under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004.

Special education. An early childhood setting with special education classes in buildings with general education students.

General/special education. Special education and related services are provided in both general education and special education settings.

Home. Special education and related services are provided at home.

Itinerant services. Students are "pulled out" of class to receive special education and related services for no more than three hours a week in a setting other than home.

Separate schools. Buildings without general education grades in private schools, educational services commissions, regional day schools, jointure commissions, or special services school districts.

Residential schools. A separate school in which students with disabilities live and for which the district pays both day and residential costs.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Number of Public Students with Disabilities Ages 3–5 by Placement in Districts and Charter Schools, 2003–04.

Figure 2.6 Preschool Teachers

SOURCE: Trenton Board of Education, Early Childhood Department, 2004–05.

Figure 2.7 Preschool Teacher Educational Attainment by Provider Type

SOURCE: Trenton Board of Education, Early Childhood Department, 2004–05.

Figure 2.8 Preschool Teacher Certification

Preschool to Grade 3 (P-3). A teaching credential required for any new preschool teacher in either a district program or a community provider setting. With some exceptions, existing teachers must make progress toward attaining the P-3 endorsement by 2005.

Certification of Eligibility (CE). A provisional credential with lifetime validity issued to individuals who have the completed the required degree, academic study, and applicable test requirements for certification.

Data Sources and Definitions

A CE permits individuals to seek and accept employment in a preschool program until they complete the additional requirements for the P-3 certificate.

Certification of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS). A provisional credential with lifetime validity issued to individuals who have completed the CE requirements plus traditional professional preparation programs. A CEAS permits individuals to seek and accept employment in a preschool program until they complete the additional requirements for the P-3 certificate.

Nursery or Elementary (N-8). Teachers who have a nursery school or K-8 certificate and two years teaching experience in an early childhood setting are also certified to teach in preschool setting through a "grandfather" clause in the regulations.

SOURCE: Trenton Board of Education, Early Childhood Department, 2004–05.

Figure 2.9 Average Preschool Teacher Time Spent in Current Position

Average time spent in current position. The average number of years since date of hire at the current provider, as measured in September 2004.

SOURCE: Trenton Board of Education, Early Childhood Department, 2004–05.

Figure 2.10 Average Preschool Teacher Salary

Average preschool teacher salary. The total of preschool teacher salaries divided by the number of preschool teachers in each category.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education, District and Provider Budgets, 2003–04 and 2004–05; New Jersey Department of Education, TRENTON Early Childhood Plan, 2001–02 & 2002–03.

Figure 2.11 Per Student Preschool Aid by Source

Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA). A state aid program for preschool in districts with high concentrations of low-income students including the Abbott districts and 102 other districts. Reported are the sum of ECPA funds over the total number of students enrolled in any given district grouping.

Preschool Expansion Aid (PSEA). A state aid program for preschool programs in Abbott districts to help cover costs associated with increased enrollment. Reported are the sum of PSEA funds over the total number of students enrolled in any given district grouping.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Finance, Office of School Funding, Advertised District Revenues, 2002–03 and 2003–04.

Data Sources and Definitions

Figure 2.12 Per Student Preschool Aid

Per student preschool aid. The total state aid received for early childhood programs divided by the actual preschool enrollment.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Finance, Office of School Funding, Advertised District Revenues, 2002–03 and 2003–04.

3. K-12 Education

Figure 3.1 Trenton Schools, Grade Structure, and Enrollment

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Fall Survey, 2003–04.

Figure 3.2 Average Class Size by Grade

Figure 3.3 Elementary School Average Class Size

Figure 3.5 High School Average Class Size

Figure 3.8 Kindergarten Average Class Size

Average class size. For the elementary grades, average class size is the number of students assigned to regular homerooms over the total number of homerooms. For the high schools, the average is calculated by the number of students assigned to an English class divided by the total number of English classes.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.4 Elementary School Enrollment

Figure 3.6 High School Enrollment

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.7 Educational Environment of Students with Disabilities Ages 6 to 21

Educational environment. The level of inclusion in general education classrooms: 1) 80% or more inclusion: students with disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their school day in a general education classroom; 2) 40–79% inclusion: students with disabilities attend general education classrooms between 40 and 79 percent of the school day; and 3) Less than 40% inclusion: students with disabilities spend less than 40 percent of the school day in a general education classroom.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Number of Public Students with Disabilities Ages 6–21 by Placement in Districts and Charter Schools, 2003–04.

Figure 3.9 Cumulative Percent Change in Kindergarten Enrollment by District Grouping

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03; New Jersey Department of Education, Fall Survey, 2003–04.

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Figure 3.10 Student-Computer Ratio

Student-computer ratio. The total number of students divided by the number of multimedia-capable computers that are accessible to students for instruction.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2001–02; 2002–03.

Figure 3.11 Student-Teacher Ratio

Student-teacher ratio. The number of students divided by the combined full-time equivalents of classroom teachers and support services staff (e.g. guidance counselors, librarians, etc).

