TRACKING PROGRESS | ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Abbott Indicators Technical Report

Union City

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 the 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 were required to undergo a series of reforms and improvements to ensure that the funds are used to fulfill the constitutional promise.

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

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

Union City Abbott Indicators Project and Report

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

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a series of indicators, the Union City Abbott Indicators Report presents the status of these reforms and student progress to date.

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

1. *Inform* people in Union City about the status of school improvement efforts and student outcomes.
2. *Engage* people in Union City 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 Union City Abbott Indicators Report are presented below. First, we list indicators about Union City as a community and the students who are enrolled in the public schools. The remaining findings are organized by Abbott remedy: preschool, K-12 education (including standards-based reform and student and family supports), and school facilities construction. All of the remedies 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 all of the elements of effective schooling have been implemented. In the full report that

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follows this summary, all indicators findings are presented with accompanying tables and discussion.

Key Findings

The Community and Students

- Union City is the most densely populated city in New Jersey, with a land area just over one square mile and a population of about 67,000.
- In 2000, more than one in five residents in Union City lived below the poverty level, compared to the state average of eight percent. More than one in four Union City children lived in families earning below the poverty level, compared to about one in nine statewide.
- In 2000, the unemployment rate in Union City was 12 percent, about double that of the state as a whole.
- More than half of Union City's residents were born in another country, compared to only 18 percent statewide.
- More than 90 percent of Union City's 11,600 students are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.
- Nearly fifteen percent of the student enrollment come from families that recently immigrated.
- Almost half of the students enrolled in the district do not speak or write English fluently. Nearly all (98%) of the English language learners in the district speak Spanish at home.
- Union City students move a great deal more than New Jersey students on average—nearly one in five students entered or left their school at least once during the 2002–03 school year. High student mobility can disrupt educational progress and negatively affect student learning.

The Preschool Program

- By 2005–06, each Abbott district is required to serve 90 percent of its eligible population. Union City met the enrollment requirement two years before the state deadline. In 2003–04, it served 90 percent of the city's eligible children in its preschool program.
- To serve all of the children in the district, the Union City Board of Education contracts with 29 private provider and Head Start programs to offer Abbott preschool in 36 locations. The district also runs six preschool programs in its own school buildings.
- To date, the district has used extensive and creative strategies to identify and recruit children into its preschool program.
- The law requires schools and districts to provide children with disabilities with appropriate educational experiences that are tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be provided in inclusive, rather than separate settings. In Union City, most of the 43 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms or received special education services outside of the preschool setting for up to three hours per day.

- Union City's district and community provider programs use the same high-quality, research-based curricula. Spanish-speaking preschoolers with limited English proficiency receive the same high-quality curriculum, with an additional bilingual component.
- The Kindergarten curriculum was recently made more challenging to adapt to the improved skills of children entering from the Union City preschool program.
- Nearly all of the 116 teachers in Union City's preschool program had earned at least a four-year college degree and were certified as required under Abbott.
- In Union City, the average preschool teacher salary was $40,735 in 2004–05. On average preschool teachers in district-run programs earned about $7,900 more than did teachers in any other provider type. The reasons for this continued difference in salaries is unclear. When compared to teachers in community provider programs, district teachers have similar levels of education, certification, and years serving as lead preschool teacher.
- At $9,164 in 2003–04, Union City's preschool program had less money on a per student basis than the other Abbott districts on average. District staff report that preschool costs are kept down by conducting intensive budget training for community providers and monitoring expenditures through monthly, rather than quarterly reporting.
- In 2003–04, Union City preschool teachers and administrators were introduced to the Early Language Assessment System (ELAS). The ELAS will be used statewide to generate information about how preschoolers are doing and help preschool teachers tailor their instruction to children's needs.
- The Union City Board of Education is keeping track of student progress in preschool and beyond with the intention of evaluating the preschool program in the future.
- Better program quality and child outcome measures are needed for all Abbott preschool programs to help stakeholders understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by Abbott preschool programs.

K-12 Education

- Research shows that children in the early elementary grades benefit from smaller class sizes. Abbott funding has had some immediate, clear effects on conditions in Union City schools: average class sizes are smaller than the Abbott standard in most grades. Limited classroom space hampered the district's progress in Grade 6, however, where class sizes were larger than the Abbott standard.
- At both the elementary and secondary levels, students in Union City spend more time on instruction than do students in the wealthiest districts, the other Abbott districts, or students throughout New Jersey.

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- Union City has 851 special needs students ages six to 21. Almost half of the district's students with disabilities go to school in "very inclusionary" settings (spending 80% or more of their day with the general education population) compared to 27 percent in the other Abbott districts and 42 percent in the state overall.
- Content-specific curriculum committees made up of district staff and teachers develop and review the district's instructional programs on a staggered, five-year cycle to ensure that they are current and aligned with the state's curriculum standards.
- Union City's high schools offer an array of honors and advanced placement courses to help students become more competitive applicants and prepare them for college. We compared Union City's honors and AP course offerings to those in Tenafly, an "I" district several miles away. Union City offers 21 honors and advanced placement courses compared to Tenafly's 31.
- Every school in the district has a "Support Services Task Force," that helps students who have health, mental health, academic, or behavioral problems. The task force coordinates support services at school and makes referrals to community-based agencies.
- Union City faculty attendance improved between 1994–95 and 2002–03. At 97 percent in 2002–03, the faculty attendance rate was at about the same level as the most successful suburban districts in the state.
- In 2003–04, Union City did better than other Abbott districts, the state average, and even the wealthiest school districts in the state in the percent of elementary school teachers who were "highly qualified" under the federal definition. Almost all of the district's high school teachers were "highly qualified."
- The Union City Board of Education offers its teachers ongoing and varied professional development activities throughout the year and during the summer. The district uses methods that stretch its professional development budget and capitalize on the experience of veteran teachers.
- Property wealth is an important indicator of local capacity to support its public services including education. In 2003, New Jersey's wealthiest suburbs had more than four times more property wealth per student than Union City. The state average was triple that of Union City.
- At $10,337 per student, Union City has had as much as the successful suburban districts to support general education since Abbott parity funding began.
- In 2003–04, Union City received $819 per student in supplemental program aid to support the second half-day of Kindergarten and other programs and services to meet the needs of students and families. This figure is much lower than the $2,017 that the other Abbott districts receive because Union City did not request any Additional Abbott Aid from the state.

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- Over the years, the district has received grant funds to support technology initiatives and student services. According to the district, these grants make up a small portion of the budget.
- Elementary school attendance rates were about the same as the wealthiest districts in the state, while high school attendance was consistently better than in the other Abbott districts.
- Union City compared poorly with the state on two indicators of child and youth well-being. The teen birth rate remained steady, but was almost double the state average. The number of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases more than doubled between 1998 and 2002. 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."
- None of Union City's schools qualify as "persistently dangerous" under federal law.
- At four percent, the district's 2002–03 elementary school suspension rate was just above the average rate in the wealthiest suburbs. In 1995–96, the rate was two percent.
- At seven percent, Union City's 2002–03 high school suspension rate was about the same as the wealthiest suburbs, on average. The high school suspension rate rose from about four percent in 1995–96.
- Union City's fourth grade general education students made gains in language arts literacy and math, and scored well above the proficiency threshold between 1999–00 and 2002–03. Union City's general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores in many districts throughout the state.
- On average, Union City's language arts and math achievement scores in Grades 8 and 11 have stayed at or slightly above the proficiency threshold between 2000 and 2003. About 90 percent of eighth graders scored proficient on language arts literacy in 2002–03. Abbott has truly yet to provide for students in middle and high schools.
- In New Jersey, there was no official graduation data until recently. In this report, we estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index. Our estimates suggest that half of Union City's class of 2001–02 graduated from school. The district's promotion index declined from a high of 61 percent seven years earlier.
- Less than half of the class of 2002–03 in Union City graduated by passing the traditional High School Proficiency Assessment. Most of the remaining graduates that year took the alternative test, the Special Review Assessment.

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- More than four out of five Union City high school seniors took the SAT in 2002–03, surpassing the state average. Union City student performance on the verbal and math tests remained below the state average between 1994–95 and 2002–03.

School Facilities Construction

- Union City was the only district in New Jersey to renovate a private preschool provider-owned building under its first-round Long Range Facilities Plan.
- Union City is one of the few Abbott districts that has any completed buildings and has made good progress in getting projects through the pipeline.
- At least part of the district's success with school facilities construction can be credited to the strong, close involvement and support of the Mayor and city council, particularly around finding suitable land sites.
- Union City was one of six districts awarded a "Demonstration Project:" a new school to replace Emerson High School and an athletic complex at the site of Roosevelt Stadium.
- Through its designation as a School Renaissance Zone, Union City will also have a new magnet school.
- Two school projects were initially delayed because the state wanted the existing buildings to be renovated instead of demolished due to their historical landmark status. This issue was resolved when an agreement was made to remove and preserve certain parts of those buildings.

Endnotes

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

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. If you cannot, read the summary report. Both are 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. You can find out about them on local television stations and in local newspapers.
- **Take part.** Attend local meetings and engage in conversations about what you learned with your neighbors, school and district staff, and your school board members.
- **Push for solutions.** Remember the goal is to support school improvement. It is not enough to identify strengths and weaknesses. Once you talk about the findings with your neighbors, decide what needs to be done and help make sure that it happens.
- **Stay involved.** School improvement is a multi-year investment. It will take your continued commitment.

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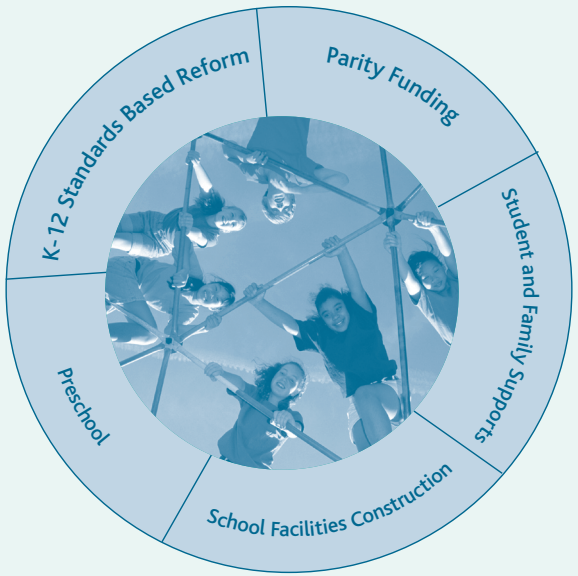
Unlike anywhere else in the nation, in New Jersey, the poorest urban school districts and the wealthiest suburbs have the same funding to support a general public education. Young people in our state's urban districts are also entitled to a broad range of remedies.

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 poorest cities. Local planning for state-financed school facilities construction started in 1998. In 1999, Abbott elementary schools started implementing Whole School Reform. In that year, districts could apply to the state for funding to support supplemental programs, and high-quality preschool became available. All of the reforms envisioned in Abbott are now underway across the state.[2]

The Abbott Indicators Project

Under Abbott, there are means available 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,

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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 their questions.
- We gathered and analyzed indicator information and summarized it in this and three other Abbott Indicators Reports—one each in Camden, Newark, and Trenton.
- 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.

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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 ensure 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 Union City about what the schools are doing to support student learning and student progress 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 changes have affected district practices.

These shifting winds have surely affected New Jersey's Abbott districts. But state-level changes 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 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 student and family supports), 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:

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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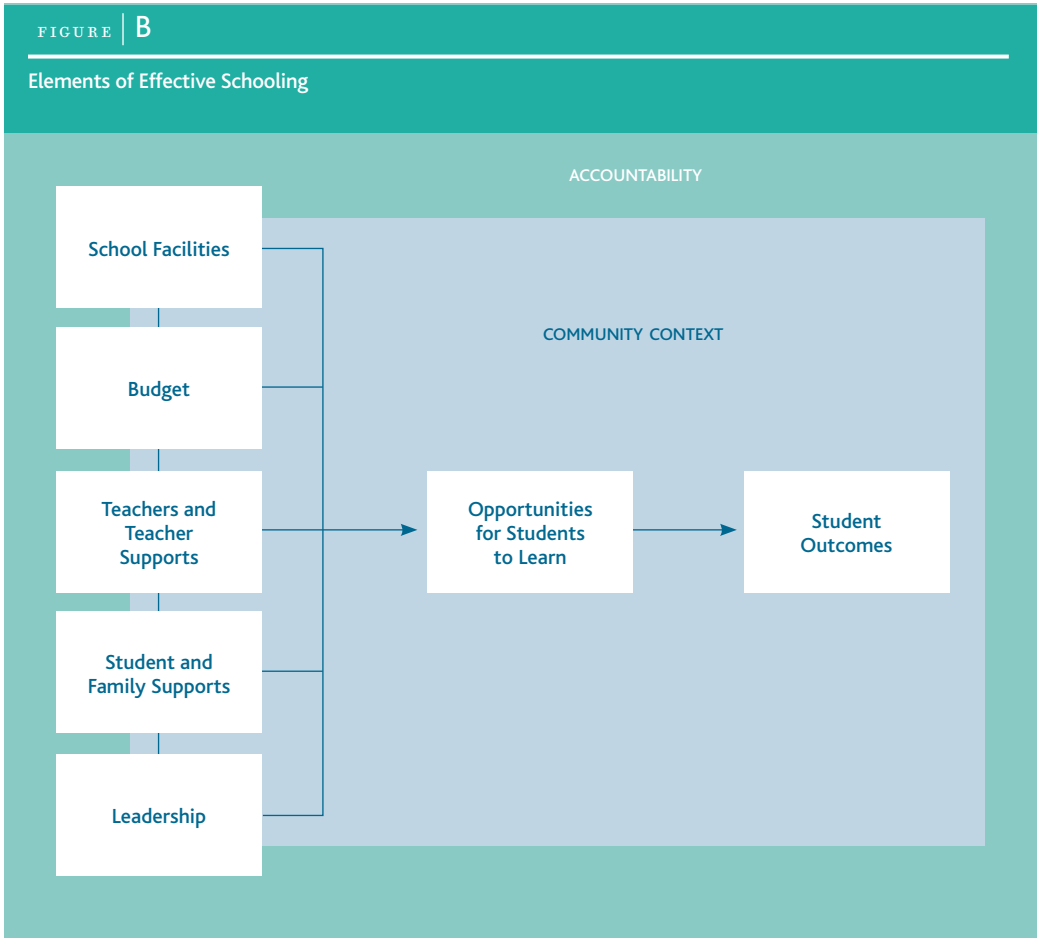
FIGURE | B

Elements of Effective Schooling



↗ **Opportunities for Students to Learn:** Opportunities for 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 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 we 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.

Introduction

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. That letter appears in an Appendix to this report. 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, and 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 Union City 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 jointure commissions, and charter schools—are included in statewide averages.

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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 tables 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 findings are summarized in the Executive Summary and at the end of 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

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 New Jersey's poorest cities. In this section, we present indicators of community distress that inform the elements of effective schooling in Union City.

1 The Community and Students

FIGURE | 1.1

Conditions of Living and Learning in Union City

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

SOURCE | Uniform Crime Report, 2002; 2000 US Census

Union City, located in Hudson County, is a small city with a land area of just over one square mile. With a population of about 67,000, it is the most densely populated city in New Jersey. Figure 1.1 shows the gaps between Union City and the state average on several indicators. For example, fewer adults are in the labor force and unemployment is twice as high in Union City than in the state as a whole. Not surprisingly, household income is also a great deal lower. 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. More than half of Union City's residents were born in another country, compared to only 18 percent statewide.

Although many single mothers are economically successful, the percentage of female-headed family households remains a strong indicator of community poverty. Figure 1.1 shows that almost a third of Union City's families are led by single mothers compared to 18 percent statewide. As parents, high school dropouts may be less trusting of schools and have fewer of their own academic

1 The Community and Students

skills to support their children's learning. Almost half of Union City adults have not earned a high school diploma.

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

Nearly all of the children in Union City are described by the district as Hispanic, and almost half are not fluent English speakers (Figure 1.2). The rest of these English language learners speak 18 different languages when they are at home. More than 90 percent of Union City's enrollment is eligible for free-or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, compared to just under two thirds in the remaining Abbott

FIGURE | 1.2

Characteristics of Students in Union City

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

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

1 The Community And The Students

districts. In 2003–04, 15 children (0.2%) did not have a permanent home.

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 test scores and other indicators of student learning. Student mobility is very high in Union City with almost one in five students moving into or out of their school during a school year. Actual student mobility may be even higher, because districts may not count an individual student leaving and returning to the same school several times throughout the year as multiple incidents.

One of the characteristics that most distinguishes Union City students from their peers across the state is that many are children of relatively recent immigrants. Of the nearly 10,000 children enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade 12 in 2003–04, about 15 percent are from first-generation immigrant families. In the Union City public schools, most recent immigrants are from the Dominican Republic and several nations of South and Central America. (The 2000 Census estimated that roughly equivalent proportions of residents originally came to Union City from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Central America, and South America, respectively.) According to the district, almost all students who are "Limited English Proficient" (98%) speak Spanish as their first language.

FIGURE 1.3

Languages Spoken by English Language Learners: Union City, 2003-04

	LEP STUDENTS	
Language	**Number**	**Percent**
Spanish	4,351	98.0%
Arabic	36	0.8%
Gujarati	14	0.3%
Mandarin	6	0.1%
Portuguese	6	0.1%
Tagalog	5	0.1%
Hindi	3	0.1%
Sinhales	3	0.1%
Akan	2	0.0%
Bengali	2	0.0%
Cantonese	2	0.0%
Pashta	2	0.0%
Wolof	2	0.0%
Fuk	1	0.0%
Italian	1	0.0%
Polish	1	0.0%
Russian	1	0.0%
Serbo/Croatian	1	0.0%
Urdu	1	0.0%
TOTAL	**4,440**	**100.0%**

SOURCE | Union City Board of Education, 2003–04.

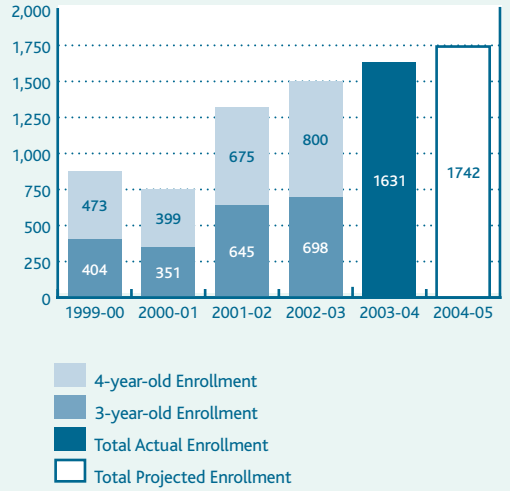
2

The New Jersey Supreme Court's Abbott preschool mandate is based on research showing that intensive, high-quality preschool programs can help lower-income children better perform in school and participate in the life of their communities as adults. The Abbott preschool program began in 1999–2000. All Abbott districts are required to serve 90 percent of the eligible population by 2005–06.

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.1

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



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

The major features of the Abbott preschool program are:

- Six-hour school day,180 days a year;
- Provisions for full-day, full-year wraparound 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

Preschool 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 Union City Board of Education toward serving its community's three-and four-year-olds. Union City preschools served 1,631 children in 2003–04, or 90 percent of the estimated number of three-and four-year-olds living in the city. The district has met this state requirement two years in advance of the deadline.

Program Setting

Abbott districts can operate their own preschool programs or enter into contracts with Head Start and/or other private provider 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 children previously not enrolled in the Federal Head Start program.

Since the Abbott preschool program began in 1999–00, more children have been placed in community programs than in district-run programs. The percentage of children served in community programs in Union City has

2 The Preschool Program

grown over the years: 93 percent were in community programs in 2002–03 compared to 68 percent in 1999–00 (Figure 2.3). The Union City Board of Education contracted with 29 providers to offer Abbott preschool in 36 locations in 2004–05 (two of these were Head Start programs). There were also six district-run preschool programs in Union City: at Edison, Hudson, Jefferson, Veterans' Memorial, Robert Waters, and Wilson schools. Many programs are quite small with about three classrooms on average.

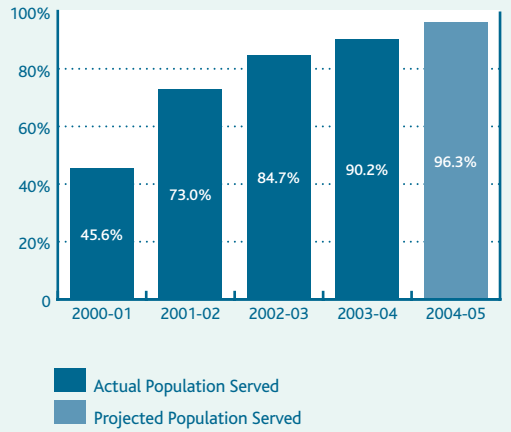
Recruitment and Outreach

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 the district is quite successful at informing parents and recruiting students. The Union City Abbott preschool program has been advertised in local English and Spanish newspapers, and on cable television and local radio stations. The district has provided flyers and brochures to neighborhood schools and businesses, adult education programs, recreation centers, libraries, Housing Authority buildings and local clinics. Back to School Night programs, and PTA and other parent meetings are additional places where the preschool program is introduced. While Union City has had much success in this area, reaching the remaining children is likely to be more difficult and expensive than the district's efforts to date.