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.12 Faculty Attendance

Faculty attendance. The average daily attendance of the faculty (teachers and support services staff) of the school. Attendance is the total number days faculty is present divided by the total number of contracted days excluding approved professional days, personal days, and extended leaves.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.13 Highly Qualified Teachers, Elementary Schools

Figure 3.14 Highly Qualified Teachers, High Schools

Highly qualified teachers. The percent of teachers that have obtained full State certification or passed the State teacher licensing examination, and hold a license to teach. New teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree and have demonstrated, by passing a State test, subject knowledge and teaching skills in the core content areas: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, world languages, civics and government, economics, arts (music, theatre, and art), history, and geography.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2003–04

Figure 3.15 Percent of Schools with Abbott Required Staff in Positions

Instructional facilitator. Staff member required in schools serving students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 to assist in the implementation of Whole School Reform.

Teacher tutor. Staff member required in schools serving students in Grades 1 through 6 to provide one-to-one or small-group tutoring to students reading below grade level.

Social worker. Required staff member of the Family Support Team in schools serving students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Attendance/dropout prevention officer. Required staff member in schools serving

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students in Grades 6 through 12 to assist students at risk of dropout.

Health-social service coordinator. Required staff member responsible for the coordination of and referral of students for health and social services in schools serving students in Grades 6 through 12.

Family liaison (parent-community coordinator). Required staff member in all schools to coordinate family education and encourage the involvement of parents in the daily school activities and decision-making. The family liaison is also a member of the Family Support team

Nurse/health specialist. Staff member required in all schools as a member of the Family Support Team.

Guidance counselor. Staff member required in all schools as a member of the Family Support Team.

Tech coordinator. Required staff member in all schools to assist in the implementation of educational technology throughout schools.

Librarian/media specialist. Required staff member in all schools to ensure that classrooms and libraries have appropriate materials to assist students in mastering the curriculum.

Security officer. Required staff member in all schools as needed to provide school security and address student disruptions and violence.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Fiscal Policy and Planning, DOENET Abbott School-Based Budget Staffing Figures, 2002–03 and 2003–04.

Figure 3.16 Average Property Value per Student

Figure 3.17 Average Equalized Tax Rate

Figure 3.20 Average School Tax Rate

Average property value per student. The equalized, assessed value of property within a district divided by the total resident enrollment.

Average tax rates. The local property taxes levied expressed as a dollar amount for every $100 of equalized, assessed property value.

Average equalized school tax rates. The portion of local tax revenues used to support public education expressed as a dollar amount for $100 of equalized, assessed property value.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, 1998–2003.

Figure 3.18 General Education Funding by Source: Trenton, 2003–04

Figure 3.19 Per Student General Education Funding

Figure 3.21 Per Student Supplemental Program Aid by Source: Trenton and All Other Abbott Districts, 2003–04

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Figure 3.22 Per Student Supplemental Program Aid

General education funding. Local and state revenues intended for the support of general education. The following revenue sources were used to determine the general education revenue totals: local tax levy, Core Curriculum Standards Aid (CCSA), Supplemental CCSA, stabilization aid, and Abbott parity aid. (Abbott Parity Aid is known as Educational Opportunity Aid, or EOA as of 2004–05.) Reported are the sum of these revenues. The per student funding is the sum of these revenues divided by the total residential enrollment in any given district grouping.

Total requested budget. The total budget amount requested by a district for the upcoming fiscal year in its initial budget submission to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Total approved budget. The total budget amount approved by the New Jersey Department of Education for a district in the upcoming fiscal year.

Supplemental program aid. The state and federal revenue intended to support health, nutrition, and social services in schools. "Title I," is federal funding under the No Child Left Behind Act used to support high-poverty districts and schools. Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA) is state aid provided to schools with low-income students. Additional Abbott Aid is state aid for required programs in Abbott districts in addition to other approved programs, such as on-site clinics, that the Abbott district must prove are necessary. Reported are the sum of these revenues over the total residential enrollment in any given district grouping.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Finance, Office of School Funding, Advertised District Revenues, 2002–03 to 2003–04.

Figure 3.23 Student Attendance, Elementary Schools

Figure 3.24 Student Attendance, High Schools

Student attendance. The percent of students who are present at school each day on average. Attendance is calculated by dividing the sum of days present over the sum of all possible school days for all students.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.25 Child and Youth Well-Being Indicators

Teen birth rate. The number of births to teenagers between ages 10–14 and 15–19 per 1,000 females in these age groups, respectively.

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Child abuse and neglect—substantiated cases. The number of child abuse and/or neglect cases for children ages 17 and under per 1,000 children ages 0 to 17 that have been verified by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services.

SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004 Kids Count; Association for Children of New Jersey, Kids Count, 1997–2002; New Jersey Center for Health Statistics: Figure N21. Live Births by Age of Mother for Selected Municipalities of Residence: New Jersey, 1997–2002; and 2000 US Census, Population by Age.