FIGURE 2.2

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

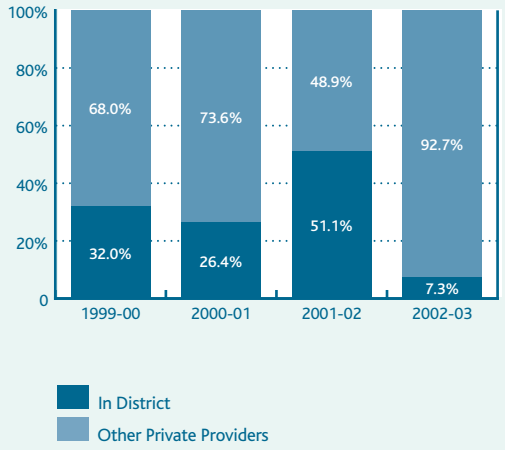


SOURCE: New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education: Office of School Funding, 1999-2003

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.3

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



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

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, non-academic, 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 regular 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.

Transition. Before children with disabilities can receive the educational programs and services they need, they must be identified and evaluated. One way for this to happen is through the Early Intervention System, a statewide system of services for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, with developmental delays or disabilities, and their families. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services oversees this system. Families who are referred to early intervention by agencies such as hospitals and child care programs should meet with a family service coordinator to determine whether an evaluation is necessary. Evaluation results are used to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that outlines needed services and describes how they will be implemented. Early intervention also helps children and families with the transition to preschool by providing information about preschool policies and services, and meeting with families to plan the preschool experience and determine the most appropriate program for each child. Children

not identified through the Early Intervention Program can be identified prior to enrolling in preschool. The district's Child Study Team, made up of the school psychologist, social worker, and learning disabilities teacher-consultant conduct an initial evaluation to determine a child's eligibility for special education and related services. 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.

Union City Board of Education staff told us that the district's child study teams (CSTs) have a positive working relationship with the city's Early Intervention Team (EIT). At age two and a half, the family of a child with disabilities receives information about district policies and services. The district and the EIT hold a meeting with the family soon after to begin planning the child's transition into preschool. The CST and the district's Office of Early Childhood Education work with the EIT and family to determine the most appropriate program for each child.

Educational environment. 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, it does state that for as much time as possible, children with disabilities must be educated in inclusive, rather than separate settings.

According to a report released by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, the state of New Jersey overall, lags behind the nation in the percentage of preschoolers with disabilities who receive their education in inclusion programs. In 2002, about one in four (22%) New Jersey preschoolers with disabilities were placed in general education classrooms, compared to 35 percent nationwide. In light of this context, we might expect to see educational placements in Union City and the other Abbott districts that are similar to those for the state as a whole.

2 The Preschool Program

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 below show the percentage of preschool children with disabilities in various educational environments—in Union City and all other Abbott districts, respectively. In 2003–04, almost half of Union City's 43 preschoolers with disabilities were in self-contained (special education) classrooms compared to two thirds of similar students in the other 29 Abbott districts. Two percent were in inclusion programs in Union City, compared to nine percent in the other Abbott districts. Seven percent of preschool-age children in Union City were taught in "separate" schools outside of the school district. Two in five (42%) preschoolers with special needs received "itinerant services," compared to only three percent in the other Abbott districts. Students categorized as receiving "itinerant services" are those who receive special education services outside of the preschool setting for up to three hours per day. This category includes students who are "pulled out" of general education classrooms to receive their special education and related services or speech-language services. The category also includes preschoolers with disabilities who receive services in a hospital or other community based settings.

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 Union City will receive the same program no matter where they move. Professional development is also easier to provide with a uniform curriculum. On the other hand, uniformity is not as important as using

2 The Preschool Program

research-based, developmentally 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, Head Start, and other private provider programs in Union City.

The district reports that the preschool curriculum was adapted by district staff from High/Scope to be aligned with the state's *Expectations*.[7] Organized by theme, the curriculum encourages active learning, focusing on helping students to develop pre-reading skills. High/Scope activities also help students develop physically, cognitively, and socially. Spanish-speaking preschoolers with limited English proficiency receive the same high-quality curriculum, with an additional bilingual component. In-district and other private provider programs use the curriculum. Head Start teachers have been exposed to the High/Scope curriculum but continue to use their own curriculum.

Curriculum adoption and review. Preschool and Kindergarten teachers first developed the district's early childhood curriculum in 1998 for each grade level between preschool and Grade Three. Because so many of Union City's children are English-language learners, the district added a bilingual component to its curriculum in 2000.

Preschool, Kindergarten, and first grade teachers—in collaboration with the Early Childhood Principal and Supervisor—revise the curricula every two years and teachers receive training on the revisions. The district recently made the Kindergarten curriculum more challenging to adapt to the increased proficiency of incoming preschool students. A math component was also added to the curriculum in response to teacher requests for help with math instruction.

Programs for English language learners. The district administers a language survey to incoming preschool students to identify the language they speak at home. At age four, Spanish-speaking children are given the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT)[8] so teach-

FIGURE 2.4

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

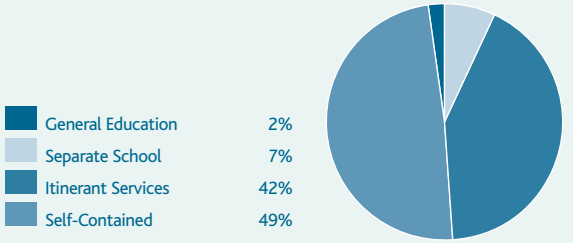
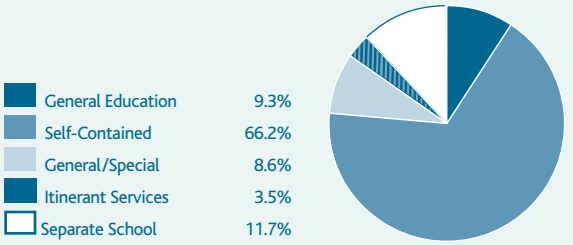


FIGURE 2.5

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 Early Childhood Programs, 2003; New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 1999-2003.

2 The Preschool Program

Union City recently made its Kindergarten curriculum more challenging to adapt to the increased proficiency of incoming preschool students.

ers can tailor instruction to their levels of proficiency. The district told us that all of its master preschool teachers have an English as a Second Language (ESL) specialization, and can help teachers administer the IPT and engage English language learners in classroom activities. A bilingual component was added to the curriculum (described above) in 2000.

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, and preschool and Kindergarten teachers communicate on a regular basis. We present best practices in preschool-Kindergarten transition and compare them with activities in Union City.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides 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.

Abbott districts are required to include in their three-year operational plans a plan for transition of children from the preschool program to Kindergarten. Union City district staff told us they have several measures to ensure a seamless transition from preschool to Kindergarten. Assemblies are offered for preschool students at local elementary schools and district staff offer workshops for preschool parents. We also learned that elementary school principals visit neighborhood preschool programs and the Principal of Early Childhood Programs attends elementary school principals' meetings.

Kindergarten teachers receive basic skills and language survey results for every incoming student. In 2003–04, Union City preschool and Kindergarten teachers were being trained to use the Early Language Assessment System (ELAS). In future years, ELAS results will also be provided to Kindergarten teach-

ers (See description in Preschool Student Outcomes section below).

Student and Family Supports

Health services. Through the ACCESS program, the North Hudson Community Action Corporation (NHCAC) is under contract with the district to provide visual, auditory, dental, and lead screenings to preschool students. Students are able to receive additional medical and dental care from physicians at the NHCAC clinic; and immunizations are offered to preschool students, even those without private healthcare insurance. The district also has a psychiatrist on-staff who is available one to two times per week to provide counseling, prescribe medication, and identify potential neurological issues. If additional services are needed, referrals are made to mental health agencies off-site.

Transportation. Union City is quite small and students are placed in preschool programs located in their neighborhoods so transportation services are not needed. Only those preschool students with disabilities in self-contained programs are provided with transportation.

Program Quality

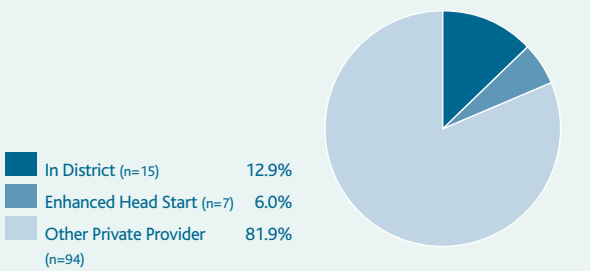
The New Jersey Department of Education formed the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC), a group of university-based preschool specialists, to conduct ongoing research on preschool program quality. In 2002–03, the state-funded ELIC to assess 310 Abbott preschool classrooms throughout New Jersey.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

All New Jersey 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.

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.6

Preschool Teachers by Provider Type: Union City, 2004–05



SOURCE | Union City Board of Education, 2004-05

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 an 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 (officially called educational program specialists in Union City) 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.[9] 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 large majority of Union City's preschool teachers work in other private provider programs that contract with the school district. There was a total of 116 preschool teachers in 2004–05: six percent were in Head Start; 81 percent in other community programs. Just 13 percent of the district's preschool teachers work in Union City 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.

2 The Preschool Program

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.

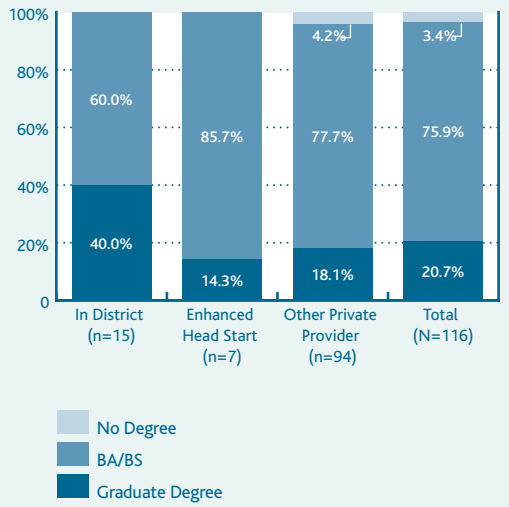
About 97 percent of Union City's 116 preschool teachers had earned at least a four-year college degree by 2004–05. Figure 2.7 shows that Union City's preschool teachers in every setting have either met or are well on their way to meeting this state requirement by September 2006.[10]

Preschool Teacher Certification

In addition to earning a bachelor's degree, Abbott preschool teachers must also be certified.[11] 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.

FIGURE 2.7

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

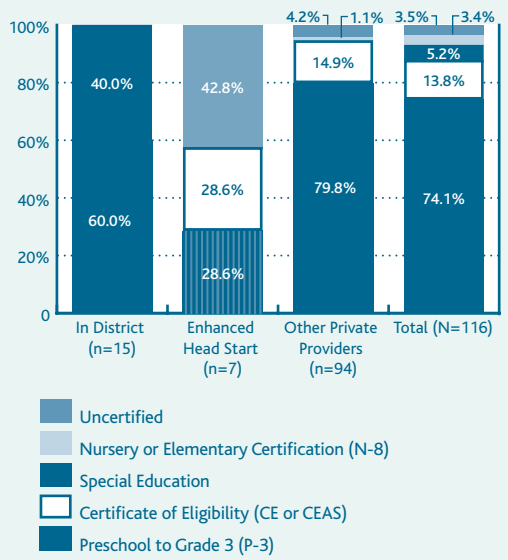


SOURCE | Union City Board of Education, 2004-05

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.8

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



SOURCE | Union City Board of Education, 2004-05

Figure 2.8 shows the status of the Union City preschool program in 2004–05 on the road toward 100-percent teacher certification. Overall, 88 percent of teachers have provisional (regular or advanced standing) or preschool to Grade 3 (P-3) certification; three percent have N-8 certification, and five percent are special education certified (one of the special education certified teachers is teaching in an inclusion classroom with another certified teacher). All seven (100%) Head Start teachers have at least provisional certification: 29 percent have certificates of eligibility, 43 percent have N-8, and 29 percent have P-3. Eighty percent of the 94 teachers working in other private provider programs have earned full P-3 certification; an additional 15 percent have provisional certification (regular or advanced standing), and one percent have N-8, while another 4 percent still need to attain certification. District staff report that another three teachers will have certification by the 2005–06 school year. All 15 of the preschool teachers working in district-run programs have sufficient certification: 60 percent have P-3 and 40 percent are special education certified.

Preschool Teacher Experience

Figure 2.9 shows how long teachers in Union City's preschool program have served as lead preschool teachers. As of October 2004, Union City preschool teachers had five years of experience on average. Teachers in district-run programs had six years as lead preschool teachers. (Years of experience gained before the Abbott program began were probably as lead teachers in Head Start or other private provider programs.) Teachers in Union City's other private provider programs had about four years of similar experience; and Enhanced Head Start teachers had eight 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 additional funding 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 Union City 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.

In 2004–05, the average preschool teacher salary in Union City is $40,735. Teachers in district-run programs earned higher salaries than those in other private provider programs ($47,581 compared to $39,724). The reasons for this continued difference in salaries is unclear. When compared to teachers in community provider programs, district teachers have similar levels of education, certification, and years on the job.[12]

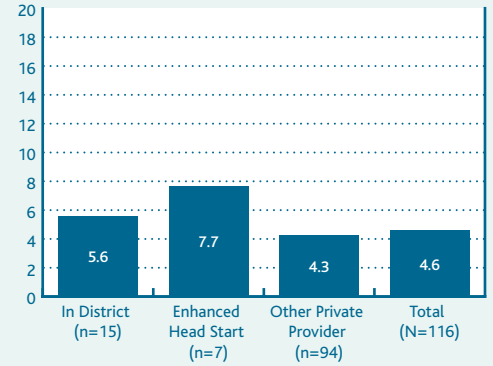
Performance Evaluation

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 capable teachers do a better job. Some feedback can happen on an informal basis; some should be part of a more formal procedure known in many professions as "performance evaluation." In Union City, performance evaluation procedures are different for preschool teachers in district-run, Head Start, and other private provider programs.

Early childhood staff told us that in district-run programs, non-tenured preschool teachers are evaluated three times a year. The school principal conducts the first and third evaluations; district administrators conduct the second evaluation. Tenured district staff are evaluated once a year by the school principal. Teacher performance is evaluated on the developmental appropriateness of their

FIGURE 2.9

Preschool Teacher Average Years as a Lead Teacher by Provider Type: Union City, 2004–05

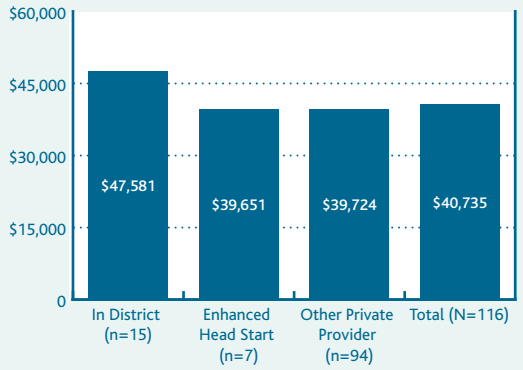


SOURCE Union City Board of Education, 2004-05

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.10

Average Preschool Teacher Salary: Union City, 2004–05



SOURCE | Union City Board of Education, 2004-05

teaching and the presence of appropriate instructional materials throughout the classroom. Evaluators observe and tell teachers how well they do the following: 1) provide opportunities for active learning; 2) follow curriculum and classroom schedules; 3) meet the state's *Expectations;* and 4) evaluate children's progress using the Early Language Assessment System (described in greater detail under Preschool Student Outcomes below).

Teachers in Head Start and other private provider programs are evaluated by their own program directors. A district administrator conducts ongoing, informal evaluations of both in-district and private provider teachers.

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 teachers have, in order to keep up with the changing times, they must be willing to update their knowledge and skills. When teachers take part in ongoing, high-quality staff development focused on instruction, classroom practice improves.

Union City district staff told us that master preschool teachers make weekly rounds to observe instruction in all of the classrooms. Master teachers (called education program specialists in Union City) know what curricular themes should be taught and when, they ensure that the teachers are on schedule and that both teachers and students are "integrating the theme." They model lessons for less experienced teachers, role-play and coach, and review lesson plans to make sure the curriculum is presented to the students as intended.

The people we spoke with also reported that preschool and Kindergarten teachers meet once a week to coordinate their efforts.

Four times a year, they attend workshops together; sometimes Kindergarten teachers take part in workshops intended for preschool teachers. Union City's preschool teachers attend High/Scope trainings and receive ongoing guidance on the use of the Early Language Assessment System (described in more detail under Preschool Outcomes). Teachers in Head Start and other private provider programs participate in district professional development and use materials purchased by the district. As required by the state, teachers who are certified through the alternate route program receive 20 days of mentoring from retired teachers.

Three things play a role in what professional development activities the district selects for its preschool teachers: teacher requests, trends in the field of early childhood education, and ensuring the alignment of the preschool curriculum with the state's *Expectations*.

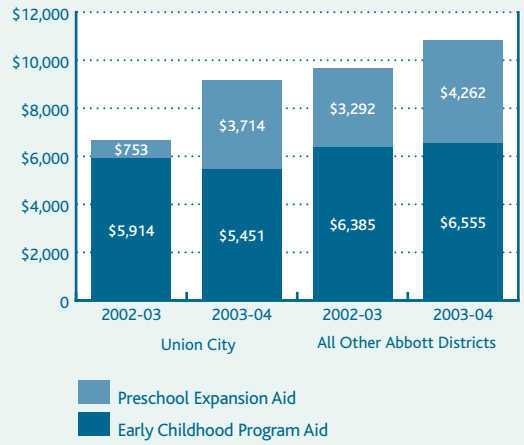
Preschool Budget

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.

Figures 2.11 and 2.12 below show the amount of preschool aid received by Union City and all other Abbott districts in 2002–03 and 2003–04. In 2002–03, Union City received a total of $6,667 per preschooler: $5,914 from ECPA, and $753 from PSEA. That year, Union City's preschool program received fewer dollars per student (in total and by source) than did the other Abbott districts on average. Although Union City saw a slight decrease in their ECPA funding in 2003–04, the PSEA increased almost 400 percent ($3,714), making the total per-student amount $9,164.[13]

FIGURE 2.11

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

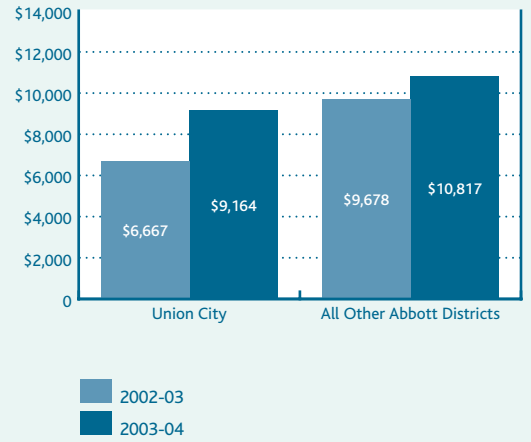


SOURCE New Jersey Department of Education, Office of School Funding, 2002-2004

2 The Preschool Program

FIGURE 2.12

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



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

In 2003–04, the district's per student aid was still lower than the other Abbott districts. In response, district staff report that a number of mechanisms are in place to keep preschool costs down. They include: intensive training for community providers on budget development, and
monitoring of provider spending through monthly, rather than the required quarterly reports.

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 stakeholders who are interested in the education and welfare of preschool-age children. The purpose of the ECEAC is to meet regularly, review the school district's progress towards full implementation of high-quality preschool programs, and participate in program planning, budget development, and early childhood facilities planning.

Union City's Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC) includes 15 people: the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, general and special education teachers, private preschool providers, Child Study Team members, a City Commissioner, and representatives from the district early childhood education office. The ECEAC meets four times per year to review and discuss curriculum and facilities planning. The district business administrator has several meetings with the ECEAC to elicit their input during budget development. The ECEAC also participated in the design of the district's Early Childhood Center, slated for completion in December 2005.

Preschool Student Outcomes

We turn now to the outcomes of the Abbott preschool program to ask if the elements we have discussed so far—supports for students and families, opportunities for students to learn, teacher qualifications and supports, and leadership—have worked together to

improve student learning among the district's three-and four-year-olds. Unfortunately, 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.

Fortunately, the Union City preschool program was part of a study conducted by the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC) to assess the language development of preschoolers. In 2002–03, ELIC tested the vocabularies of 84 students entering Kindergarten from the preschool program. They used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) in English, and the TVIP-R in Spanish.[14] We report the results below in standard scores and national percentile ranks.

Scores between 90 and 109 are considered to be in the "average" category. The average *standard score*[15] of the 12 English-speaking children was 93.8. These children scored in the 41st percentile of a national sample of children who took the same test. The 72 English language learners were tested twice. First, they took the TVIP-R (in Spanish) and had an average standard score of 88.3. These children scored in the 32nd percentile in the nation. When tested in English, their average standard score was 79.2, in the 18th percentile. In light of the small number of children who were tested, we must note that these scores may not accurately reflect preschoolers' language development in the district as a whole.

In 2003–04, Union City preschool teachers and administrators were introduced to the Early Language Assessment System (ELAS) that will be used statewide to help preschool teachers tailor their instruction to children's needs. The ELAS was developed and piloted by the New Jersey Department of Education–Office of Early Childhood Education and the Early Learning Improvement Consortium, a group of university-based early childhood specialists throughout the region. Preschool teachers and administrators from Union City and six other pilot districts were trained by consortium members on the ELAS

New Jersey's public preschools do not currently generate consistent and reliable information that will help us understand how well children are doing statewide.

2 The Preschool Program

in 2003–04. They learned how to observe students, record their observations, and collect and assess student work samples. The ELAS underwent revisions during the summer of 2004. In 2004–05 and in future years, Union City preschool teachers will use the ELAS to help them adapt their instructional methods and will share ELAS results with Kindergarten teachers as students transition out of preschool. District early childhood staff told us that the district is also keeping track of student progress in preschool and beyond with the intention of evaluating the Union City preschool program in the future.

It is not yet clear if this information can be used to assess how well preschoolers are learning on a district or statewide basis. Early childhood education specialists are reluctant to do widespread assessment of young children; however, we need to strike a balance between these concerns and the need to know exactly how well Abbott preschoolers are doing.

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 Union City's Abbott Preschool Program. We then present a summary Figure 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, each Abbott district is required to serve 90 percent of its eligible population. Union City met the enrollment requirement two years before the state deadline. In 2003–04, it served 90 percent of the city's eligible children in its preschool program.
- To serve all of the children in the district, the Union City Board of Education contracts with 29 private provider and Head Start programs to offer Abbott preschool in 36 locations. The district also runs six preschool programs in its own school buildings.
- Information provided by the district suggests that it has used extensive and creative strategies to identify and recruit children into its preschool program. It will be a great deal more challenging and expensive for the district to bring the remaining children into the program.

2 The Preschool Program

- The law requires schools and districts to provide children with disabilities with appropriate educational experiences that are tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be provided in inclusive, rather than separate settings. In Union City, most of the 43 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms or received special education services outside of the preschool setting for up to three hours.
- Union City's district and community provider programs use the same research-based curriculum—High/Scope. Spanish-speaking preschoolers with limited English proficiency also receive instruction in the same curriculum, with an additional bilingual component.
- More data on program quality—such as the results of reliable measures like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised—are needed to help us understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by Abbott preschool programs.

Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

- Nearly all of the 116 teachers in district-run, Head Start, and private provider programs had earned at least a four-year college degree and were certified, as required under Abbott.
- In Union City, the average preschool teacher salary was $40,735 in 2004–05. On average preschool teachers in district-run programs earned $7,900 more than did teachers in any other provider type. The reasons for this continued difference in salaries is unclear. When compared to teachers in other private provider programs, district teachers have similar levels of education, certification, and years serving as lead preschool teacher.

Preschool Budget

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

Preschool Leadership

- The representative body that governs Union City's preschool program meets to discuss curriculum and facilities issues. They have met with the district business administrator to provide input during budget development and have also participated in the design of the district's new Early Childhood Center.

Preschool Student Outcomes

- Union City's Kindergarten curriculum recently was made more challenging to adapt to the in-

FIGURE 2.13

Abbott Preschool Program: Benchmark Status In Union City

Benchmark	Status
District must serve at least 90 percent of eligible populations by 2005-06	Met
District teachers required to have bachelor's degree	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with the district to earn bachelor's degree	Met
District teachers required to have certification.	Met
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with district to earn certification.	Met

2 The Preschool Program

creasing proficiency of students entering from its preschool programs.

- The Union City Board of Education is keeping track of student progress in preschool and beyond with the intention of evaluating the preschool program in the future.
- In 2003–04, Union City preschool teachers and administrators were introduced to the Early Language Assessment System (ELAS). The ELAS will be used statewide to generate information about how preschoolers are doing and help preschool teachers tailor their instruction to children's needs.
- Public preschool programs in New Jersey do not yet generate consistent, reliable information that will help us to understand how well preschoolers are doing. 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 how well the programs are serving Abbott preschoolers. Better program quality and child outcome measures are needed for all Abbott preschool programs to help stakeholders understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by Abbott preschool programs.

Endnotes

4. The New Jersey Department of Education covers the costs for six-hours,180 days per year of pre-school 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. 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.

8. The IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) assesses children's spoken language and early literacy skills in both English and Spanish. It is only administered to four-year-olds in the preschool program.

9. 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.

10. By September 2005, the district projects that there will be only one teacher still working toward a college degree.

11. 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.

12. In these analyses, preschool teacher salary includes wages only and does not include fringe benefits. Any tuition reimbursement paid to alternate route teachers is not included.

13. Revenues may not be evenly distributed across provider types. Some providers may receive less aid per preschooler than this district average.

14. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Third Edition (PPVT-III) is a quick and accurate test of receptive (hearing) vocabulary. The PPVT-III is useful in testing pre-school children; screening for both giftedness and developmental delays; measuring English language proficiency in people whose first language is not English; and identifying language difficulties. The test can be given to people between the ages of 2 ½ and 90. The Spanish version is known as "Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody" (TVIP).

15. The number of questions a child answers correctly is converted into a *standard score.* Standard scores range from a low of 40 to a high of 160.

New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards 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

Union City Schools, Grade Structure, and Enrollment: 2003-04

School Name	Grade Range		Enrollment
Jefferson	PK	G4	315
Hudson	PK	G6	415
Thomas A Edison	PK	G8	1,417
Robert Waters	PK	G8	1,262
Sara M Gilmore	KG	G6	390
Roosevelt	KG	G8	1,079
Washington	KG	G8	1,000
Woodrow Wilson	G1	G8	355
Christopher Columbus	G6	G8	351
Emerson High	G9	G12	1,506
Union Hill High	G9	G12	1,409

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 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.

In 2003–04, Union City schools enrolled about 10,000 students in 11 public schools (not including children enrolled in private preschool programs). Among the nine schools serving young people in preschool through Grade 8, there were seven different grade configurations. Four served children from Kindergarten to Grade 8; two of those schools had preschool classrooms. In addition to the other four elementary schools, there were two high schools and one middle school.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

Whole School Reform

When Abbott first began, every elementary school was required to select a Whole School Reform model.[16] 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.[17] 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. The New Jersey Department of Education also requires that low-performing schools use alternate approaches.

In this section, we review how Union City responded to Abbott's Whole School Reform requirement and what models it chose. In 1989, after receiving an "Abbott" district designation, the Union City Board of Education was ordered to develop and enact an improvement plan or be taken over by the New Jersey Department of Education. In response, the district started a set of reforms including curriculum, cooperative learning, and school-based management teams. By 1992, for example, the district was already fully committed to ground-up management by school-based teams. By 1995, the state removed Union City from the list of troubled school districts. In other words, when Abbott required that schools adopt Whole School Reform models, Union City's schools had already begun implementing many of the reforms that were now required. The issue is how the new Whole School Reform mandate added to its existing efforts.

Within the first few years after the requirement, most Union City's schools, including secondary schools—selected one of four models. The Comer School Development Program was being implemented at the Edison, Hudson, Jefferson, Robert Waters, and Washington Schools. The Coalition of Essential Schools model was used at Columbus Middle, Woodrow Wilson, and Emerson and Union Hill High Schools. Gilmore Elementary used Success For All, and Roosevelt used the Accelerated Schools Model.

(continued on page 42)

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When Abbott required that schools adopt Whole School Reform models, Union City schools had already begun implementing many of the reforms.

Comer School Development Program

The program developer, James Comer, recognized that many children living in inner cities come to school unprepared for school success and that many teachers never really learned about how children develop, and how home cultures affect their academic success. The School Development Program aims to help teachers understand child development, improve relations between schools and parents, and of course, increase student achievement. The main program elements are: a school-based management team that develops and monitors the use of a comprehensive school plan; a student and staff team focused on improving school climate and providing support services; and a parent team that promotes parent involvement. The program is known for its blame-free approach to problem solving, and its emphasis on collaboration and shared decision-making. A special unit of the management team is also assigned to address curriculum, literacy skills, teacher development, and other instructional issues.

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.

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools, developed by Ted Sizer, is not a specific model. Instead, it is based on the belief that schools must develop their own approach that will match the needs of their students. CES operates according to common principles. The overarching goal is to teach young people to use their minds well. To do so, teachers and students must know one another well. Students in CES schools are encouraged to gain deep knowledge and skills in a few areas rather than broad content coverage. The approach also emphasizes documenting progress, budgeting for learning, school-community collaboration, and seeing the whole school as the unit of change.

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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School and district staff told us that they had come a long way on their own and that most model developers did not offer enough added value to warrant a full contract. These schools purchased specific services from their model developers or attended conferences on an as-needed basis. In 2003–04, Success for All was the only model developer under contract to the Union City Board of Education.

Among the five schools we visited in the district, three used the Coalition for Essential Schools, one used the Comer School Development Program, and one newer school had not yet selected a Whole School Reform model. The schools using the Coalition for Essential Schools model, Union Hill and Emerson High Schools, unanimously said that they chose it because: 1) it was consistent with their school's vision and values; and 2) it did not require detailed, step-by-step procedures. Even though the high schools were not required to adopt a model, both were interested in adopting an approach that would help them improve teaching and learning and be compatible with the approaches used by their feeder schools. The two high schools also agreed to adopt the same model because of high student mobility in the district. Robert Waters Elementary selected the Comer School Development Program because staff agreed that they needed to consider the whole child and have ongoing communication with and involvement by parents in school activities.

In 2003–04, Veterans' Memorial School was looking most closely at Success For All, because of the strong evidence of effectiveness at improving language arts and literacy achievement. Veterans' teachers visited another school in the district that used Success for All and liked what they saw: the materials and technical assistance really helped both teachers and students make the most of the reading classes. Another model, called Co-Nect, was also being considered, because it stressed learning across the subjects and used projects to organize learning. Veterans' staff told us that they would probably make their final model selection after their first-year test data were out.

Program Structure

Across all whole school reform models, students in Grades 1 through 4 have 23 periods a week (or at least three a day) of "humanities" instruction, including language arts/literacy, social studies, tutoring, and enrichment activities. Ten periods a week are scheduled for uninterrupted math instruction; and seven periods for special classes such as gym, world languages, art, music, computer science, and health or science. One period is devoted to library activities, and four are reserved for teachers to use to help their classes complete or brush up on the materials scheduled for that week.

Similarly, students in Grades 5 through 8 spend 23 periods each week in humanities instruction, 10 periods in math, and seven in "special" classes such as physical education, languages, and art. In addition, students in the middle grades spend five periods in health or science instruction.

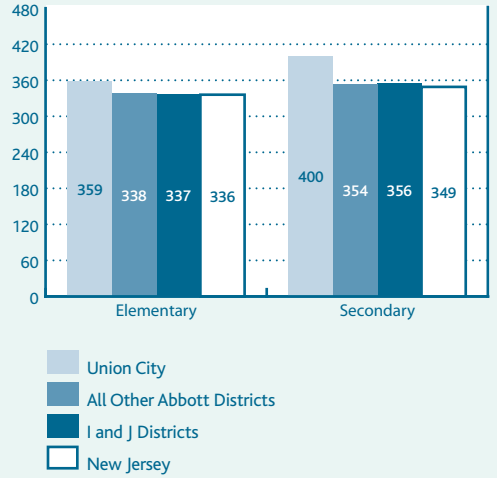
The amount of time that students spend learning is one indication that the school day is being used productively. Figure 3.2 shows a striking difference between Union City schools and any other district grouping. At both the elementary and secondary levels, students in Union City spend more time on instruction than do students in the wealthiest districts, the other Abbott districts, or students throughout New Jersey. Teaching and learning occur for six hours a day in Union City's elementary schools and six hours and forty minutes in the city's high schools.

Of course, hours and minutes alone do not indicate that high-quality instruction and active learning are occurring: we turn to other indicators to understand precisely what might be happening in the classroom.

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 their 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

FIGURE 3.2

Total Instructional Time (in minutes) by School Level and District Grouping, 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 2002-03

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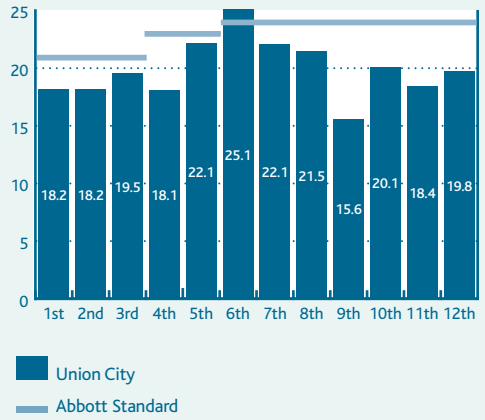
FIGURE 3.3

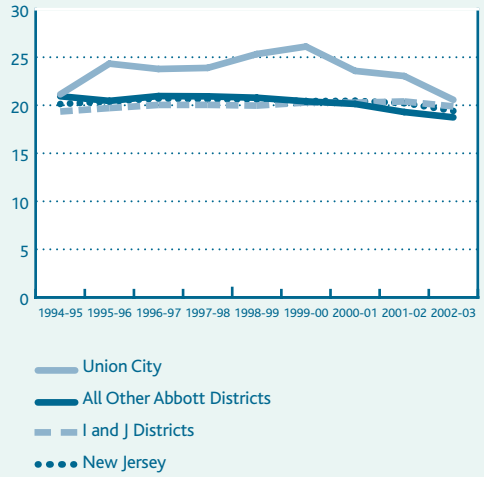
Average Class Size by Grade: Union City, 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 2002-03

FIGURE 3.4

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



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

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 3.3 shows the average class size by grade for Union City, compared to the Abbott standards. In the most recent year in which we have information, Union City's average class size was smaller than the maximum allowed by Abbott in every grade except Grade 6.

Figure 3.4 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 Union City) have decreased from 21 to just less than 19. Union City class sizes started at about the same level as the other Abbott districts, increased to a high of 26 in 1999–00, and shrunk again to just over 20 children per class during this same period. Class size can increase

for a number of reasons. The most common reasons are lack of space, a growing student population, or a lack of resources to hire teachers. Whatever the reason this occurred in Union City, the larger class sizes in the elementary grades at the turn of the century no longer seem to be a problem.

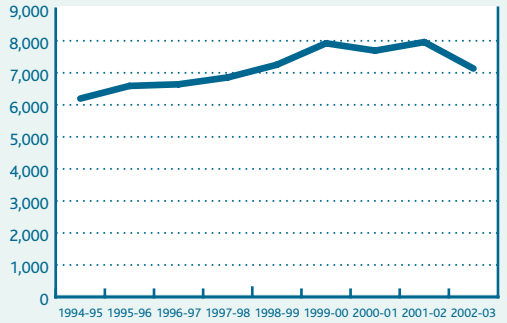
Why did class size change in Union City's elementary schools? Changes in classroom space, number of teachers, and enrollment could explain the class size trends. Figure 3.4 shows the district's total elementary school enrollment from 1994–95 to 2002–03. We can see that K-8 enrollment rose from just under 6,200 in 1994–95 to over 7,900 in 1999–00; and then decreased to 7,135 in 2002–03. These data suggest that the changes in enrollment may have been a factor in the class size changes experienced during this period.

We see almost a mirror image of the elementary school class size trends in Figure 3.6. Union City's high school class sizes decreased during the mid-1990s, stayed at about 15 for several years, and rose again to about 19 in 2002–03. Meanwhile, the average high school class size remained steady at about 20 in all other district groupings. Understanding why class sizes grew in the elementary grades may help us to understand why they grew in 2002–03 in the high schools. If the elementary school student enrollment grew in the late-1990s, these larger classes may be just now entering the high schools. A rising student enrollment, combined with limited space could explain the rise in class sizes. Later in this report, we turn to Union City's school facilities construction efforts for a closer look at this issue.

Do enrollment patterns explain the changes in high school class sizes in Union City? Figure 3.7 shows that Union City's high school enrollment grew by 23 percent between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Enrollment changes, then, helped to explain the overall growth in class size since 1999–00, but not the dramatic improvements in class sizes that occurred beforehand.

FIGURE 3.5

Elementary School Enrollment: Union City, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

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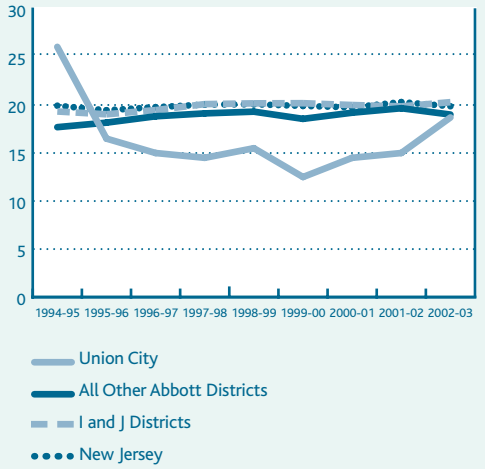
FIGURE 3.6

High School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 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.[18] 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, non-academic, 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 regular 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 Union City's special needs students are educated.

Before and since Abbott, the Union City school district made conscious efforts to reduce the number of children with disabilities who were educated in self-contained classrooms or "pulled out" of class for separate instruction. Almost half of Union City's 851 students with disabilities go to school in a "very inclusionary" setting (spending 80% or more of their day with the general education population), compared with 27 percent in the other Abbott districts and 42 percent in the state overall (Figure 3.8). Of the four district groupings we analyzed, students with disabilities in the wealthiest districts are most likely to be taught in classrooms with general

education students for 80 percent or more of the day (56%).

More than one in four (27%) students with disabilities in Union City are 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 for the state as a whole (17%) and the I and J districts (8%). Six percent of special needs children are placed in a school outside of the district, compared to nine percent statewide, and seven percent in the wealthiest districts.[19] In addition, more than two percent receive instruction at home compared to a smaller percentage statewide or in any other district grouping.

Programs for English Language Learners

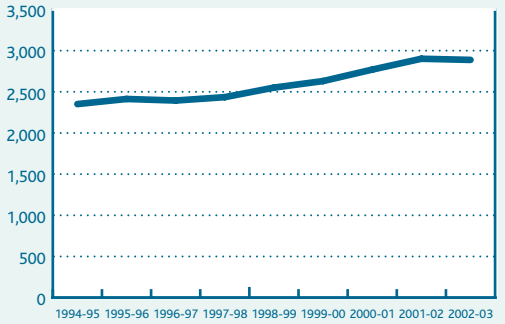
School districts are required to identify eligible limited English proficient (LEP) students at the time of enrollment. Once the district has identified the language proficiency of students, it must provide the programs and services needed to enable LEP students to meet the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Below, we describe the types of programs available for students in Union City whose first language is not English.

For elementary school students. Union City's elementary schools offer a Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Program, which uses a transitional bilingual education model. All students are tested upon entry into the district, and annually thereafter. The IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) is used in preschool through Grade 7, and the Maculaitis Assessment of Competencies (MAC) is used in Grades 8 through 12.[20] In 2005–06, the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), which will be the state standard in 2006, will be piloted in Union City.[21]

Spanish-speaking English language learner students are placed in the Transitional Bilingual/ESL Program, based on their results on the IPT or MAC. The goals of this program are to ensure that: 1) students enter the mainstream classroom within a one- to four-year period; 2) English language learners are provided with an educationally equitable environment; and 3) diversity is respected. In

FIGURE 3.7

High School Enrollment: Union City, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

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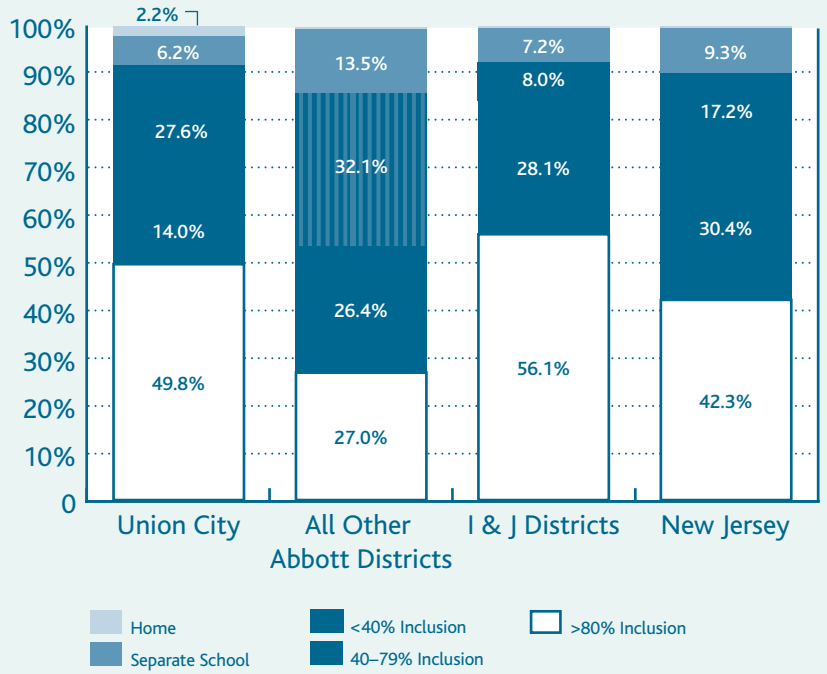
FIGURE | 3.8

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



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

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

the program, students gradually move from native language-assisted instruction to the three levels of instruction in English: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Beginner level students receive instruction in Spanish and two forty-minute periods of ESL, one in a core curriculum content area. The intermediate level emphasizes instruction in English in some core curriculum content areas; the advanced level provides all content area instruction using English language only. Non-Spanish speaking ELL students must be placed in the advanced program, but are provided with additional support if needed. Students in all three groups receive full-time programs of instruction and tailored small group instruction (from support teachers) that targets specific areas in need of improvement. They can also participate in bilingual and ESL classes after school and in the summer.