Figure 3.26 Category A Offenses, Elementary Schools

Figure 3.27 Category A Offenses, High Schools

Figure 3.28 NCLB (Category B) Index, Elementary Schools

Figure 3.29 NCLB (Category B) Index, High Schools

Category A offenses. The total number of the following types of offenses: (1) firearm offenses; (2) aggravated assaults on another student; (3) assaults with a weapon on another student; and (4) assaults on a school district staff member.

NCLB index. The rate of Category B offenses adjusted for enrollment: (1) simple assaults; (2) weapons possession or sales (other than a firearm); (3) gang fights; (4) robbery or extortion incidents; (5) sex offenses; (6) terroristic threats; (7) arsons; (8) sales or distribution of drugs; and (9) harassment and bullying incidents.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Program Support Services, Division of Student Services. Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting System, 1999–2003.

Figure 3.30 Suspension Rate, Elementary Schools

Figure 3.31 Suspension Rate by District Grouping: High Schools

Suspension rate. The percent of students who were suspended—in-school or out-of-school—at least once during the school year. Students suspended more than one time are counted once.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2001–02; 2002–03.

Figure 3.32 New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Language Arts Literacy

Figure 3.33 New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Math

Adequate yearly progress targets for language arts literacy provide the percent of students that should pass the language arts literacy section of the ASK4, GEPA, and HSPA

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in 2002–03, 2004–05, 2007–08, 2010–11, and 2013–14. By 2013–14, 100% of all students should pass the language arts literacy exam.

Adequate yearly progress targets for math provide the percent of students that should pass the math section of the ASK4, GEPA, and HSPA in 2002–03, 2004–05, 2007–08, 2010–11, and 2013–14. By 2013–14, 100% of all students should pass the math exam.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, 2004.

Figure 3.34 Categories and Action Steps for Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress

Categories and actions steps for schools not making adequate yearly progress include:

Early warning. The first year of missing one or more AYP threshold. No actions are required under NCLB, but schools and districts should identify areas that need to be improved.

School improvement. The second and third consecutive year missing AYP threshold. In the second year, parents are notified and given the option to transfer their children to a school that made AYP. Schools must identify areas needing improvement and work with parents, teachers, and outside experts to develop a plan. In the third year, tutoring and other supplemental services must be made available.

Corrective action. The fourth and fifth consecutive year missing AYP threshold. In the fourth year, school choice and supplemental services are still available. In addition, schools must undertake at least one of a series of corrective actions, including: staff replacement; curriculum adoption; decreased school authority; external consultant to advise the school; extended school day or year; and/or reorganize school governance. In the fifth year, the school must develop a plan for alternate school governance. Choice, supplemental services, and other corrective actions still required.

Restructuring. The sixth consecutive year of missing AYP threshold. Schools must implement alternate school governance developed in year five.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, 2004.

Figure 3.35 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Average Score

Figure 3.38 Grade 4 Math Average Score

Figure 3.42 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Average Score

Figure 3.45 Grade 8 Math Average Score

Figure 3.49 Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Average Score

Figure 3.51 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Average Score

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Figure 3.54 Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Average Score

Figure 3.56 Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Average Score

Average scores. The weighted mean scores on the Grade 4, 8, and 11 assessment in language arts literacy and math. School-level results are weighted by the number of students taking the test prior to averaging across schools in a district grouping.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment & Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2002–03; New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.36 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.39 Grade 4 Math Proficiency

Figure 3.43 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.46 Grade 8 Math Proficiency

Figure 3.50 Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Proficiency

Figure 3.52 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.55 Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Proficiency

Figure 3.57 Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Proficiency

Proficiency. The percent of students falling within the following proficiency thresholds on the Grade 4, 8, and 11 language arts literacy and math exams: partially proficient, proficient, and advanced proficient. School-level results are weighted by the number of students taking the test prior to averaging across schools in a district grouping. The HSPT had a passing threshold of 300 with a range of scores from 100 to 500. The following are the proficiency cut points for the ESPA/NJASK, GEPA, and HSPA.

	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Advanced Proficient
Beginning Cut Point	100	200	250
Ending Cut Point	199	249	300

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment & Evaluation, 1997–98 to 2002–03; New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1998–99 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.37 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.40 Grade 4 Math Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.44 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.47 Grade 8 Math Proficiency by Subgroup

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Figure 3.53 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.58 Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Proficiency by Subgroup

Proficiency by subgroup is the percent of white, Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, special education, or limited English proficiency students that pass the Grade 4, 8 and 11 language arts literacy and math exams. Reported are those subgroups with at least 20 students taking the exam, except for students with disabilities, where at least 35 students had to take the test to be included in the analysis. School-level results are weighted by the number of students taking the test in each subgroup prior to averaging across schools in a district grouping.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment & Evaluation, 2002–03; New Jersey Department of Education, Fall Survey, 2002–03.

Figure 3.41 Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 4

Figure 3.48 Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 8

Figure 3.59 Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 11

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The measure set by each state to assess performance of all students including students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, migrant students, students eligible for free/reduced lunch, and white, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American students. By 2013–14, all students in all subgroups must reach the proficiency level set by the state.