Project SELL (Spanish-English Language Literacy) is a dual language program currently being implemented at Roosevelt School. Through two-way immersion, Project SELL enhances and enriches students' first

language (either Spanish or English) and develops their second language at the same time. The goals of the program are to: 1) develop bi-literacy and critical thinking skills in English and Spanish; 2) maintain academic achievement at grade level; and 3) develop and promote multicultural understanding. The program's curriculum is aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS), the New Jersey World Languages Content Standards and the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Standards.

For high school students. When English language learner students first enter high school, they are given the Maculaitis to determine placement in one of the district's six levels of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. At the end of each marking period, students are re-assigned based on classroom performance and teacher recommendation (some students may remain at the same level, others may jump several levels). As part of the district's assessment protocol, all English language learner students are given the Maculaitis again in the spring.

At the first level of ESL, ESL *Reading/Writing New Entrant,* students are introduced to the English language and American culture. The focus of this course is on the development of basic listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. The next three levels, *ESL Reading/Writing Beginner, ESL Reading/Writing Intermediate,* and *ESL Reading/Writing Advanced* meet the needs of students who have achieved higher levels of competency in English. Once students have mastered basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, they can take the *ESL C* course to help them ultimately function in a monolingual English class. Special attention is given to developing the skills needed to pass the Grade 11 standardized test. At the sixth level, students are placed in a monolingual English classroom taught by a teacher certified in ESL as well as in English.

All elementary and secondary teachers in Union City who work with English language learners are required to take courses leading

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to the attainment of a Bilingual or ESL certificate. The district pays for these courses.

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 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 Union City, K-12 curricula are developed by content-specific committees that include district staff and elementary, middle, and high school teachers. District policy requires curricula be reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle to ensure that they are current and aligned with the CCCS. Curriculum cycles are staggered to ensure that different content areas can be addressed each year. In March 2004, the district had recently completed revising the math curriculum for students in Grades 1 through 4 and was beginning revisions to the math curriculum for Grades 5 through 8. Curriculum development meetings are held weekly during the winter.

High school action plan. In the spring of 2003, the district's new administrative team recognized that the two high schools required extensive assistance and intervention. A major area of concern was the district's poor scores on the Grade 11 test, particularly in math. Secondary teachers were asked to complete a survey to elicit their opinions about the problem and provide recommendations about how secondary education in Union City could be improved. In response to feedback central office administrators received, the district hired a math coordinator, whose role is to ensure that the math program in Kindergarten through Grade 12 is rigorous.

The math coordinator worked with administrators, supervisors, teachers, and outside consultants, to develop a three-year action plan for improving the math program. In 2003–04, the first year of the plan, the following activities took place: 1) the Algebra 2 curriculum was realigned and sequenced to reflect the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) and the Grade 11 test; 2) tutorial classes for eleventh graders were offered before school, during lunchtime, and after school; 3) eleventh grade teachers had regular planning meetings to address student placement, classroom techniques and curriculum alignment; 4) two online assessments were given to eleventh graders to identify student weaknesses; and 5) eleventh grade students in danger of failing the Grade 11 test attended six-week review sessions either three days after school or on Saturday mornings.

In 2004–05, the district added the following activities: 1) summer packets that provide math concept review and enrichment were given to incoming eleventh grade students and incoming ninth grade students for completion; 2) entering ninth grade students from Edison School who were identified as needing remediation in math participated in a summer pilot program designed to enhance their math skills (this will be expanded to include identified students in all Union City schools in 2005–06); 3) general math classes were eliminated from the district academic program (all students were enrolled in a core math course such as algebra or geometry; and if necessary, a supplemental course such as HSPA skills); 4) Algebra 1 and Geometry curriculum guides were realigned and sequenced to reflect the CCCS and the Grade 11 test; and 5) at both high schools, math labs were created as resource centers for students and teachers.

In 2005–06, the district intends to: 1) develop plans for improving articulation between Grades 6 through 9; 2) plan for better transition between eighth and ninth grade; 3) establish a pre-algebra program for seventh grade students; 4) improve the district's eighth grade Algebra 1 program; 5) purchase new text books for Geometry and Algebra 2;

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and 6) develop summer packets for all incoming students in Grades 6 through 11.

College preparatory classes. Nationwide, high school students of color are under-represented in college admissions. One reason might be a lack of opportunity to learn challenging material in high school. Union City's high schools offer a number of courses to prepare students for college. Honors courses are offered to students in Grades 9 through 12 in the following subjects: World History (Grade 9), Biology with Lab (Grades 9 through 10), Algebra (Grades 9 and 11), English (Grades 9 through 12), Geometry (Grade 10), American History (Grades 10 through 11), Chemistry with Lab (Grade 11), Calculus (Grade 12), and Physics with Lab (Grade 12). Beginning in Grade 10, Union City students also have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement (AP) courses for college credit in American History, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, English Literature, Spanish Language, and Spanish Literature.

We compared Union City's honors and AP course offerings to those in Tenafly, an "I" district several miles away. Union City offers 21 courses compared to Tenafly's 31. Tenafly offered additional honors courses such as: Creative Writing, French, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Precalculus, Russian, Spanish, and Western Civilization. Tenafly students also take AP courses in Computer Science, English Language, English Literature, French, Music Theory, Physics, and Statistics.

Student and Family Supports

Abbott Overview

Under Abbott, the New Jersey Supreme Court requires the state to fund and implement "supplemental programs." The purpose of these programs is to address disadvantages experienced by young people who grow up in poor cities. There are two kinds of supplemental programs under Abbott. Some programs are required. They are:

- 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
- School-to-work and college transition

Funding to support others is available if a school or district can show that the students need them. These 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
- 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 Union City or the other Abbott districts, nor did we assess their quality. 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 Union City'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.

All of Union City'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

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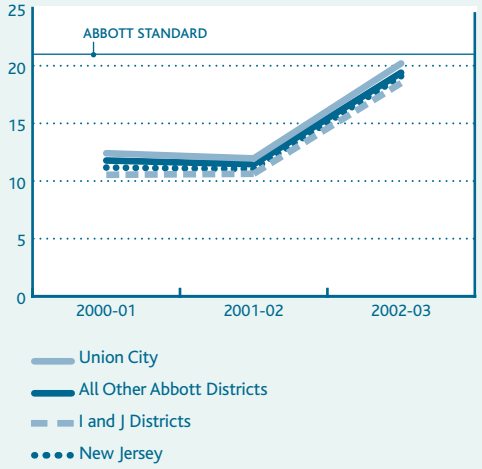
FIGURE 3.9

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



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

Kindergarten classes from 2000–01 to 2002–03 compared to all other Abbotts, the wealthiest districts, and the state average (Figure 3.9). The findings reveal—for every district grouping we analyzed—Kindergarten class sizes were smaller than the Abbott standard of 21 and rose to close to the maximum class size by 2002–03. Union City's Kindergarten class size was 12.4 in 2000–01 and 20 in 2002–03. The average Kindergarten class size in all other Abbott districts was 12 in 2000–01 and 20 in 2002–03.

These findings suggest a combination of possible factors that could affect Kindergarten class sizes across the state: limited classroom space for Kindergarten, a growing Kindergarten enrollment, and/or districts have either dropped Kindergarten teacher staff lines that did not keep pace with enrollment. Figure 3.10 shows the cumulative percent changes in Kindergarten enrollment for Union City, 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 shows that change plus the change between 1999–00 and 2000–01, and so on.

Union City Kindergarten enrollment remained between 720 and 750 students from 1998–99 to 2001–02. Kindergarten enrollment then dropped 10 percent between 2001–02 and 2003–04.

Early Literacy

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

Union City is one of 11 New Jersey school districts involved in the Reading First early literacy program.[22] The program is designed to measure student progress through ongoing screening and classroom assessments; identify children at risk for reading failure; provide professional development for teachers using research-based reading programs; and work with parents to promote parent partnerships, parent literacy, and reading at home. Kindergarten through Grade 3, special and general education students and teachers take part in the program. Like Success for All and the Abbott requirements for all other schools, Reading First also includes a 90-minute intensive early literacy period for students in the early elementary grades. In 2003–04, Edison and Washington Schools were the first to participate because they were designated as "needing improvement" under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Beginning in Fall 2004, the district began implementing Reading First at Gilmore, Veterans' and Robert Waters Schools. Although not formally designated as Reading First schools, Hudson, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Wilson Schools are using similar strategies in their Kindergarten classrooms.

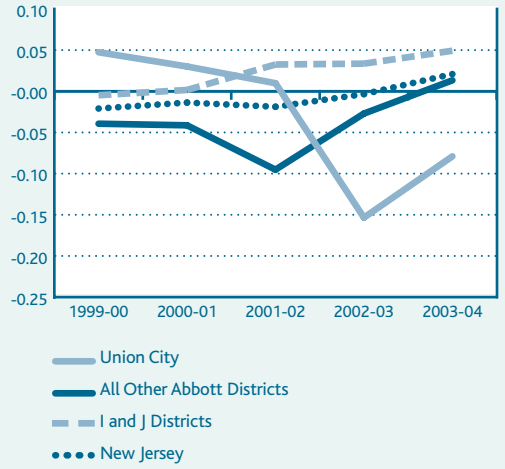
Veterans' Elementary School tests students' reading skills three times a year and places them into different early literacy instructional groups based on their performance: "benchmark" (grade level), "strategic" (moderately at-risk), or "intensive" (high-risk). High-risk, or "intensive" students in Grade 1 receive tutoring with a reading specialist during the day. Second and third graders at high risk receive after-school tutoring. The remaining students work with teacher tutors. Robert Waters School provides Reading Recovery tutoring to students scoring in the lowest 20 percentile of the same test.

Parent Involvement

Emerging research suggests that children with parents who are involved in their *learning* are more likely to attend school, earn higher grades, improve their social skills, graduate from high school and go on to college. Parent involvement in the *school* can be important

FIGURE 3.10

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



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

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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 and parent representation on its SLC.

In Union City, every school has a parent-community coordinator. According to the district's handbook for parent-community coordinators, the coordinator's mission is "to build a bridge between school and home by helping parents, grandparents, and/or guardians get the information, help and support they need to ensure their children's academic and social success in school." Parent-community coordinators work with principals, faculty, and parents to establish parent groups, and communicate the objectives of continuous school improvement. Parent involvement is also a large component of the early childhood program. Every private preschool provider has a family worker, and every in-district school has a parent-community coordinator.

SLC chairs at the five schools we visited told us that there are parent representatives on their management teams. The district also has a parent handbook that includes parent involvement policies, opportunities for training, and policies on visiting the school and meeting school staff members.

Health and Social Services

Referral and coordination. Abbott schools should have staff dedicated to 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 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 liaison, and the whole school reform instructional facilitator. At middle and high schools, the community services and health and social service coordinators do the job of the family support team.

Union City calls its family support teams Support Services Task Forces and every school in the district has one. The task forces are made up of instructional staff, the assistant principal, Child Study Team (CST) members, the parent liaison, and a school nurse. The team typically meets once a week to discuss students identified by teachers and/or other staff as having health, mental health, academic, or behavioral problems. The task force reviews student test score data, attendance, discipline, and other behavior issues to determine if each referred student is at risk of dropping out. The team develops a written plan for each student that outlines strategies that can be implemented before referring the student to the CST. Representatives on the team bring this information back to grade-level meetings. Each team is also responsible for coordinating student services and making referrals for students to community agencies.

There is also a districtwide task force that includes a district-level support services supervisor, assistant principals from each school, CST representatives, and medical and special needs staff. The task force meets monthly and reviews information on each referred student's health and well-being to determine the appropriate programs and services to address students' needs.

The district substance abuse counselor conducts workshops for students through the Students Against Substance Abuse program. Students suspected of substance abuse are referred to the Giant Steps program in Hoboken for testing. Students with other mental health issues are referred to the School Based Youth Services Program or St. Mary's Hospital. The school social worker provides parents with

Through "Union City Online," the district placed over 2,000 computers in classrooms, libraries, computer labs, and media centers in the mid-1990s. Access to and training in technology was fully integrated by 2003–04.

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information about agencies where they can bring their children for needed health and social services. North Hudson Community Action Corporation staff (NHCAC) also offer parents information about immunization and talk with them about state-sponsored health insurance programs such as New Jersey KidCare.

On-site services. Under Abbott, if social and health services are not easy to access outside of school, schools may request funding to support an on-site clinic. The Union City Board of Education did not request supplemental funds through Abbott. Emerson High School offers health and social services on site through the School-Based Youth Services Program, funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services. Services are offered daily until 9 P.M., and include mentoring, mental health counseling, career counseling, employment skills training, and workshops.[23] The district recently received a grant to expand the program to middle school students. School-Based Youth Services also provides teenage mothers in the district with support to prevent them from dropping out of school. The 15 mothers who currently receive these services drop their children off at the program's day care before going to class, participate in group activities with other mothers after school, and receive information on topics such as parenting and nutrition. The district hopes to receive additional funding to expand these services in the future.

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.

In the early-to mid-1990s, before Abbott funding began, the Union City Board of Education combined local school revenues with funding from private enterprise and federal

grants to support a massive investment in a network that linked classrooms and school libraries, district offices, public libraries, and Union City's government offices. The project, known as "Union City Online," placed over 2,000 computers in the classrooms, libraries, computer labs and media centers. Development of the district's website also began during this period.

When we visited the district in 2003–04, access to and training in technology was fully integrated throughout the district. Through a web-based system known as "Class Link" Union City students accessed and submitted homework on-line. Teachers corrected, commented, and returned student work on-line too. Through Project Hiller, 30 ninth graders at Union Hill High School received laptops and printers for their homes. This project provided students who would not otherwise have access to computers the opportunity to use up-to-date technology to complete their homework and school projects. Students can also take a CISCO certification course that teaches students the skills needed to design, build, and maintain small-to medium-sized networks. The district felt that CISCO certification helps to make students more attractive job candidates. Through the Teen Tech program, Union Hill High school students work with the technology facilitator to diagnose and repair computer equipment for credit. Union Hill students can also participate in a summer web design program for credit and wages.

The new Veterans' Memorial Elementary School is a wireless building and each grade has two carts of laptops. The district provides laptop computers to all teachers at the school and all lesson plans are submitted to the principal electronically. The school has a technology curriculum with benchmarks, and all students in Preschool through Grade 5 are enrolled in computer skills classes. For example, preschool students master reading software; third and fourth grade students do Internet research. Veterans' has a partnership with the Sony Corporation that enables students to take "electronic field trips." Most recently, Veterans' students communicated with students at Pascack Valley High School.

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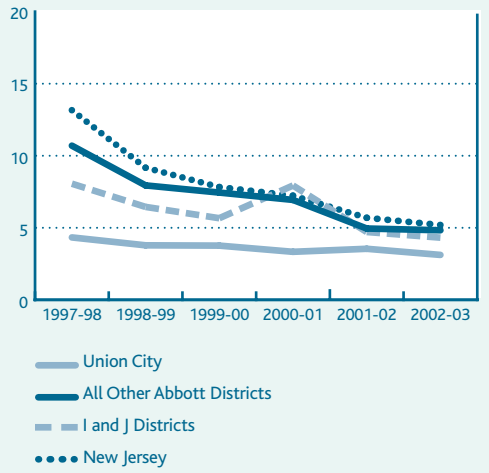
FIGURE 3.11

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



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

Students at both schools role-played and asked one another questions.

Figure 3.11 shows the number of students to every computer in Union City, the other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts in the state, and statewide. We expected to see a smaller number of students to each computer, given the district's extensive efforts at upgrading and using technology. We have information about the student-computer ratio beginning in 1997–98, so we can see if student access to computers improved in the years after Abbott funding came in. Figure 3.11 shows that Union City students had easier access to computers than their peers in any other district grouping we analyzed throughout the time period. In 1997–98, there were only 4.3 students to every computer; in 2002–03 there were 3.2, better than (below) the standard of five students to every computer.

Across the other Abbott districts during the same time period, student access to computers improved by over 100 percent. In the other 29 Abbott districts, the average number of students to every computer decreased steadily from 10.7 to 4.8. Student access to computers also improved throughout the state. Although there was a two-year period (1999–00 to 2000–01) when it worsened in the wealthiest districts, student access to computers improved over all during this time period.

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 and 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.

In Union City, the middle school alternative education program is an alternative setting for eighth grade students identified as at-risk by the Support Services Task Force of their school. Students are eligible for the program if they have poor academic per-

formance, social and emotional problems, and/or difficulties in the home environment.

The program is operated at three schools: Edison has two classes, Washington and Jose Marti each have one class. Classes can have no more than 15 students. The curriculum is tailored to the educational needs of each student with special provisions made for students who need remediation and tutoring. Skills needed for the Grade 8 test are strongly emphasized. Students receive individual and group counseling from the school social worker who also holds formal parent meetings eight times a year. In addition to the academic program, students work as volunteers in county hospitals and nursing homes. Twice a year, their supervisors grade their performance. Students who successfully complete the middle school alternative education program may enter the mainstream high school environment, or if necessary, may go on to the high school alternative education program.

When Emerson High School staff discovered that only about half of the 480 students who entered the school as ninth graders graduated, it looked for a way to address this problem. The school provides a Focus on Success Program to 32 ninth grade students who are at risk of dropping out. Union Hill High School also has a Focus on Success program servicing 32 ninth graders. Students in these programs typically come from eighth grade alternative education programs in the district. Focus on Success keeps these students together with a small number of teachers as they move up through high school.

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.

Union Hill and Emerson High Schools both have the Road to College program. The program aims to expose students to college

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Abbott high schools are also required to provide programs to help students transition to their chosen pathways after graduation.

and the application process in Grade 9. Students visit local and out-of-state colleges and universities. Union City students attend summer enrichment programs at nearby colleges, and some have the opportunity to attend these schools tuition-free. The high schools also hold meetings with students at every grade level to discuss issues such as college applications and entrance examinations.

There are also three College Nights throughout the year for students and their families. The first meeting is intended to help students and their families explore their options on the Internet. At the second meeting students and their families can practice filling out college applications with assistance from school staff. The third meeting is reserved for assistance and information on financial aid forms. Union City College Nights are conducted in English and Spanish. Each fall, English teachers also review seniors' college essays and classes are offered on interviewing and professional dress.

Current and former Union City residents come to the high schools to talk about their professions. Through the Business Community Education program, seniors work in local businesses and juniors work in places such as City Hall. The district pays for student transportation to their jobs. A Career Exploration Class is offered to students in Grade 9.

After-School Programs

District staff told us that they view extended day, or after-school programs, as an extension of the classroom. Teachers in after-school programs are reported to be in constant communication with classroom teachers to make sure there is continuity with the school-day classroom. At the elementary school level, students receive after-school tutoring. Students in Grades 3 and 4 can prepare for standardized tests before and after school and on weekends leading up to the test. At the high school level, there is before-and after-school tutoring for the Grade 11 exam and SAT tutoring on Saturdays.

The district recently received a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant to support extended day programs in its lowest

achieving schools.[24] Through this and the Even Start program, parents can participate in English as a Second Language (ESL), computer, and parenting skills courses after school hours.[25] Childcare services are provided. Some schools have extracurricular activities after school such as sports teams, cheerleading, clubs (for example, drama and art), peer mediation, peer leadership, and student government. There is a nurse available at every location with an after-school program.

In 2003–04, all of Union City's elementary schools had a Math Night, where general education and bilingual teachers team-taught children and their parents or caregivers. Teachers received training from Rutgers University in Family Math instruction to help parents work with their children on math. Parent liaisons are also involved in this project. The program started with fourth grade students and will be expanded in future years to include third graders and their families.