Grade 4. In 2003–04, 68 percent of Grade 4 students had to pass the language arts literacy exam in order to meet the AYP standard; 53% of Grade 4 students had to make a proficient score on the math exam in order to meet the 2003–04 AYP standard.

Grade 8. In 2003–04, 58 percent of Grade 8 students had to pass the language arts literacy exam in order to meet the AYP standard; 39% of Grade 4 students had to make a proficient score on the math exam in order to meet the 2003–04 AYP standard.

Grade 11. In 2003–04, 73 percent of Grade 11 students had to pass the language arts literacy exam in order to meet the AYP standard; 55 percent of Grade 11 students had to make a proficient score on the math exam in order to meet the 2003–04 AYP standard.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability, 2004.

Figure 3.60 Cumulative Promotion Index

Cumulative promotion index. An estimate that a ninth grader will graduate within four years. The estimate is calculated by multiplying the grade-to-grade promotion rate over a two-year period by the percent of 12th graders who graduated in the current year. The CPI is calculated through 2001–02 because the

New Jersey Report Card changed the way it measured graduation in 2002–03.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.61 Graduation by Traditional (HSPA/HSPT) Grade 11 Exam

Figure 3.62 Graduation by Alternative (SRA) Grade 11 Exam

Graduation by Traditional (HSPA/HSPT) Grade 11 Exam. The percent of students graduating from high school by passing the Grade 11 exam.

Graduation by Alternative (SRA) Grade 11 Exam. The percent of students graduating from high school by taking the Special Review Assessment (SRA). The SRA is the alternative assessment to the HSPA.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

Figure 3.63 SAT Participation

Figure 3.64 SAT Verbal Average Score

Figure 3.65 SAT Math Average Score

SAT participation. The percent of twelfth graders taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

Average scores are the weighted mean scores on the verbal and math sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. School-level results are weighted by the number of students taking the test prior to averaging across schools in a district grouping.

SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education, School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03.

4. School Facilities Construction

Figure 4.1 Trenton's First-Round Facilities Plan Overview

The first-round facilities plan was the initial plan for a district's school construction.

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

Figure 4.2 Overview of Trenton's Current Projects

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

Figure 4.3 Status of Facilities Projects: Trenton and All Other Abbott Districts

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

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Abbott Advisory Council. A steering committee composed of district and community representatives that are responsible for the review of district policies and procedures as they relate to Abbott program implementation.

Abbott district. One of New Jersey's 31 poor urban school districts. Abbott districts: 1) receive state aid that ensures that they have the same per student funding as the wealthiest suburbs in the state; 2) offer full-day, full-year preschool on-demand to all eligible three-and four-year-olds; 3) implement school reforms to ensure that students learn the knowledge and skills required to master the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards; 4) offer programs and services designed to help low-income children come to school ready to learn; and 5) have 100% state-financed school facilities construction. The students of 28 districts were plaintiffs in the original Abbott v. Burke case decided by the New Jersey Supreme Court. The students of Neptune and Plainfield were added in 1999; students in Salem City were added in 2004. In the analyses that appear throughout this report, Salem City is not included among the Abbott districts. The Abbott districts are listed in another Appendix to this report.

Abbott Parity Aid. The per student foundational funding level for the 31 Abbott districts that is equal to, or at parity with, the wealthiest suburban districts in New Jersey, also known as the I & J districts. Abbott parity aid is now known as Education Opportunity Aid.

Accelerated Schools. A Whole School Reform model that improves learning for at-risk K-8 students through acceleration of instruction rather than remediation; by improving school climate; and through school organizational changes based on a participatory process of decision-making.

Additional Abbott Aid. The per student supplemental funding intended to address the unique needs of urban students. Programs such as full-day kindergarten and health and social services referral and coordination are required in all Abbott schools, however schools can receive funding for other programs intended to assist students' needs if the need is demonstrated to the New Jersey Department of Education (now known as Discretionary Educational Opportunity Aid).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The measure set by each state to assess performance of all students including students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, migrant students, students eligible for free/reduced lunch, and white, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American students. By 2013–14, all students in all subgroups must reach the proficiency level set by the state.

Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates the participation of all students with disabilities in statewide assessments. States must develop and conduct alternate assessments for students who cannot participate in the general statewide testing program. As a result, the Alternate Proficiency Assessments are used as the statewide test for students with severe disabilities.

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Alternate route. An alternate certification process adopted in 1985 that permits qualified individuals lacking education credentials to earn them in the public schools under a mentoring program and become licensed teachers. It allows people to enter teaching after they have worked in other careers.

Application for State School Aid (ASSA). The data collection document submitted by districts for the purpose of calculating most state school aid.

Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (ASK4). The state assessment administered in Grade 4 to determine achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Prior to 2002–03, the test was known as the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA).

Attendance/dropout prevention officer. Required staff member in schools serving students in Grades 6 through 12 to assist students at risk of dropout.

Benchmark. A standard against which performance may be judged.

Brigance Screen. An assessment published by Curriculum Associates, Inc., that screens key developmental and early academic skills.