Summer Programs

The district has a four-week instructional summer program for students needing extra help in math or reading. Eligibility for this program is based on test scores. The district also runs summer enrichment programs for English language learners and students with disabilities.

The Union City Department of Recreation provides activities for students in Grades 1 through 8 from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M throughout the summer. High school teams have weeklong clinics in football, soccer, and basketball. The district also employs approximately 800 students to work in the community.

At the high school level, students can participate in the web design program to receive credits and wages. Through the Summer Scholars program, high school students can also attend summer programs at universities such as New Jersey Institute of Technology, New Jersey City University, Harvard, and Princeton. Eighth graders identified as being at-risk of failing or dropping out receive extra

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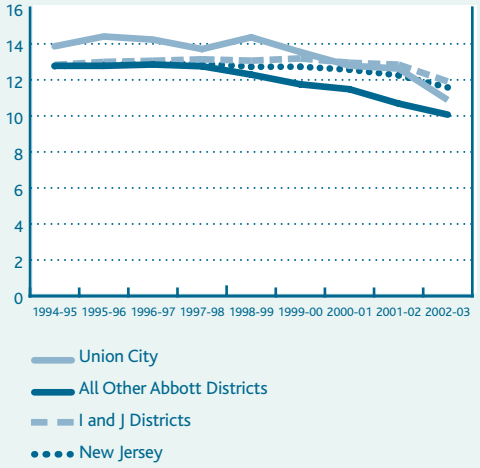
FIGURE | 3.12

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



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

help during the summer before they enter high school.

Art and Music

Art and music programs took place in varied settings in the schools we visited. Ideally, instruction should take place in rooms that are dedicated to these subjects and taught by specialists in the subject matter. Union Hill High School has a music wing with two rooms for the fine and performing arts programs. The school also has choral music and instrumental programs, and a video production department which films school events and sells DVD's to raise money for the school. At Emerson High School, music is taught in blocks in a dedicated music room. At the new Veterans' School, music instruction is conducted on the stage of the auditorium, which can be converted into a classroom. The dedicated art room was still under construction when we visited in 2003–04, so art was taught in another classroom. At Columbus Middle School, students received art and music instruction from specialized teachers who traveled from classroom to classroom. Robert Waters Elementary students received music instruction once a week in the cafetorium. After school, there was choral music and music technology instruction. There are two art teachers at Robert Waters.

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 are beyond the scope of our project, however. We offer, instead, information about the number, type, and qualifications of teachers; teacher attendance on the job; training that is made available to teachers; 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 aver-

age, while student-teacher ratios show the relationship between the total number of certificated faculty on staff 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.

By 2001–02 and 2002–03, there were fewer students to every teacher in Union City than there were in the wealthiest districts, or the state as a whole. Figure 3.12 shows that the student-to-teacher ratio has decreased in Union City and the other Abbott districts. Union City had higher student-teacher ratios than the other district groupings we examined in every year before 1999–00.

Faculty Attendance

Research shows that teachers who like their jobs, are involved in decision making at school, and who 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 faculty attendance. Teachers say that student misbehavior and even the change of 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 the faculty attendance rates in Union City, compared to other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state as a whole.

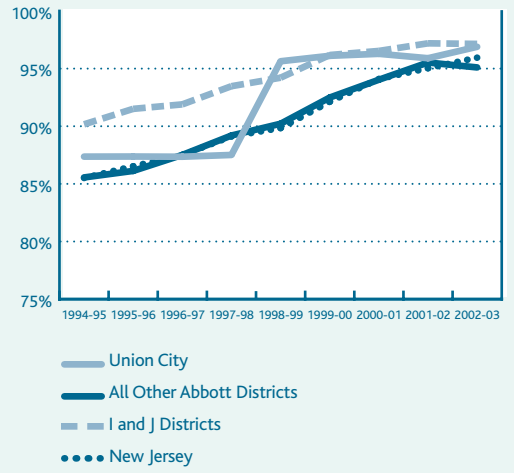
Figure 3.13 shows a positive statewide trend in faculty attendance between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Union City faculty attendance improved more than any other district grouping we analyzed. Of special note is the dramatic increase in 1998–99 to over 95 percent attendance. This high level of faculty attendance in Union City has been maintained at about the same level ever since.

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 provi-

FIGURE 3.13

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



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

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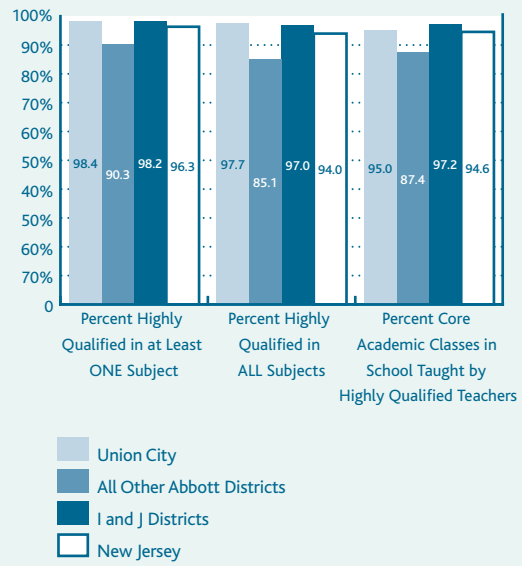
FIGURE | 3.14

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



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

sion requires that teachers of core subjects must be "highly qualified" in each subject they teach.[26] The requirements of becoming highly qualified under federal law depend 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 college credit 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 3.14 and 3.15 show the percentage of highly qualified teachers in Union City, the wealthiest districts in the state, and statewide, in 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* subjects, and the percent of core subject area *classes* taught by a highly qualified teacher. Union City does better than other Abbotts, the state average, and even the wealthiest school districts in the state when it comes to the percent of elementary school teachers who are qualified in one or all subjects (Figure 3.14). Nearly all of the elementary school teachers in the district are highly qualified.

Union City compares well with the state average and is just slightly below the wealthiest districts on the percent of core *classes* taught by highly qualified teachers. There are two reasons why 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 Union City, highly qualified teachers carry the same course load as their colleagues and are assigned to teach the subjects they

are qualified in. All in all, when we compare Union City with the other Abbott districts, more elementary school teachers are highly qualified and more core classes are taught by highly qualified teachers.

Figure 3.15 shows the same results in Union City's two high schools. Almost all of the district's high school teachers are highly qualified in one or all of the subjects they teach, and almost all classes are taught by these highly qualified teachers. Union City compares well with the wealthiest districts and does better than the other Abbotts and the state average on all three measures.

Staffing Patterns

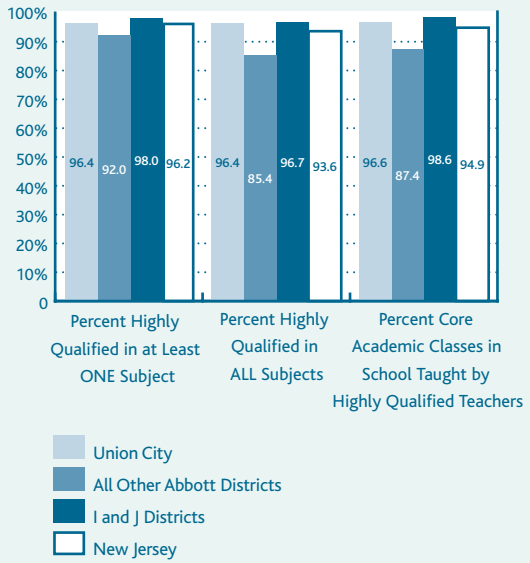
Abbott districts electronically submit their school-by-school staffing plans to the New Jersey Department of Education each year. We present the districts' submissions as estimates of the true number of staff that are employed. These numbers do not reflect any new hires or layoffs that occurred after these 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 Union City and the other Abbott districts on the percent of schools with each 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 social worker to work as an integral part of the

FIGURE 3.15

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



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

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FIGURE | 3.16

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

	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
Elementary Schools Staff	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Instructional Facilitator	88.9%	87.5%	97.5%	95.3%
Social Worker	88.9%	100.0%	69.2%	68.0%
Teacher Tutor	25.0%	62.5%	24.6%	39.8%
All Positions	25.0%	62.5%	20.2%	32.9%

	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
Middle and High Schools Staff	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Attendance/Dropout Prevention Officer	50.0%	37.5%	49.3%	52.4%
Health-Social Service Coordinator	87.5%	50.0%	32.6%	36.7%
All Positions	37.5%	12.5%	24.2%	25.6%

	Union City		All Other Abbott Districts	
All Schools Staff	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Family Liaison (Parent-Community Coordinator)	91.7%	91.7%	67.8%	70.4%
Guidance Counselor	83.3%	75.0%	94.1%	94.1%
Librarian/Media Specialist	91.7%	75.0%	89.4%	91.5%
Nurse/Health Specialist	91.7%	91.7%	97.4%	97.2%
Security Officer	91.7%	100.0%	88.0%	88.7%
Technology Coordinator	91.7%	100.0%	82.2%	85.9%
All Positions	83.3%	50.0%	56.6%	57.0%

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

Family Support Team coordinating supportive services for students.

Figure 3.16 shows that a majority of Union City's schools serving students in the elementary grades had all of the required staffing positions in 2003–04 while only one in five did so in 2002–03. All or almost all Union City elementary schools employed instructional facilitators and social workers in both years. In 2002–03, only one in five schools had a teacher tutor for students not reading on grade level. More tutors were hired in 2003–04, however. Union City was in better compliance with elementary school staffing requirements than the other Abbott districts in 2003–04, and about the same as the other Abbott districts in the previous school year.

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 students 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.

Figure 3.16 shows how well Union City's schools serving students in Grades 6 through 12 complied with Abbott staffing requirements. In 2002–03 most of these schools had a health and social service coordinator and half had a dropout prevention officer. In 2003–04, fewer schools had either staff position and only one in eight had both. In the other Abbott districts, about a half of the middle and high schools had dropout prevention coordinators and about a third had health and social service coordinators in both years.

Finally, Figure 3.16 lists the positions that every Abbott school should have and compares Union City's compliance with all of the other Abbott districts. Almost all of Union City's schools had each of the positions required under Abbott and a majority had all of the required positions staffed in 2002–03. In 2003–04, there were somewhat fewer schools with guidance counselors and media specialists, but more with at least one technology coordinator or security officer. Half of the schools had all of the required positions. Most schools in the other Abbott districts had at least one guidance counselor, media specialist, nurse, and security officer too. Fewer, though still a majority, had a parent-community coordinator (family liaison) or a technology coordinator. About half of the schools in the other Abbott districts were in compliance with the full staffing requirements in both years.

Professional Development

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

For teachers. In Union City, three full days are allotted for district-wide professional development for teachers. The first and last two

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days of the school year are also professional development days. For example, the first two days are used to orient staff to curriculum changes. The district would like to increase the number of professional development days to five in coming years.

We also learned that schools and the district conduct informal staff development activities. During school hours, these activities include: weekly grade-level meetings and other meetings where teachers discuss how to ensure that their curricula are aligned from grade to grade. District supervisors visit classrooms and model instructional practices for newer teachers and teachers who need help. These teachers are also encouraged to observe more experienced teachers in their own school and other schools in the district. Teachers attend conferences, particularly those sponsored by the Whole School Reform models and the Reading First program. The district does a lot of turnkey training as well: the few teachers who attend off-site trainings provide information or training to other teachers when they return.

Teachers have other opportunities for training outside of regular school hours. On Super Saturdays, teachers districtwide participate in off-site training on reading and math instruction. In 2004, for example, preschool and Kindergarten teachers were trained on a new curriculum published by Pearson/Scott Foresman. There is also an optional mid-summer institute, held off-site, where teachers select the workshops they would like to attend. Teachers who take part in after-hours training are paid for their time.

For administrators. There are also a number of opportunities for administrators—principals, assistant principals, and district supervisors—to take part in trainings. There are after-school workshops on curriculum, union issues, education law, and teacher evaluation procedures. Every year, district and school administrators take part in an administrative retreat, informally referred to as "Camp Sanger" (named after the district's Superintendent). They have attended conferences given by the Global Institute for Leadership, Reading First, Whole School Reform

model developers, and software companies serving the district. Union City schools are or will be undergoing accreditation through the Middle States Association's Accreditation for Growth (AFG) program; principals receive professional development in preparation for this process.

School and district staff told us that ideas for professional development activities come from three sources: 1) teacher surveys administered during the district's planning process; 2) performance evaluations; and 3) teachers' own Professional Improvement Plans. The district keeps track of evaluations and staff development activities with a software application known as Filemaker Pro. Administrators use Filemaker Pro to ensure that teachers have participated in the professional development activities recommended to them.

K-12 Budget

Overview

Up to this point, we have explored the characteristics of Union City 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 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 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 Union City and other school districts throughout the state to support public education.

Fiscal Distress

Union City, like several cities in the United States, entered into a state of fiscal distress in

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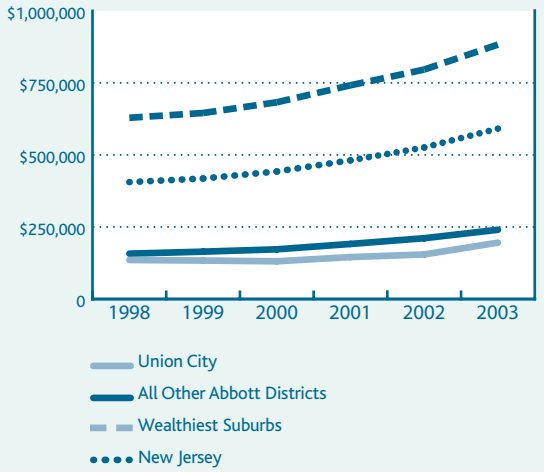
FIGURE | 3.17

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



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

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 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.[27] When property tax revenues decline, cities have less money to pay for education.

Figure 3.17 compares the property wealth in Union City, 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 to support education and other services provided by New Jersey's towns and cities.[28, 29] The most striking feature of Figure 3.17 is the enormous gap in property wealth between Union City 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 and a half times higher in the wealthy suburbs ($628,955) than in Union City ($135,414). Between 1998 and 2003, property values rose dramatically across the state: by 46 percent on average and by 44 percent in Union City. By 2003, there was more than four times as much property wealth per student in the I and J suburbs ($882,773 per student) than in Union City ($195,612). The

state average of nearly $600,000 of property wealth per student was nearly triple that of Union City in the same year.

Strapped for money to pay for public 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 taxes, even though higher taxes might prevent potential residents and employers from moving in.

Figure 3.18 compares the total equalized tax rates in Union City with those found in the other Abbott cities, the wealthiest suburbs, and across the state.[30] Union City's rate was 4.1 in 1998, almost twice as high as in the wealthiest suburbs the same year (2.2) and much higher than the 3.0 maximum recommended by two state commissions created to study local taxes in New Jersey. On the whole, local tax rates in New Jersey have declined between 1998 and 2003: by 11 percent across the state and by 23 percent in Union City. In 2003, Union City's total equalized tax rate was 3.2, still higher than any other district grouping shown.

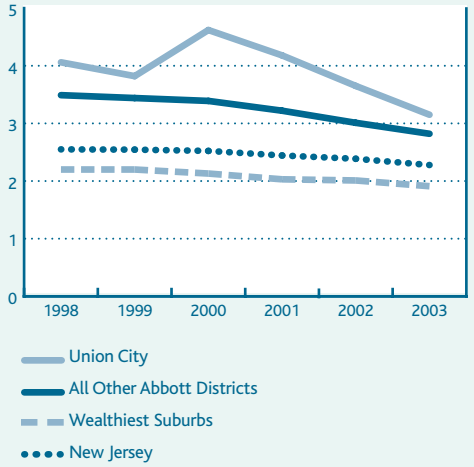
School Finance

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.[31]

In this section, we examine the resources that Union City has had to support its educational program for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. General education fund-

FIGURE 3.18

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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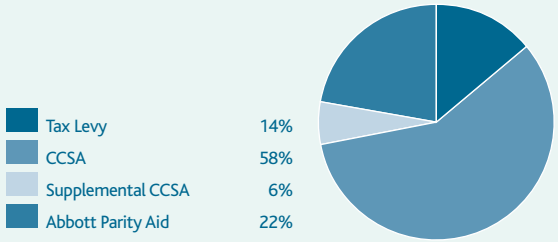
FIGURE | 3.19

General Education Funding by Source: Union City, 2003–04



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

ing 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.[32] 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 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 st ate 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.[33]

Figure 3.19 shows the sources of funding for general education in Union City in 2003–04. Fourteen percent of the revenue came from local taxes. Union City drew the largest portion (58%) of its revenue from Core Curriculum Standards Aid. One fifth (22%) of the money came from the state in the form of Abbott Parity Aid.

We now compare Union City's general education funding with general education funding in the other Abbott districts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts, and the state average (Figure 3.20). (The figures have all been divided by the resident enrollment in each category to provide "per student" amounts.) Union City, the other Abbott districts, and the I and J districts had about the same amount of aid per student in both 2002–03 and 2003–04. For example, Union City had $9,813 in 2002–03 compared to an average of $9,832 per student in the other Abbott districts and $9,972 in the I and J districts. The state average for 2002–03 was $9,218 per student.

Figure 3.20 shows that Abbott Parity Aid, in combination with other state aid, now provides the Abbott districts with a per-student general education budget about 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 3.17) that property wealth increased in Union City between 1998 and 2003. As expected, Union City's school tax rates declined at the same time (Figure 3.21). In 1998, Union City homeowners paid $1.28 in school taxes for every $100 of assessed property value, a somewhat lower rate than in the wealthiest suburbs (1.31), the other Abbott cities (1.35) or across the state on average (1.40). Property values increased in

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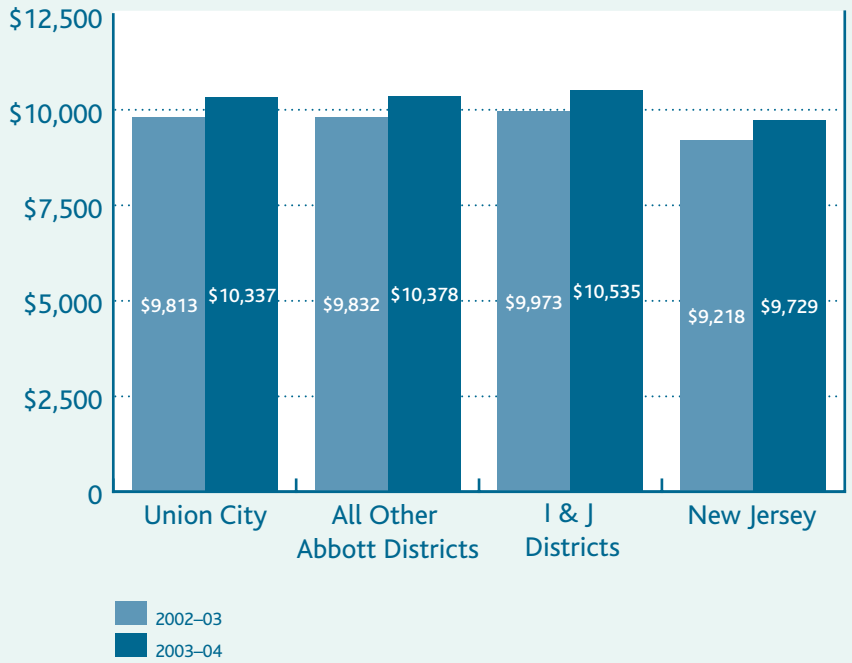
FIGURE | 3.20

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

the other district groupings and their school tax rates also fell between 1998 and 2003. Union City's school tax rates fell 37 percent during this time period, more sharply than in the other Abbott cities (29%), the wealthiest suburbs (10%), and statewide (8%). By 2003, Union City's school tax rate was 0.81, lower than in the other Abbott cities (0.96), the wealthiest suburbs (1.17), or the state on average (1.28).

Supplemental programs funding. To be ready and successful learners, the children and youth of Union City have unique needs for health, nutrition, and social services that must be addressed. There are three sources of money to support supplemental programs in Abbott districts: one comes from the federal government and two from the state. The federal funding is called Title I and provides funding for schools serving children from low-income families. The money is intended to improve educational quality and give extra help to struggling students. The second supplemental programs funding source, Demonstrably Effective Program Aid (DEPA),

has been provided by the state since CEIFA. 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.

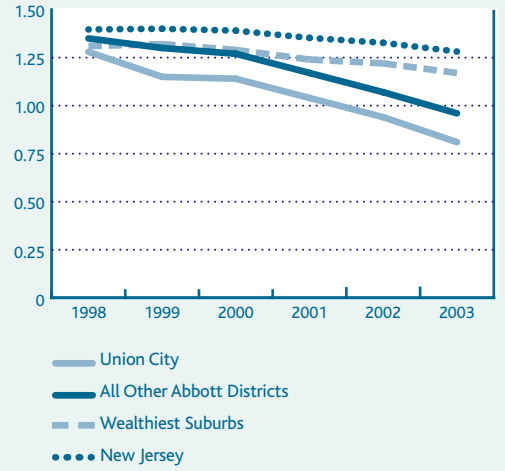
How did the Union City Board of Education support its supplemental programs and how much money did it have? In 2003–04 Union City had $819 per student to support its supplemental programs. This figure is much lower than the other Abbott districts ($2,017) because Union City did not request any Additional Abbott Aid (Figure 3.22). Union City received $453 per student from the state, and $366 per student from the federal government. On average, the other Abbott districts received $1,097 per student in Additional Abbott Aid, $414 per student in DEPA, and $406 per student in Title I.[34]

Figure 3.23 shows that the amount of money the district had to support supplemental programs decreased by $81 per student between 2002–03 and 2003–04. (Again, Union City did not request Additional Abbott Aid in either year; all of the district's supplemental program funding came from Title I and DEPA.)

It is unclear how the Union City Board of Education supported the array of supplemental programs we have described throughout this report. We note several programs that have been supported by grant funds raised by the district. For example: the School-Based Youth Service Program is supported by the New Jersey Department of Human Services;

FIGURE 3.21

Average School 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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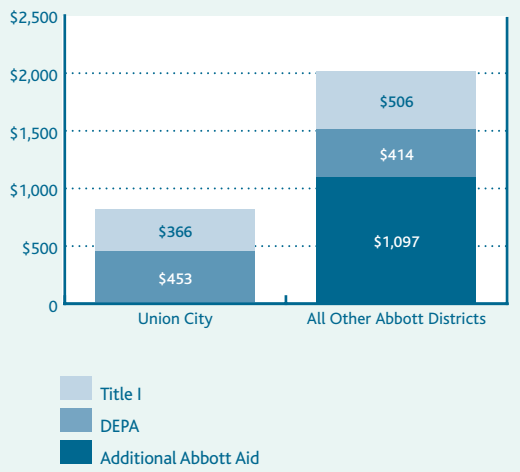
FIGURE 3.22

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



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

the district's technology initiatives have been supported by private-sector grants as well as a grant from the National Science Foundation; some after-school programs are supported by a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. District staff report, however, that these grants only make up a small portion of the budget.

K-12 Leadership

School Leadership Councils

State regulations require every school in the Abbott districts to have a School Leadership Council (SLC). The SLC is a group that serves on a volunteer basis to represent school staff and the neighborhood. Its primary purpose is to help improve teaching and learning. The SLC does 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 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.

In Union City, each SLC is made up of the principal, teachers, non-instructional support staff, parents and caregivers, community representatives, and the Whole School Reform facilitator. SLC meetings are held at different times (after school and evening) to increase the chance that parents and community members will attend.

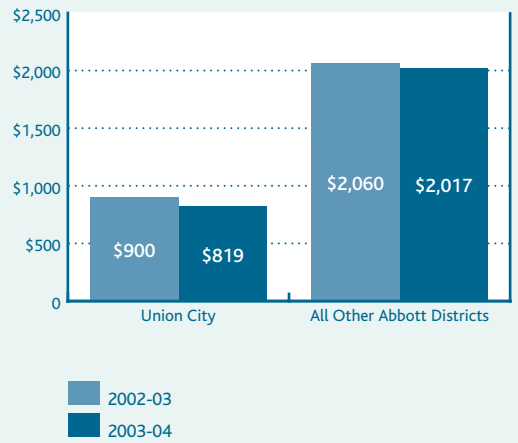
The people we spoke with said that the SLCs in the district follow New Jersey Department of Education regulations about the purpose of the council and the roles and responsibilities of its members, including participation in plan and budget development. Before the SLCs developed their schools' three-year operational plans, members reviewed student data and surveyed staff, students, and parents to find out what programs and services should be brought in to address needs. An SLC member at one school we visited told us that that SLC had less input into its plan than was previously allowed because the school had not met the state's Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks, standards developed by the state to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. A district staff member believed that school-based planning had moved the district's central office to upgrade its information management system to keep up with the schools.

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

In all Abbott districts, control over budgeting and planning moved away from the schools and their SLCs and returned to the district office in 2002–03. Since then,

FIGURE 3.23

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



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

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

budgeting has begun with the district's business administrator, who sets school budgets based on a state template, 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 three-percent 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. In some of the Union City schools we visited, SLC members voted on both three-year operational plans and budgets: a majority vote was needed for them to pass. In other schools, SLC members simply signed their name to show support.

SLC members receive training from the district business administrator once per year. The business administrator informs them about how the district budget operates and reviews every component of the budget with members so that they have the knowledge needed to make decisions during budget development and review. The business administrator notifies SLC members when budget cuts are going to take place and the anticipated impact on their schools and the district over all. We also learned that, in the past, SLCs had received professional development from their Whole School Reform model developers.

Abbott Advisory Council

The Abbott Advisory Council (AAC), formerly known as the district Whole School Reform Steering Committee is a steering committee consisting of 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.

The Union City Abbott Advisory Council (AAC) is made up of 20 members including: the Superintendent who serves as chairperson, two Assistant Superintendents, the business administrators, two district supervisors, Whole School Reform facilitators from each of the district's 12 schools, one parent, and one community representative. AAC members typically participate on other school/district committees, such as an SLC. Meetings are held once a month. The focus of Union City AAC activities during the 2003–04 school year was on the revision of the district's three-year operational plan.

Local Support Team

Formerly known as School Review and Improvement Teams (SRI), local support teams (LST) are New Jersey Department of Education staff who provide districts and schools with technical assistance on the development of school and district plans and budgets, the use of data for school improvement, and alignment of federal programs (e.g., NCLB) with district and school plans.

District and school staff had positive things to say about their local support team (LST). According to them, LST members have been active participants in district activities. They have attended SLC and other meetings to help schools develop budgets and three-year operational plans. LST members provided students and staff with information about testing and attended special events such as Back to School Night, Test Pep Rallies, and the Eighth Grade Ring Ceremony.

K-12 Student Outcomes

Historically, educational success has been largely determined by student, family, and neighborhood characteristics. On average, children who grow up in wealthy communities do better in school than their peers who grow up in concentrated poverty. As educa-

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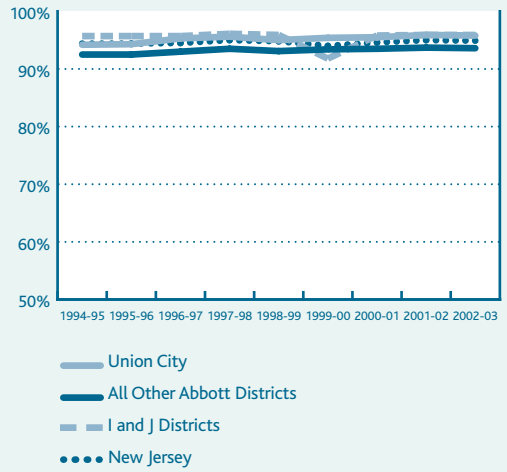
FIGURE | 3.24

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



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

tion stakeholders, our job is to change this. The educational success of our children is a product of elements of schooling that we can affect: opportunities for students to learn; supports for students and families; staff to teach students, and supports for that staff; financial resources to work with; the physical 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 put the elements of effective schooling in place and overcome the effects of poverty on student well-being and academic performance. All of the elements should be in place and working together in a coordinated fashion for schools to provide a chance for children to succeed. We encourage readers to consider the student outcomes presented below in light of what we have presented up to this point and in Section 5 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 here 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 3.24). Union City's elementary school student attendance was at 94 percent in 1994–95 and rose slightly but steadily to 96 percent in

2002–03, about the same as in the wealthiest districts in the state.

High school attendance rates were lower across the state when compared to the elementary schools (Figure 3.25). Union City's high school attendance was consistently better than in the other Abbott districts, ranging between 92 to 95 percent over the years. Across the state, between 92 and 93 percent of high school students attended school in every school year between 1994–95 and 2002–03. High school attendance was slightly higher in the wealthiest suburbs than in Union City, with the exception of 1999–00 when attendance in those districts dropped to 90 percent.

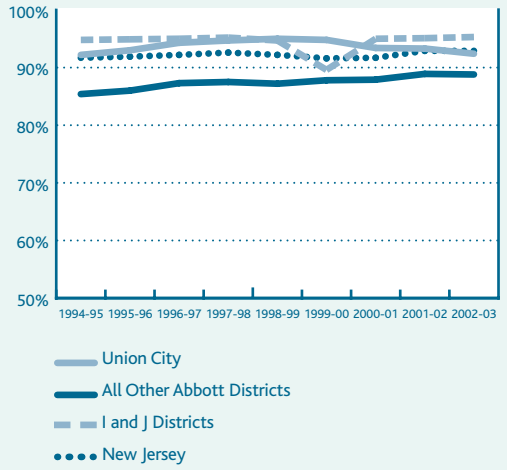
Child and Youth Well-Being

Children and youth who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy are better able to learn at school. Abbott's supplemental programs are intended to improve the well-being of children and youth of New Jersey's cities so that they can come to school prepared to learn. School staff either provide direct service to children and their families or help link them with needed services provided in the community. Service provision and linkage are essential parts of the jobs of health and social services coordinators, parent-community coordinators, 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."

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 below a small number of citywide indicators of child and youth wellbeing (Figure 3.26) for Union City and the State of New Jersey. Our expectation was that Union City would compare poorly

FIGURE 3.25

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



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

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FIGURE 3.26

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

		Union City				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
Child Death	1997-2000	1	0.1	0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Teen Death	1997-2002	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.4	0.3
Births to Teens (10–14)	1998-2002	*	*	3	1.4	–	0.5
Births to Teens (15–19)	1998-2002	124	56.1	118	53.3	34.1	28.8
Child Abuse and Neglect	1998-2002	43	2.2	102	5.3	4.2	3.4

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

* Unknown

with the state because of the many challenges faced by its families, but that we would see some improvement on these indicators over the past several years. We expected to find improvement because of the many school-based services available to Union City students and the district's efforts to link students and their families to needed services outside of the district. Our findings were mixed in this regard.

On two critical measures, Union City compares extremely well to the state: the number of child and teen deaths. Obviously, no children or teens should die in any year. And in Union City in 1997, none did. In 2002, one Union City child died, resulting in a rate of 0.2 per 1,000 (no teens died in 2002). A total of 124 teen girls, ages 15 to 19, gave birth in 1997 and 118 did so in 2002. The Union City teen birth rate is holding steady, but at almost double the state average. Teen birth is an area for the district to continue to address, along with its community partners, through prevention and postvention programs such as those offered by School-Based Youth Services (described in Health and Social Services).

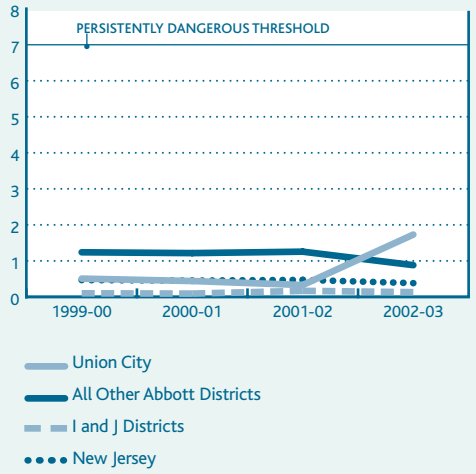
The rise in the child abuse and neglect rate between 1998 and 2002 is troubling. Forty-three cases of abuse or neglect were substantiated by the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services in Union City in 1998. That number more than doubled in 2002, when 102 cases of abuse or neglect were substantiated in Union City alone. Across the state, child abuse and neglect decreased during the same period.

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

FIGURE 3.27

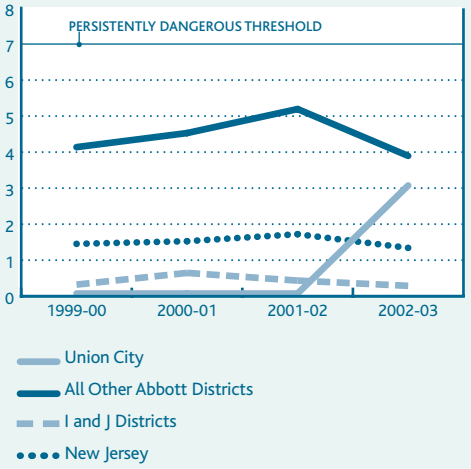
"Category A" Offenses by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.28

"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

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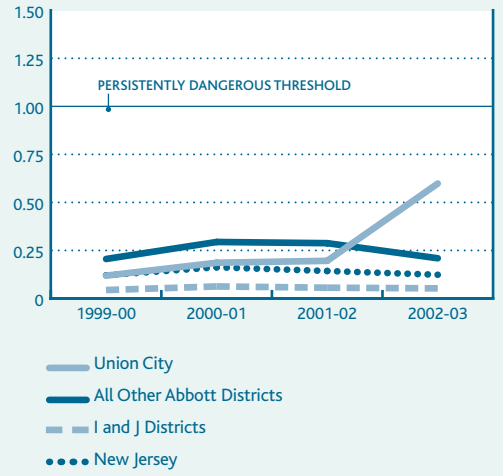
FIGURE 3.29

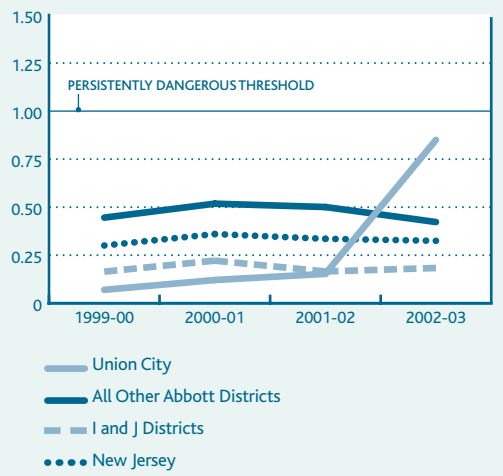
NCLB (Category B) Index by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.30

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

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 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.[35] 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 3.27 through 3.30 show the number of Category A offenses and the NCLB (Category B) Index for Union City, 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. We report the results 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 in the middle grades are included with the elementary schools.

Figure 3.27 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 has an average that comes anywhere near this level. Union City's

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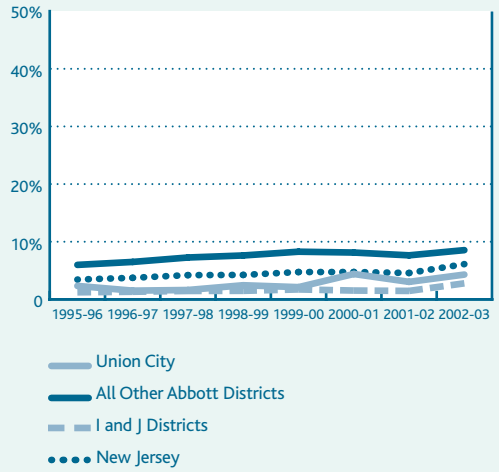
FIGURE | 3.31

Suspension Rate by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1995–96 to 2002–03



SOURCE | School Report Card, 1995-96 to 2002-03

elementary schools had an average of less than one incident from 1999–00 through 2001–02. Although an average of 1.7 incidents in 2002–03 is relatively low, it stands out against the district's positive track record. Actually, Union City tracked the state average very closely until that year. Elementary schools in all other Abbott districts averaged about 1.2 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 fewer than one-tenth of an incident per school during the same time period.

Figure 3.28 shows the number of Category A offenses in high schools between 1999–00 and 2002–03 by district grouping. Union City's high schools reported that none of these incidents occurred between 1999–00 through 2001–02 and three occurred in 2002–03. High schools in the other Abbott districts averaged 4.1 Category A incidents in 1999–00, rising to just over five incidents per school in 2001–02, and falling again to just under four in 2002–03. The high schools in the wealthiest districts appear to be the safest, averaging fewer than one Category A incident each year during the same time period.

Turning to the NCLB index of Category B incidents in the elementary schools, Figure 3.29 shows a trend that is similar to that seen in Figure 3.27 above. From 1999–00 through 2001–02, Union City elementary schools had an index at about the state average and far below the persistently dangerous threshold. In 2002–03, the index rose to 0.6, still below the threshold, but much higher than in previous years. In contrast, the average NCLB index in the other district groupings has been stable over the time period with the wealthiest districts the lowest, the state average slightly above that, and the other Abbott districts just above the others (ranging from 0.2 to 0.3).

Union City's high schools had fewer Category B incidents than any other district grouping between 1999–00 through 2001–02 (Figure 3.30). The NCLB index rose in 2002–03, bringing the district's index score to 0.85. In contrast, the other district groupings had about the same index rating 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 at 0.45.

The violence and vandalism trends suggest that something changed in Union City's schools in 2002–03. Given the criticisms of the reporting system we outlined above, it is possible that the district changed the way it reported violent incidents. Did the district receive training or did it merely begin abiding to the letter of the law? In response to this question, we learned that reporting practices had indeed improved with the change in the district's administration that year. The Union City Board of Education should not be punished for its honesty if better reporting explains the apparent rise in violent incidents. District leadership also reported that district and school staff employ the violence and vandalism incident data for uses that go well beyond required reporting. They are used to identify and refer children and youth for prevention, intervention, and postvention services; and to inform district programming.

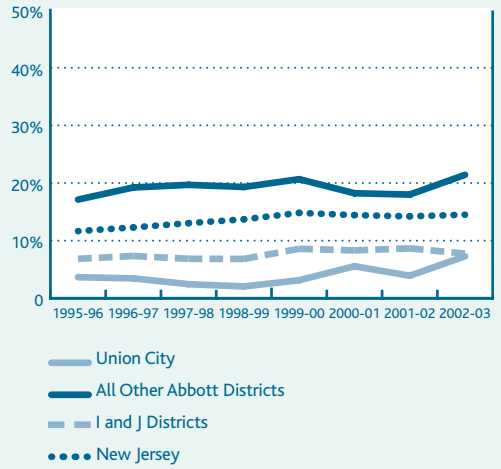
Suspension

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 3.31 and 3.32 show suspension rates in Union City 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. Schools serving students in the middle grades are included with the elementary schools.

Between 1995–96 and 2002–03, Union City's elementary suspension rates were lower than or the same as the state average and just above the average rates in the I and J districts. Suspension rates rose in all of the district groupings we examined. In 2002–03,

FIGURE 3.32

Suspension Rate by District Grouping: High Schools, 1995–96 to 2002–03



SOURCE School Report Card, 1995-96 to 2002-03

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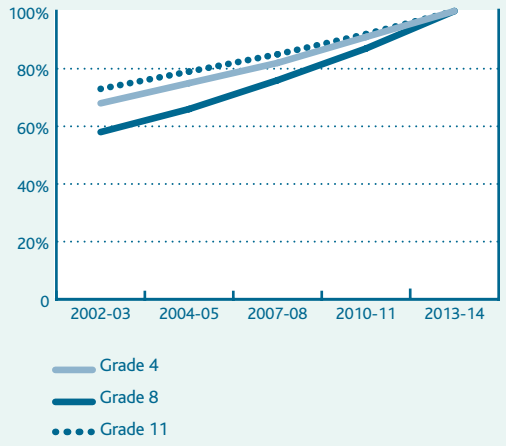
FIGURE | 3.33

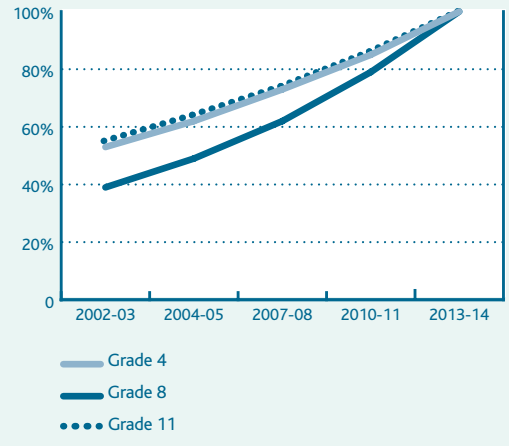
New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Language Arts Literacy



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

FIGURE | 3.34

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

the suspension rate in Union City was four percent (up from 2%); the state average was six percent (up from 3%); and the average for the other Abbott districts was nine percent (up from 6%).

Compared to the elementary schools, high school suspension rates were higher in all of the district groupings. Between 1995–96 and 2002–03, suspension rates also rose across the board. The Union City suspension rate was lower than all of the other district groupings until 2002–03 when it was about the same as the I and J average. In all years, the other Abbott districts had the highest suspension rates.

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 standard-

ized 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 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 known as 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 3.33 and 3.34 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:

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 official proficiency cut-points. *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,

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FIGURE | 3.35

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

respectively. First, we compare average scores over time for general education students in Union City, all other Abbotts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts in the state, and the state over all. Second, we show the percent of Union City's general education students scoring within the three proficiency categories over time. Third, we compare Union City's major student 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 among schools, we highlight the Union City schools that did well on each test and improved the most over time.