Category A offenses. The total number of the following types of offenses: (1) firearm offenses; (2) aggravated assaults on another student; (3) assaults with a weapon on another student; and (4) assaults on a school district staff member.

Certification of Eligibility (CE). A provisional credential with lifetime validity issued to individuals who have the completed the required degree, academic study, and applicable test requirements for certification. A CE permits individuals to seek and accept employment in a preschool program until they complete the additional requirements for the P-3 certificate.

Certification of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS). A provisional credential with lifetime validity issued to individuals who have completed the CE requirements plus traditional professional preparation programs. A CEAS permits individuals to seek and accept employment in a preschool program until they complete the additional requirements for the P-3 certificate.

Child study team (CST). Consists of a school psychologist, a learning disabilities teacher/consultant, and school social worker who are employees of the school district responsible for conducting evaluations to determine eligibility for special education and related services for students with disabilities.

Coalition of Essential Schools. A Whole School Reform model that focuses on redesigning instruction in an entire high school so that the students acquire thinking skills that enable them to question and reason. The model uses personalized instruction and is based on nine common principles on which teachers must reach consensus and then decide how to apply them to instruction.

Comer School Development Program. A Whole School Reform model that focuses on bridging the gap between home and school by identifying and addressing the underlying problems that students and their fami-

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lies may have that interfere with the child's progress in school. It is designed to involve all school staff, community agencies, and parents in solving the problems that have been identified. Comer has three components: a School Planning and Management Team, a Student and Staff Support Team, and a Parent Involvement Team.

Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environments Model (CFL/ALEM). A Whole School Reform model that focuses on high academic achievement and positive student self-perception. Each school must create its own planning and implementation framework that incorporates a school-wide organizational structure and a coordinated system of instruction and related services delivery. This model is designed to break down artificial barriers within the school and among the many agencies that provide services.

Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA). A law passed in 1996 to establish a definition of the constitutional guarantee to a thorough and efficient system of public education through the establishment of Core Curriculum Content Standards and efficiency standards. CEIFA guarantees a level of funding known as the T & E (thorough and efficient) amount. The state's definition of the T & E amount was found unconstitutional under Abbott.

Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). Standards adopted by the State Board of Education in 1996 to establish expectations for students to meet in seven academic and five workplace readiness areas. They outline the common expectations for student achievement throughout the 13 years of public education in the following subject areas: visual and performing arts, comprehensive health/physical education, language arts literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. The five cross-content areas for workplace readiness encompass career planning; use of technology information and other tools; critical thinking/decision-making/problem-solving; self-management; and safety principles.

Core Curriculum Standards Aid (CCSA). The amount of state aid that is distributed to all school districts for general fund expenses to ensure that each district can provide a thorough and efficient system of education consistent with the CCCS.

Corrective action. The fourth and fifth consecutive year missing AYP threshold. In the fourth year, school choice and supplemental services are still available. In addition, schools must undertake at least one of a series of corrective actions, including: staff replacement; curriculum adoption; decreased school authority; external consultant to advise the school; extended school day or year; and/or reorganize school governance. In the fifth year, the school must develop a plan for alternate school governance. Choice, supplemental services, and other corrective actions still required.

Creative Curriculum. An early childhood education curriculum developed by Teaching Strategies that applies child development and learning theories to an education environ-

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ment that focuses planning around indoor and outdoor interest areas.

Cumulative promotion index. An estimate that a ninth grader will graduate within four years used in the absence of reliable graduation rates.

Curiosity Corner. An early childhood education curriculum developed by the Success For All Foundation that fosters cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional development of three-and four-year-olds.

Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA). State aid that is allocated to schools with low-income pupils to provide effective programs that have been shown to enhance the teaching/learning process, improve school governance, and provide students with collaborative learning environments and health and social service programs.

Demonstration Project. A school facilities project selected by the State Treasurer for construction by a redevelopment agency.

Department of Human Services (DHS). A partner with the New Jersey Department of Education in implementing the Abbott early childhood education program. DHS is responsible for licensing community childcare providers and funding wrap-around services in those providers.

Discretionary Education Opportunity Aid (DEOA). The per student supplemental funding intended to address the unique needs of urban students. Programs such as full-day kindergarten and health and social services referral and coordination are required in all Abbott schools, however schools can receive funding for other programs intended to assist students' needs if the need is demonstrated to the New Jersey Department of Education (formerly known as Additional Abbott v. Burke Aid).

District factor grouping (DFG). A system used by the New Jersey Department of Education to rank local school districts according to socio-economic status. DFGs are based on information available from the Census: educational attainment of the adults in the community, employment rates, occupations, population density, and income/poverty. There are eight DFGs starting with A which designates the lowest socio-economic level and also include B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J. The DFGs were recalculated in 2004 based on 2000 Census information. 1990 DFGs are used throughout this report.

Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC). Community stakeholders who are responsible for the review the school district's progress towards full implementation of high-quality preschool programs in addition to participating in program planning, budget development, and early childhood facilities planning.

Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality. A document containing guidelines for creating developmentally appropriate preschool learning environments that promote early literacy and other important goals. The guidelines support and prepare young children to meet New

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Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) when they enter Kindergarten.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). A program quality assessment used in early childhood settings.

Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA). A state aid program for preschool and support services in districts with high concentrations of low-income students including the Abbott districts and 102 other districts. Previously, ECPA funds used to support the "second half-day" of Kindergarten, required under Abbott. Now, it is funded through Discretionary Educational Opportunity Aid.

Early Language Assessment System (ELAS). Assessment of preschool students intended to help preschool teachers tailor instruction to meet children's needs.

Early warning. The first year of missing one or more AYP threshold(s). No actions are required under NCLB, but schools and districts should identify areas that need to be improved.

Education Opportunity Aid (EOA). The per student foundational funding level for the 31 Abbott districts that is equal to, or at parity with, the wealthiest suburban districts in New Jersey, also known as the I & J districts. Abbott parity aid is now known as Education Opportunity Aid.

Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act (EFCFA). Passed in July 2000 to initiate the state's school construction program.

Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA). The former state assessment administered in Grade 4 to determine achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Updated in 2002–03 and now known as the ASK4.

Eligible preschool population. The number of eligible three-and four-year olds for preschool estimated by the New Jersey Department of Education by doubling the number of students enrolled in the previous year in Kindergarten and Grade 1 in a school district's public, charter, and nonpublic schools.

English as a Second Language (ESL). Programs in K-12 education that require a daily developmental second language program of up to two periods of instruction based on student needs. The programs offer listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing in English using second-language teaching techniques. The teachers also incorporate the cultural aspects of the students' experiences into their ESL instruction.

English language learner (ELL). Students whose native language is other than English and who have difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language as measured by an English language proficiency test. ELL students, also known as Limited English Proficient students (LEP), require bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English.

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Enhanced Head Start. The program under which existing Head Start seats are upgraded to meet Abbott standards funded with both state and federal money.

Equalized. An adjustment made to property values by the New Jersey Department of Treasury to enable comparisons across municipalities regardless of the year in which the most current property assessment was made.

Expanded Head Start. The program serving children in Abbott districts that were not previously enrolled in Federal Head Start, funded entirely with state money.

Facilities Advisory Board (FAB). An advisory board composed of parents, teachers, principals, community representatives, an architect, an engineer, and a staff person from the New Jersey Department of Education. The board was designed to guide the development of the Long Range Facilities Plan.

Facilities Efficiency Standards (FES). Developed by the Commissioner of Education for elementary, middle, and high schools. These standards determine the extent to which a district's construction project qualifies for state aid. They were intended to represent the standard of instructional and administrative spaces to be considered educationally adequate to support the achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Facilities Management Plan (FMP). The original term used to describe the Long-Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). The FMP is a plan developed by a district for repairing physical infrastructure deficiencies, educational adequacy deficiencies, and capacity deficits of the district's school buildings. All Abbott districts were required to develop comprehensive five-year facilities management plans.

Fall Survey. A report prepared by each district on a form provided by the Commissioner providing enrollment counts and selected demographic characteristics of the student enrollment.

Family liaison (parent-community coordinator). Required staff member in all schools to coordinate family education and encourage the involvement of parents in the daily school activities and decision-making. The family liaison is also a member of the Family Support team.

Family worker. A position required in every Abbott early childhood education program in a community provider setting. There must be one family worker for every 40 children and their families being served by the center. The family worker works with the center and the parents to ensure that the parents and their children obtain necessary health and social services.

Feasibility study. A pre-construction evaluation undertaken by a district to determine if—because of health and safety or efficiency—it would be more feasible to replace or renovate a school facility.

Full-day/full-year. Under Abbott, preschool programs must be made available for ten hours a day, 245 days a year. For a minimum of 180 school calendar days, a program

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must include at least a six-hour educational component meeting Department of Education requirements and a four-hour wrap-around services component meeting Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements. The remaining 65 days must meet DHS requirements for the ten hours of service.

General education funding. Local and state revenues intended for the support of general education. The following revenue sources were used to determine the general education revenue totals: local tax levy, Core Curriculum Standards Aid (CCSA), Supplemental CCSA, Stabilization Aid, and Abbott Parity Aid. (Abbott Parity Aid is known as Educational Opportunity Aid, or EOA as of 2004–05).

Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). The Grade 8 test that replaced the Early Warning Test in 1999. The GEPA is intended to provide information about student progress toward mastery of the skills specified by the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Guidance counselor. Staff member required in all schools as a member of the Family Support Team.

Health-social service coordinator. Required staff member responsible for the coordination of and referral of students for health and social services in schools serving students in Grades 6 through 12.

High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). The Grade 11 test that replaced the HSPT in 2001–02 used to determine student achievement of the knowledge and skills specified by all areas of the Core Curriculum Content Standards and Workplace Readiness Standards. Passing all sections of the HSPA or the Special Review Assessment (SRA) is a requirement for receiving a high school diploma.