Grade 4: ESPA/NJASK 4. Nationally, reading achievement scores of students in Grade 4 have not improved since 1992. Math scores have improved by 10 percent between 1990 and 2003 nationwide, but only by four percent since 2000.[36] We turn now to examine the results of the language arts/literacy test given to Grade 4 New Jersey students

with particular interest in any 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.[37] 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.

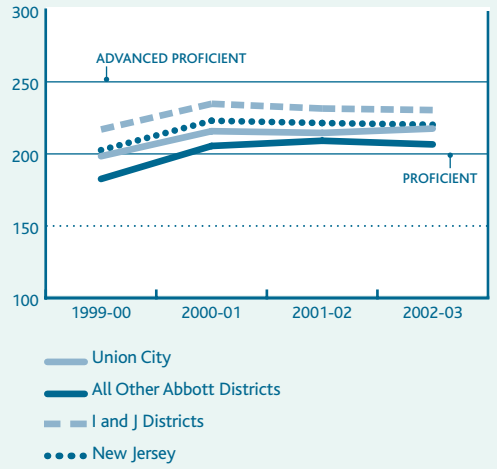
Given the potential changes to the instructional program, resources, teaching, and leadership we might expect to see student performance begin to improve over this period. Any positive effects of Whole School Reform have taken five or more years to occur in other school districts throughout the country. In this report, we have learned that the district's intensive early literacy programs began years before 1999–00, and that Abbott resources strengthened its reform efforts, so we have high expectations for positive academic outcomes at the fourth grade level.

Figure 3.36 displays the average scores in the language arts literacy between 1999–00 and 2002–03 for Union City schools, all other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state as a whole. This figure shows an 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 average score in the following two years, however. Union City language arts literacy (LAL) average scores of general education students improved from just below proficient (198) in 1999–00 to 218 in 2002–03: a 10 percent rise. The average language arts literacy score for Grade 4 general education students in the other Abbott districts was lower overall but rose at a similar pace: improving from 183 to 207, or by 13 percent. In 2002–03, Union City's fourth graders scored as well as the children in the wealthiest districts had in 1999–00 and almost as well as the state average in the same year.

Figure 3.37 shows the percent of Union City's Grade 4 students scoring in each of

FIGURE 3.36

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



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

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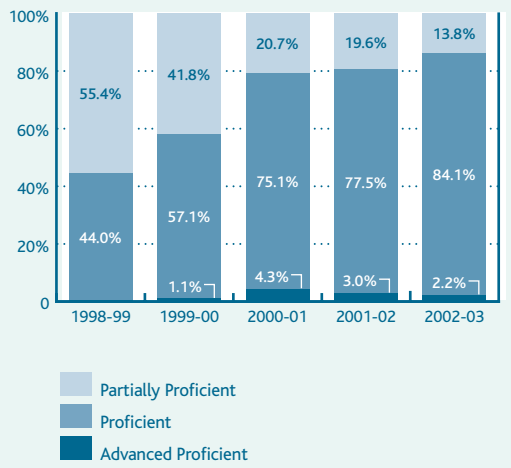
FIGURE 3.37

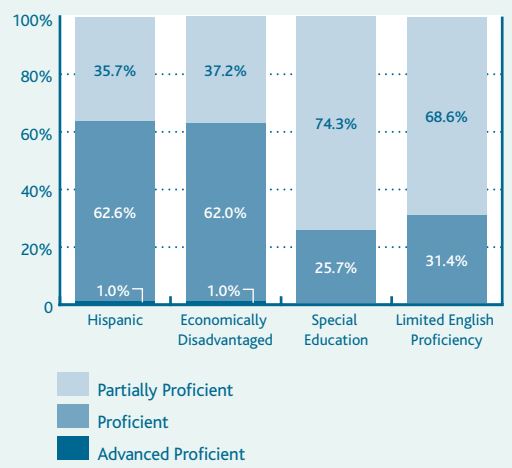
Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



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 3.38

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



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

the three proficiency categories. The most striking feature of the chart is the change in proportion of Grade 4 students scoring in the proficient category. In 1998–99, only 45 percent of the district's fourth graders met or exceeded state standards in language arts literacy, compared to 86 percent in 2002–03.

Next, we present the 2002–03 Grade 4 language arts literacy results for the demographic groups represented in the district (Figure 3.38).[38, 39] Reading from left to right, we see the percent scoring in the three proficiency ranges among Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, special education, and limited English-proficient student subgroups. (2002–03 general education results are shown in Figure 3.37 above.) About two thirds of the Hispanic and economically disadvantaged children in the district scored at least proficient on the Grade 4 language arts literacy exam in 2002–03. In contrast, a third of limited English proficient students met state standards in fourth grade language arts literacy as did one in four special education students in the district that year.

The Union City Schools have put a great deal of effort into reworking the elementary grades math curriculum—another effort that predates the Abbott remedies. These efforts continue and appear to show results: Grade 4 general eduaction math scores increased by nine percent between 1999–00 and 2002–03 from 208 to 226. The increase in Grade 4 math scores is larger in Union City than it is in any other district grouping we analyzed. Math scores in all other Abbotts and the state improved, though less so, and the scores in the wealthiest districts remained relatively stable.

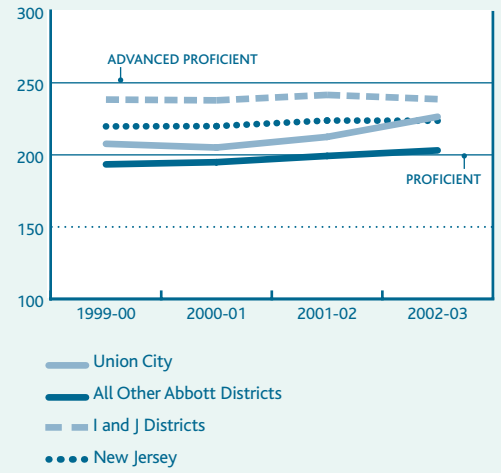
Figure 3.40 shows the educational progress that underlies Union City's increasing math scores. The chart shows clearly that fewer Grade 4 general education students scored in the partially proficient range over the years, while more and more children scored in the advanced proficient range. In 1998–99, about half (48%) met the state's math standards compared to 76 percent in 2002–03. About one in three (33%) students scored in the

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 proficiency 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, there were no low-performing schools in Union City in 2003–04. There were, however, four high-performing Abbott schools: Gilmore, Hudson, Jefferson, and Wilson Elementary Schools.

FIGURE 3.39

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

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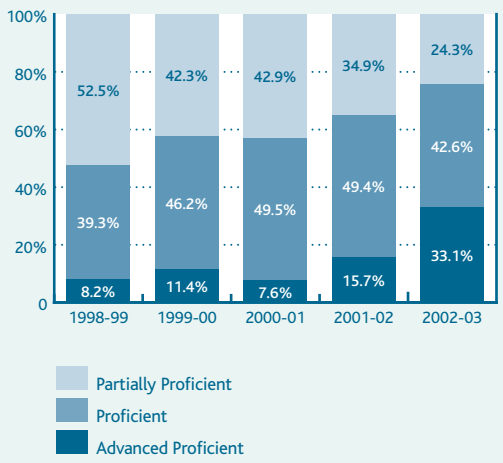
FIGURE 3.40

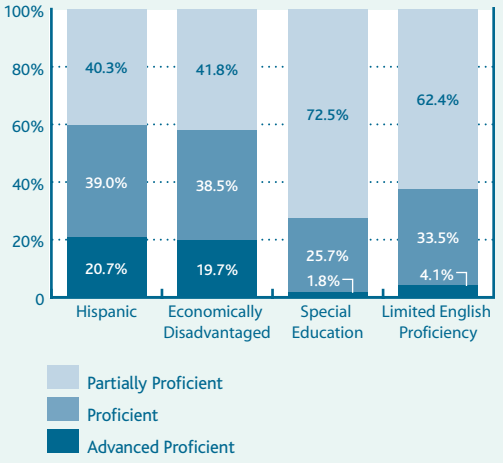
Grade 4 Math Proficiency: Union City, 1998–99 to 2002–03



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 3.41

Grade 4 Math Proficiency by Subgroup: Union City, 2002–03



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

advanced proficient range in 2002–03 compared to just eight percent in 1998–99.

Figure 3.41 compares the performance of Union City's various student groups on the 2002–03 Grade 4 math test. About three in five children who are Hispanic (60%), or economically disadvantaged (58%) scored proficient or better on the Grade 4 math test in 2002–03. (In both of these groups, about 20% scored in the advanced proficient range.) Among special education students, about one in four (28%) met state standards, and 38 percent of students with limited English proficiency scored at least proficient on the math test that year.

Grade 4: AYP. A school must meet many requirements to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under federal law. For the 2003–04 Grade 4 exam alone, schools had to meet 40 benchmarks to make AYP: 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

3.42 lists the Union City schools that did *not* make AYP as a result of student performance on the Grade 4 exam, the number of indicators on which it fell short, and the number of years it did not meet the standard.[40]

Two Union City elementary schools missed one or more AYP benchmarks on the Grade 4 test. Edison missed three AYP targets and Washington missed two. These two schools fell short of state targets for the second year in a row, placing them in the school improvement category under NCLB (see Figure 3.35). Parents with children in these schools may choose to send their children to another public school in the district or a charter school in Union City. Two schools that did not make AYP in 2002–03 earned hold status in 2003–04. Roosevelt Elementary was in school improvement, but met the standards on which it had previously fallen short. Similarly, Robert Waters Elementary corrected the shortfall that put the school in early warning status in 2002–03.

AYP results suggest that there may be important differences in test performance *among schools.* General education students in all of Union City's schools exceeded the No Child Left Behind proficiency threshold in Grade 4 literacy (68%). There was some variation around the district's 86 percent proficiency average in 2002–03.

Every Grade 4 general education student at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School scored at least proficient on the test that year. And more than 90 percent scored as well at Roosevelt, Jefferson, and Gilmore Elementary Schools.

Improvement over time is, of course, an important indicator that a school is moving in the right direction: Robert Waters and Hudson Elementary Schools showed the biggest gains in the average score of general education students on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

Union City schools also scored just as well across the board on the Grade 4 math test. Among general education students, all schools exceeded the NCLB threshold of 53 percent in math. At Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, every general education

FIGURE 3.42

Union City Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 4, 2003-04

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Roosevelt	0	3+
Thomas A Edison	3	2
Washington	1	2
Robert Waters	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.

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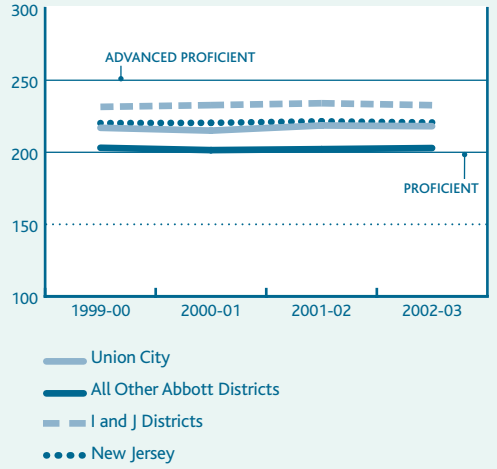
FIGURE 3.43

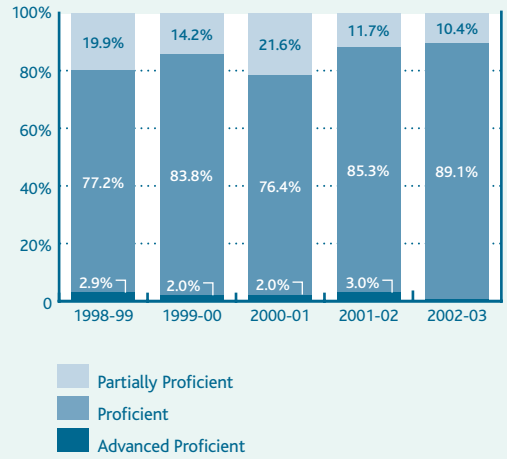
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Score by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.44

Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Union City, 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

student that took the Grade 4 math test scored proficient or better.

Robert Waters Elementary School stands out among the elementary schools as having improved the most between 1999–00 and 2002–03 with a 45-point gain in the average math score of general education students.

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.[41] In this section, we begin to explore if Abbott reforms have produced achievement results with middle school-age students. 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 Union City, the other Abbotts, and indeed throughout the state that are similar to those found in the nation as a whole.[43] 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.[42]

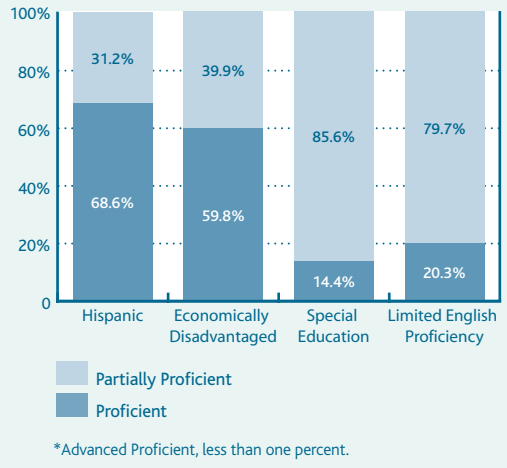
Grade 8 general education language arts literacy scores show little to no change in any of the district groupings we analyzed (Figure 3.43). Union City's eighth graders consistently scored between 216 and 219, well above the proficient level, in all four years.

Figure 3.44 shows the distribution of Union City general education scores on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test from 1998–99 to 2002–03. In most years, a large majority of the districts met state standards in language arts literacy. In 2002–03, 90 percent scored in the proficient range, slightly more than in previous years.

In 2002–03, a majority of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students scored at or above proficient on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test (Figure 3.45). About two out of three Hispanic students scored at least proficient, compared to about three out of five economically disadvantaged students. Fourteen percent of the district's eighth grade special education students and 20 percent

FIGURE 3.45

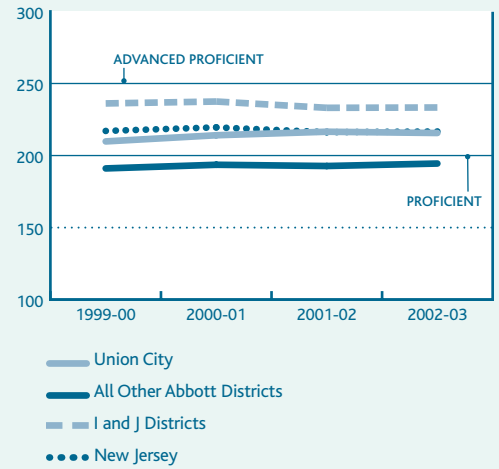
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup: Union City, 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.46

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

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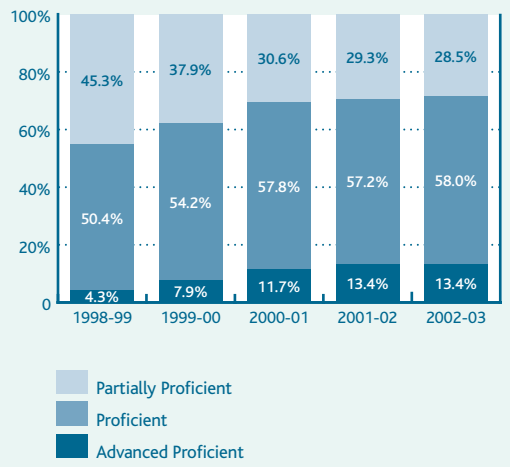
FIGURE 3.47

Grade 8 Math Proficiency: Union City, 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

of the students who were not fluent English speakers met the eighth grade language arts literacy standards that year.

Over the years, the district's general education eighth graders scored about the same on the state's math test, improving from 210 to 216. Their peers in the other Abbott districts have scored consistently lower, but also improved over the years. In 2002–03, eighth graders in the other Abbott districts scored six points below the proficiency threshold on average. Eighth grade students in the wealthiest districts actually scored a little worse on the math test in 2002–03 than they did in 1999–00; the statewide average stayed about the same over the years.

Figure 3.47 reveals that the slight rise in Union City's eighth grade math scores happened when fewer students scored in the partial proficient range and more scored proficient or higher. In 1998–99, 55 percent met the state's eighth grade math standards, compared to 71 percent in 2002–03.

There was some variation in the performance of different student groups on the Grade 8 math test in 2002–03 (Figure 3.48). Fifty-four percent of the Hispanic students met state standards, compared to 49 percent of the students who were economically disadvantaged. Fifteen percent of the special education students and 19 percent of the limited English proficient students scored at least proficient on the Grade 8 math test that year.

Grade 8: AYP. Two Union City schools missed one or more AYP benchmarks on the Grade 8 exam. Edison and Washington fell short on one AYP target each. The 2003–04 school year was the second year the two schools did not make AYP, placing them in the school improvement category under NCLB. Parents with children in these schools may choose to send their children to another public school in the district or a charter school in Union City. Three schools that did not make AYP in 2002–03 earned hold status in 2003–04: Roosevelt Elementary was in school improvement, but met the standards on which it had previously fallen short. Similarly, Robert Waters and Columbus Elementary

Schools corrected the shortfall that put the school in early warning status in 2002–03.

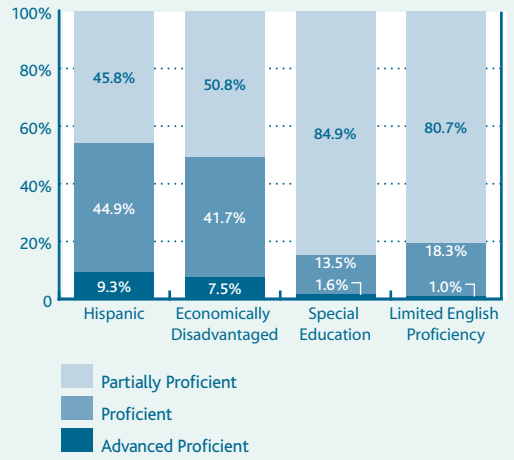
Performance on the 2002–03 Grade 8 tests did not vary a great deal among Union City schools. As in the Grade 4 test, general education students in all schools exceeded NCLB targets in language arts literacy and math. In language arts literacy, the highest performers were Robert Waters, Christopher Columbus, and Woodrow Wilson Elementary Schools.[44] In each of these schools, more than 90 percent of the Grade 8 general education students scored proficient or better. In math, the top performers were Thomas Edison Elementary and Christopher Columbus Schools: more than 80 percent of their general education students scored proficient or better that year.

Two schools showed eight-point gains in the average score on the Grade 8 language arts literacy between 1999–00 and 2002–03: Robert Waters and Roosevelt Elementary Schools. Roosevelt Elementary School showed the biggest gain in the average score on the Grade 8 math test during those years (31 points) followed by Thomas Edison Elementary School with a 12-point gain.

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 ongoing national study reveal little change in the reading or math scores of high school seniors over time. We suspect, along with many other education observers, that this lack of progress is the result of a relative lack of attention to high schools compared to elementary and middle schools. In this way, the Abbott reforms do not differ from standard educational practice across the state or indeed, nationally. As we discussed above, until recently, the Abbott remedies have provided less in the way of real instructional reforms at the middle or high school levels when compared to what has been available for younger children. We turn next to the results of the Grade 11 assessments with moderate expectations.

FIGURE 3.48

Grade 8 Math Proficiency by Subgroup: Union City, 2002–03



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

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FIGURE 3.49

Union City Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 8, 2003-04

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Roosevelt	0	3+
Thomas A Edison	1	2
Washington	1	2
Christopher Columbus	0	1*
Robert Waters	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 standards that it had missed in the previous year.

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 3.50 shows Union City high school students performing about the same as their peers in the other Abbott districts on the Grade 11 exam. While the scores of the district's general education 11th graders improved by about three percent (from 313 to 321), their peers' scores improved by less than one percent. Grade 11 students in Union City and all other Abbotts scored consistently lower than did students the same age in the wealthiest districts and throughout the state between 1997–98 and 2000–01. However, the 11th grade reading scores for both non-Abbott groups dropped slightly during this time period.

What trends were behind this slight rise in Union City's high school reading scores? Figure 3.51 shows that more high school juniors passed the Grade 11 reading test in 2000–01 (62%) than in 1997–98 (56%).

The high school language arts literacy results from the last two years tell a similar story: Grade 11 general education scores improved slightly in Union City. Eleventh graders in Union City and the other Abbott districts scored lower on language arts tests than did their peers in the wealthiest districts or statewide. However, under this new test, a greater portion of Union City and the other Abbott districts' 11th graders met state standards, with about 80 percent passing in Union City and 70 percent in the other Abbott districts. A slightly greater percentage of students in the I and J districts and the state passed the Grade 11 language arts exam in 2001–02 and 2002–03.

About one in three Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students in Union City met state standards on the 11th grade language arts literacy exam in 2002–03. That same

year, 16 percent of special education students and 18 percent of limited English proficiency students scored at least proficient on the exam.