High School Proficiency Test (HSPT). The Grade 11 test formerly administered in the fall of the junior year, consisting of three sections: reading, mathematics, and writing. The HSPT was replaced by the HSPA in 2001–02.

High/Scope. An early childhood education curriculum developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation that encourages children to make choices about materials and activities throughout the day. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with classmates and adults, engaging in activities that foster developmentally important skills and abilities.

Highest educational attainment. The percent of adults ages 25 and over by the highest level of school completed.

Highly qualified teachers (HQT). The percent of teachers that have obtained full State certification or passed the State teacher licensing examination, and hold a license to teach. New teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree and have demonstrated, by passing a State test, subject knowledge and teaching skills in the core content areas: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, world languages, civics and govern-

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ment, economics, arts (music, theatre, and art), history, and geography.

In-district preschool. A preschool program housed in school district buildings.

Individualized Education Program (IEP). A written plan developed at a meeting that includes appropriate school staff and parents or guardians. It determines the special education program for a student with disabilities through individually designed instructional activities constructed to meet goals and objectives established for the student. It establishes the rationale for the students' placement, which should be in the "least restrictive environment."

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The federal statute that mandates a free, appropriate public education for students with disabilities. In New Jersey, that includes students ages three to twenty one.

Instructional facilitator. Staff member required in schools serving students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 to assist in the implementation of Whole School Reform.

Intervention and referral services (I&RS). A team case management strategy for identifying and helping students at risk for behavioral problems.

Least restrictive environment. The standard that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be educated with children who do not have disabilities. It means that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment should occur only when the severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be adequately provided in a general education environment.

Librarian/media specialist. Required staff member in all schools to ensure that classrooms and libraries have appropriate materials to assist students in mastering the curriculum.

Local tax levy. The amount of funding that a local school district can raise based on property wealth and income levels. The local tax share of educational costs is used to determine the amount of Core Curriculum Standards Aid that a district will receive, if any.

Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). The name now used to describe the Facilities Management Plans (FMP). It is a plan developed by a district to outline repairs to physical infrastructure deficiencies, educational adequacy deficiencies, and capacity deficits of the district's school buildings. All Abbott districts were required to develop comprehensive five-year facilities management plans.

Master teacher. A position required in every Abbott early childhood education program. There must be one master teacher for every 20 early childhood education classrooms to coordinate early childhood education programs and assist in the provision of early childhood education professional development. The official position title for master preschool teachers in districts with collective bargaining

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agreements with a local affiliate of the New Jersey Education Association is "education program specialist."

Modern Red Schoolhouse. A Whole School Reform Model that strives to help all students master subject matter through the construction of a standards-driven curriculum, flexibility in organizing instruction and deploying resources, and the use of advanced technology in learning and management.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. An effort by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics to measure educational achievement of American students in reading, math, and science and the changes in that achievement over time. The program also provides scores for subpopulations defined by demographic characteristics and by specific background characteristics and experiences.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A professional organization for early childhood educators and others dedicated to improving the quality of programs for children from birth through Grade 3.

NCLB index. The rate of Category B offenses adjusted for enrollment: (1) simple assaults; (2) weapons possession or sales (other than a firearm); (3) gang fights; (4) robbery or extortion incidents; (5) sex offenses; (6) terroristic threats; (7) arsons; (8) sales or distribution of drugs; and (9) harassment and bullying incidents.

New Jersey School Report Card. Prepared and disseminated annually to parents and other interested taxpayers within each local school district. It also is accessible on the NJDOE Web site. The report card for each school building in the state contains information about student enrollment, test scores, attendance, and graduation rates, as well as information about teaching and administrative staff.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The 2001 reauthorization of the federal program, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Nurse/health specialist. Staff member required in all schools as a member of the Family Support Team.

Nursery or elementary certification (N-8). Teachers who have a nursery school or K-8 certificate and two years teaching experience in an early childhood setting are certified to teach in a preschool setting.

Other private providers. Preschool programs run by private organizations (other than Head Start) under contract to the school district.

Parents as Teachers (PAT). Program run by the Department of Human Services aimed at supporting the development of preschool students by giving parents information on topics such as child development and growth, literacy, and positive discipline.

Persistently dangerous schools. The No Child Left Behind Act specifies 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

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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. A school is called persistently dangerous if it meets either one of the two following conditions for three consecutive years: 1) Seven or more of the following types of serious incidents, known as 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) An index rating of 1 or more (calculated by a ratio of the sum of the following incidents over the square root of the enrollment): 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.

Preschool Expansion Aid (PSEA). A state aid program for preschool programs in Abbott districts to help cover costs associated with increased enrollment.

Preschool Mathematics Inventory (PCMI). Assessment of the materials and teaching strategies used to support and enhance children's math skills.

Preschool through Grade 3 certification (P-3). A teaching credential required for any new preschool teacher in an Abbott district in either a district program or a community provider setting. With some exceptions, existing teachers must make progress toward attaining the P-3 endorsement by 2004.

Proficiency. The percent of students passing a state administered exam aimed at measuring a student's mastery of the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Resident enrollment. The number of students other than preschoolers, postgraduate pupils, or postsecondary vocational pupils, who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of the current year, are residents of the district.

Restructuring. The sixth consecutive year of missing AYP threshold. Schools must implement alternate school governance developed in year five.

School-Based Youth Services Program. A program of student prevention, intervention, and treatment services funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

School improvement. The second and third consecutive year missing AYP threshold. In the second year, parents are notified and given the option to transfer their children to a school that made AYP. Schools must identify areas needing improvement and work with parents, teachers, and outside experts to develop a plan. In the third year, tutoring and other supplemental services must be made available.

School Leadership Councils (SLC). A volunteer group composed of the principal, teachers, non-instructional staff, parents, community representatives, and the Whole School Reform facilitator that represents school staff and the neighborhood; their pri-

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mary purpose is to help improve teaching and learning by participating in program planning and decision-making and encouraging broad participation by school staff and neighborhood stakeholders.

Schools Construction Corporation (SCC). State agency created under former Governor McGreevey to oversee the completion of the Long Range Facilities Plan.

Security officer. Required staff member in all schools as needed to provide school security and address student disruptions and violence.

Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS). Self-evaluation created by the Office of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education; the evaluation is intended for use in planning the district's programs.

Social worker. Required staff member of the Family Support Team in schools serving students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Special Review Assessment (SRA). An alternative assessment that provides students with the opportunity to exhibit their understanding and mastery of the HSPA skills in contexts that are familiar and related to their experiences. The SRA content is linked to the HSPT/HSPA test specifications. This is necessary in order to ensure that students who are certified through the SRA have demonstrated the same skills and competencies at comparable levels as students who pass the written test.

Standardized test. An assessment that is administered and scored in exactly the same way for all students. Traditional standardized tests are typically mass-produced and machine-scored; they are designed to measure skills and knowledge that are thought to be taught to all students in a fairly standardized way. Performance assessments also can be standardized if they are administered and scored in the same way for all students.

Student mobility. The percent of students who entered or left school during the school year. Districts may or may not report a single child who leaves and enters school multiple times throughout the school year as multiple incidents.

Students with disabilities. The percent of students with an individualized education program (IEP), regardless of placement and program involvement. An IEP contains special instructional activities to meet the goals and objectives of the student.

Success for All/Roots and Wings. Under Abbott, the presumptive Whole School Reform Model for elementary schools. Success for All is a reading program that helps students read on grade level by third grade. The model focuses on reading and language arts and includes a family support team. Roots & Wings expands Success for All in other major subject areas, such as math, social studies, and science.

Supplemental Core Curriculum Standards Aid (SCCS). The state aid for low-income districts that supplements CCSA to lessen the impact on the local tax rate.

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Supplemental program aid. The state and federal revenue intended to support health, nutrition, and social services in schools. "Title I," is federal funding under the No Child Left Behind Act used to support high-poverty districts and schools. Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA) is state aid provided to schools with low-income students. Additional Abbott Aid is state aid for required programs in Abbott districts in addition to other approved programs, such as on-site clinics, that the Abbott district must prove are necessary. (As of 2004, Additional Abbott Aid is known as Discretionary Education Opportunity Aid or DEOA).

Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA). Assessment of the classroom practices used to support children's early language and literacy skills.

Teacher tutor. Staff member required in schools serving students in Grades 1 through 6 to provide one-to-one or small-group tutoring to students reading below grade level.

Technology coordinator. Required staff member in all schools to assist in the implementation of educational technology throughout schools.

TerraNova. A standardized test used to assess performance in Kindergarten through Grade 2.

Thorough and Efficient (T&E). Refers to New Jersey's constitutional provision that all children have a right to a "thorough and efficient system of free public schools."

Whole School Reform (WSR). A complete restructuring of an entire school, putting in place a series of programs and strategies that have been proven by research to be effective. To succeed, this restructuring requires the support and participation of those who must carry it out, including principals, teachers, support staff, parents, and community members. The WSR initiative is systemic in nature, unlike previous generations of reforms that were incremental and piecemeal.

Wrap-around services. Services required in Abbott early childhood education programs. They consist of activities held during the four hours before and/or after the required six-hour educational component during the ten-hour full-day program. They also are provided through the summer program.

Zero-based budgeting. A type of budgeting procedure that analyzes and justifies costs from a base of zero, rather than the previous year's balance, in order to improve fiscal efficiency.

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School District Information, Interviews, and Access

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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.

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Prior to coming to ELC, Dr. Applewhite-Coney was a postdoctoral fellow at The Consultation Center of Yale University School of Medicine. There, she worked as part of the local evaluation team conducting an assessment of school needs for the Partnership for Kids Project, an initiative funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to introduce a behavioral system of care for students and families in Bridgeport, CT schools. She also served on the local evaluation team for Bridgeport Safe Start, a citywide initiative with the goal of reducing the incidence and impact of exposure to violence in the home for children birth to six. Dr. Applewhite-Coney received her B.A. in Psychology and Spanish from New York University, and a Psy.D. in School Psychology from Rutgers University.

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