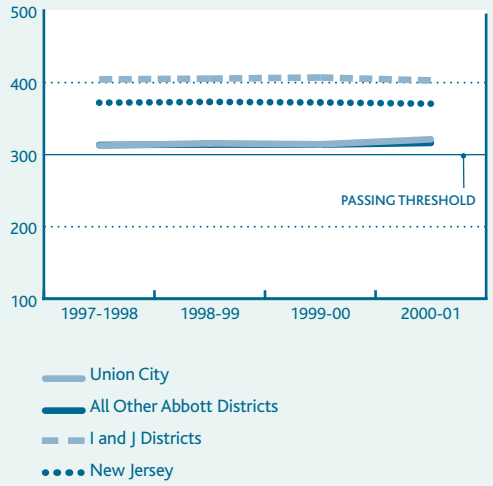
As with the high school reading and language arts literacy scores, we did not expect to find a change in Union City's high school math scores. The Union City 11th grade general education math scores improved a bit between 1997–98 and 1998–99, but fell in 2000–01, although the average scale score remained above the average of the other Abbott districts (Figure 3.55). Grade 11 math scores in other Abbott districts improved by four percent (320 to 334) by 2000–01.

Although a majority of Union City's high school juniors passed the state's math test in every year shown, the percent passing increased from 1997–98 (67%) to 1998–99 (74%), and decreased to 70 percent by 2000–01 (Figure 3.56).

In the test given to 11th grade students in later years, Union City's general education scores rose slightly above the average of the other Abbott districts. There was no change in

FIGURE 3.50

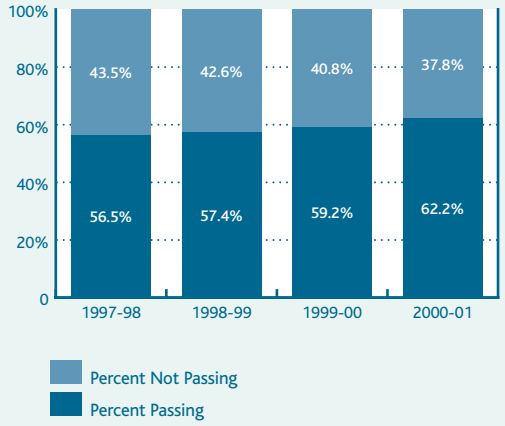
Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Average Score by District Grouping, 1997–98 to 2000–01



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

FIGURE 3.51

Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Proficiency: Union City, 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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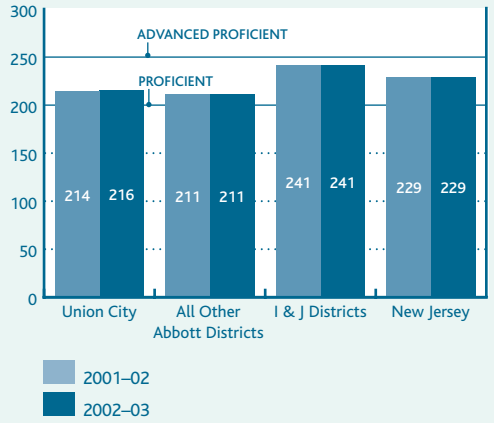
FIGURE 3.52

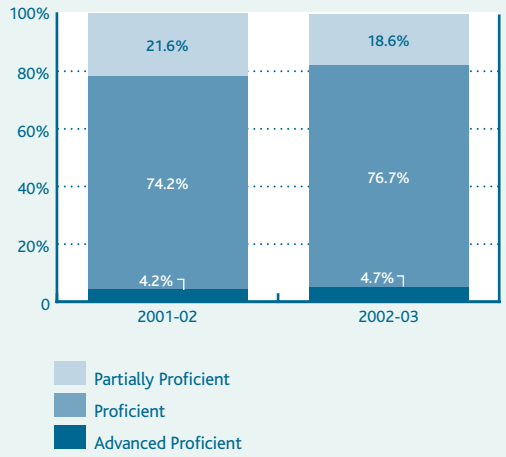
Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Average Score by District Grouping 2001–02 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.53

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



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

high school math scores (in either test) in the wealthiest districts or in the state as a whole. Fewer than half of the 11th graders in Union City or the other Abbotts achieved proficiency in 2001–02 and 2002–03.

The proficiency levels for the subgroups in Union City on the math exam are similar to those of the language arts literacy exam. In 2002–03, about one in three Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students scored proficient or better. About one in six (18%) limited English proficiency students met state standards compared to only four percent of students in special education programs.

Grade 11: AYP. Union City's two comprehensive high schools missed Grade 11 AYP benchmarks in 2003–04. This was the second year in which Emerson and Union Hill High Schools did not make AYP, placing them in the school improvement category under NCLB. 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 in Union

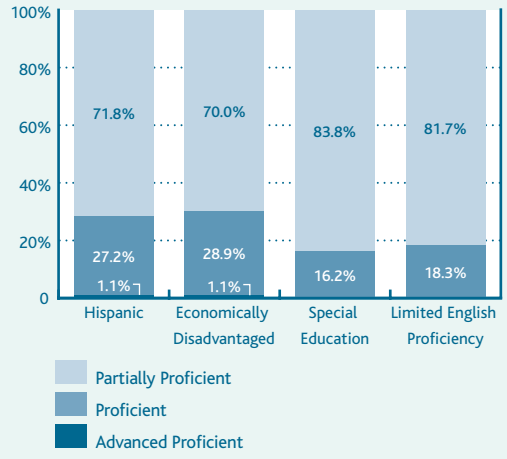
City. There are no other public or charter schools that serve high school-age students in Union City. NCLB enables parents in such circumstances to send their children outside of the district, but this provision of the law has not yet been used in New Jersey.

Performance on the Grade 11 test differed only a little between Union City's two high schools. The general education students in both schools outperformed NCLB targets in language arts in 2002–03 (73%), although a somewhat higher percentage scored proficient at Union Hill (86%) than at Emerson High School (78%). Fewer than half of the general education students in both high schools scored at least proficient in math, however. Union Hill's students improved from 2001–02 to 2002–03 with a four-point gain in the average score of general education students on both tests.

Other testing in the Union City schools. As a requirement of its federal Reading First grant, the Union City Board of Education administered the Terra Nova test to students in Kindergarten, and Grades 1 and 2.[45] Re-

FIGURE 3.54

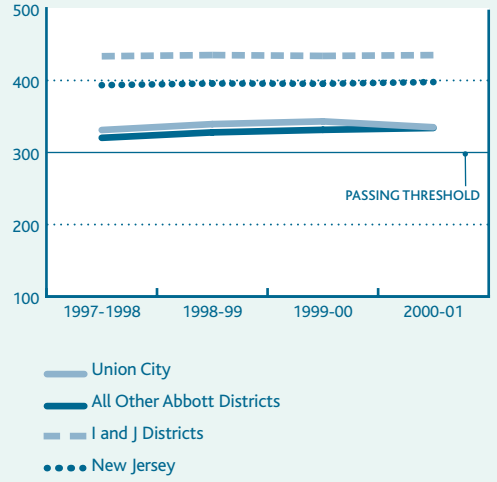
Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup: Union City, 2002–03



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

FIGURE 3.55

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

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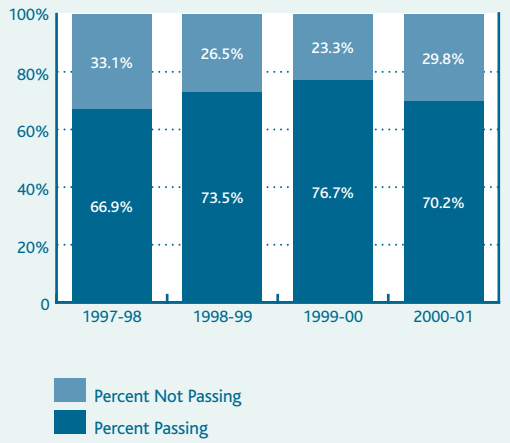
FIGURE 3.56

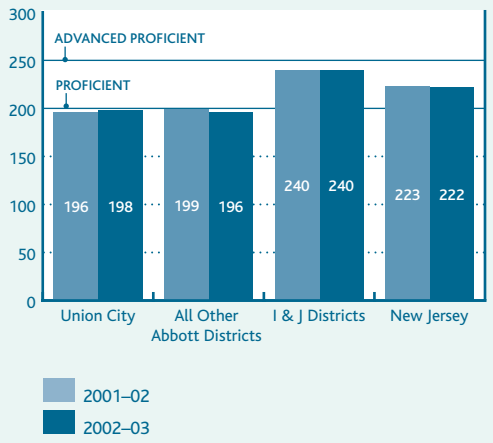
Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Proficiency: Union City, 1997–98 to 2000–01



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

FIGURE 3.57

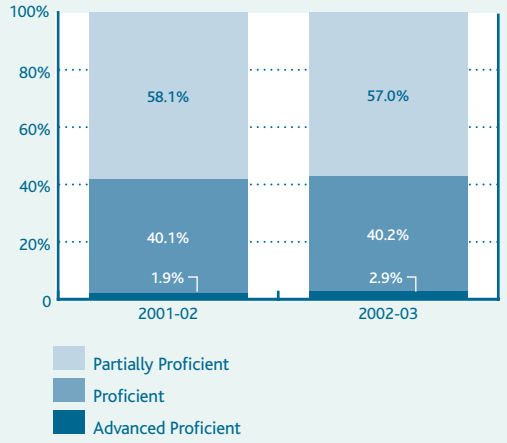
Grade 11 (HSPA) Math Average Score by District Grouping, 2001–02 to 2002–03



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 3.58

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



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

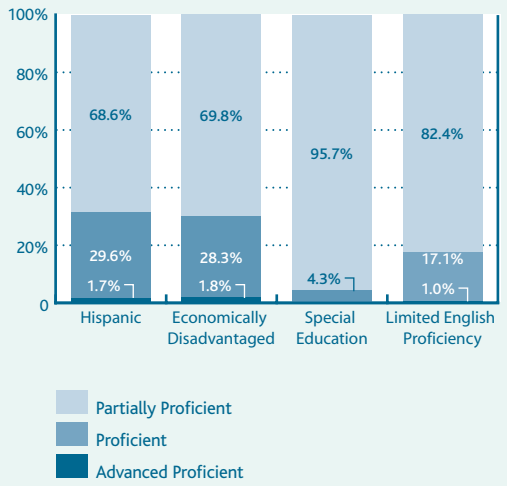
sults from the reading tests provide the best estimate available of how many children are reading on grade level in the early grades in Union City Board of Education. The percentage of Union City's general education students scoring above the national median on the reading test in Spring 2003 are shown by school and grade in Figure 3.61, with district averages across the bottom row. These findings show that Union City's children in the lower elementary grades compare extremely well with same-age children nationwide.

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, before 2003–04, neither Abbott nor Union City's own reforms truly addressed instructional programs in the

FIGURE 3.59

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



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

FIGURE 3.60

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

School	Number Standards Not Met	Years Not Making AYP
Emerson	1	2
Union Hill	1	2

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

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FIGURE 3.61

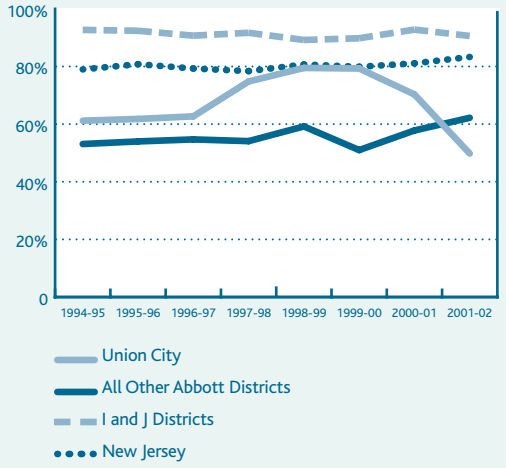
Percent Scoring Above National Median on TerraNova by Grade and School: Union City, 2002–03

	K	1	2
Edison	89	73	39
Gilmore	61	66	69
Hudson	81	86	74
Jefferson	79	35	32
Mrs. P's	100	–	–
Roosevelt	60	58	46
UCDC I	100	–	–
UCDC II	94	–	–
Washington	100	72	55
Robert Waters	97	83	42
Woodrow Wilson	–	100	81
District	84	72	53

SOURCE | Source: Union City Board of Education, 2002-03

FIGURE 3.62

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



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

high schools, so we approach these findings with moderate 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.[46] 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 practices in that year. Like any other estimate we could use, 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.[47]

Below, we use the CPI to estimate graduation rates for Union City, all other Abbott districts, the wealthiest districts, and the state from 1994–95 to 2001–02. We estimate that 61 percent of the 9th graders who entered in 1990–91 graduated from Union City high schools in 1994–95. The Union City graduation rate rose between 1995–96 and 1998–99 and reached the state average of 79 percent in 1999–00. By our estimation, however, the Union City graduation rate has steadily and rapidly declined to a low of 50 percent in 2001–02. Part of this decrease occurred as a result of a large increase in Grade 9 enrollment in 2001–02. The decrease also reflects a lower rate of promotion from grade to grade in the two district high schools that year. Our graduation estimates for Union Hill and Emerson have differed widely over the years. In 2001–02, however, both schools graduated only about 50 percent of their students.

On average, our estimates suggest that high schools across the state have graduated about 80 percent of their students and the wealthiest districts have graduated about 90 percent. The other Abbott districts graduated about 53 percent of their students in 1994–95 and about 62 percent in 2001–02. If the CPI is a reasonable estimate, these findings reveal troubling news for high schools in Union City and the other Abbott districts.

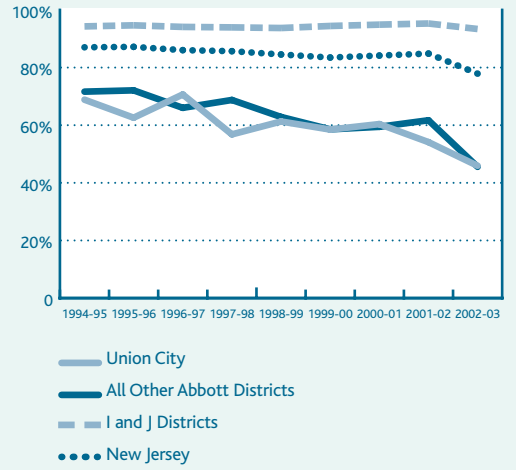
Routes to Graduation

Next, we consider how Union City's high school seniors showed their readiness to graduate. In New Jersey, students can graduate by passing the traditional High School Proficiency Assessment or the alternative Special Review Assessment (SRA).

High school achievement tests are intended to show that students have mastered the content and skills outlined in New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. Prior to 2001–02, it was assumed that most general education students who graduate had shown that they had mastered the appropriate content by passing the traditional exam. We provide information below about how students

FIGURE 3.63

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



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

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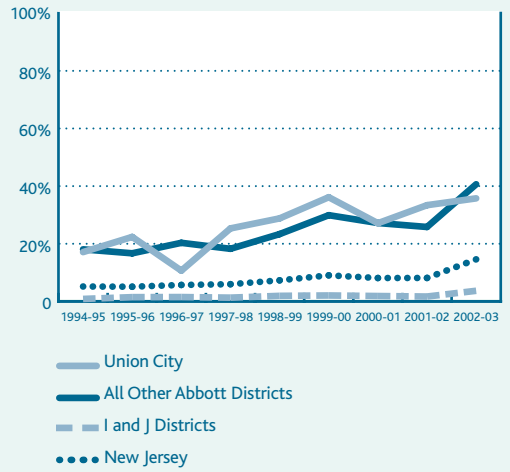
FIGURE | 3.64

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



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

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 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.

are showing their readiness to graduate and whether the change in state policy described above had a different effect on Union City and other Abbott districts than it did on other districts in the state.

People disagree about alternative routes to graduation like the SRA. Critics argue that students must show that they have mastered curriculum standards to graduate from high school. Supporters praise New Jersey's SRA and argue that states with a single high stakes graduation test have a strong incentive to push 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.

The figures show the percent of students graduating via the traditional and alternative exams respectively (Figures 3.63 and 3.64). In 1994–95 through 2002–03, the wealthiest districts consistently had the highest percentage of students using the traditional route to graduation (HSPA), followed by the state

overall. Union City and all other Abbott districts closely track one another and have had a lower percentage of their students graduating by passing the traditional exam throughout the same time period. All four district groupings show a marked drop-off after 2001–02. In Union City and the other Abbott districts, less than half of the class of 2002–03 graduated by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam.

Figure 3.64 is a mirror image of Figure 3.63, suggesting that most students who did not graduate by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam had indeed taken the alternative SRA.

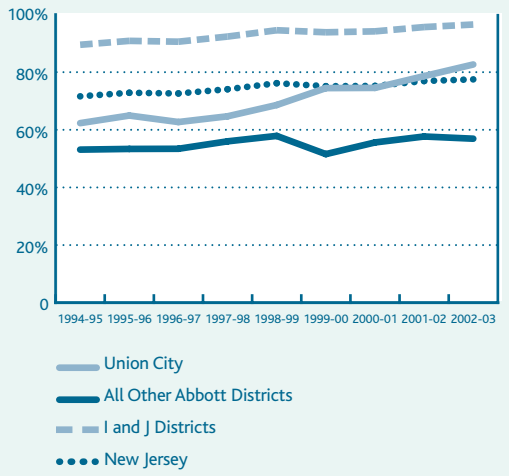
College Entrance Exams

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 and 80 percent of the most competitive colleges in the country still require SAT scores (the remaining 44 percent accept them on an optional basis). We examine SAT participation, below, as an indicator that Union City's high school seniors have been seriously planning to pursue a four-year college degree.

Through its Road to College program, Union City's public schools have encouraged high school students to pursue college and helped them to prepare stronger applications (see Student and Family Supports for a description). We expected to see strong SAT participation in Union City, especially since the introduction of this program and our findings matched our expectations. Between 1994–95 and 2002–03, more Union City high school seniors took the SAT with each passing year (Figure 3.65). In 1994–95, 62 percent took the test; and in 1999–00 when the program was introduced, 75 percent took the test, the same percentage as the average of all school districts across the state. By 2002–03, Union City surpassed the state average, with 83 percent taking the SAT. SAT test-taking in the other Abbott districts did not show a similar trend: 53 percent took the test in 1994–95 and 57 percent did so in 2002–03. Almost all seniors in the wealthiest districts in the state

FIGURE 3.65

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



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

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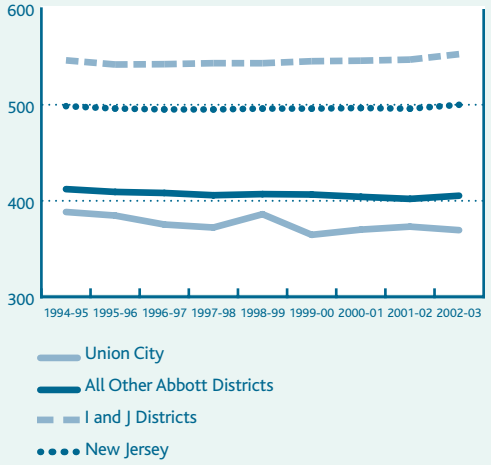
FIGURE | 3.66

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



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

consistently take 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. 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 how well students—from Union City, the other Abbott districts, the I and J districts, and the state—have done on the verbal (Figure 3.66) and math (Figure 3.67) sections of the SAT between 1994–95 and 2002–03.

Figure 3.66 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. Union City'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 most successful suburbs.

Students across the state scored higher on the SAT math than on the verbal (Figure 3.67). In the other Abbott districts and throughout the state, scores remained about the same between 1994–95 and 2002–03. Average math scores in Union City were 415 in 1994–95 and went down to 397 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 Union City, including standards-based reform and student and family supports. 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 with specific stan-

dards or requirements under Abbott or other state or federal law.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

- Research shows that children in the early elementary grades benefit from smaller class sizes. Abbott funding has had some immediate, clear effects on conditions in Union City schools: average class sizes are smaller than the Abbott standard in most grades. Limited classroom space hampered the district's progress in Grade 6, however, where class sizes were larger than the Abbott standard.
- Union City has about 851 special needs students ages six to 21. Almost half of these students go to school in "very inclusionary" settings (spending 80% or more of their day with the general education population) compared to 27 percent in the other Abbott districts and 42 percent in the state overall.
- K-12 curriculum development and review procedures are thorough and continuous. Content-specific curriculum committees made up of district staff and teachers develop and review the district's instructional programs on a staggered, five year cycle to ensure that they are current and aligned with the state's curriculum standards.
- Union City's high schools offer a variety of honors and advanced placement courses to make students more competitive college applicants and prepare them for college. Honors courses are offered in Math, English, History, and the sciences. Seniors can take AP courses for college credit in American History, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, English Literature, Spanish Language, and Spanish Literature. We compared Union City's honors and AP course offerings to those in Tenafly, an "I" district several miles away. Union City offers 21 honors and advanced placement courses compared to Tenafly's 31.

Student and Family Supports

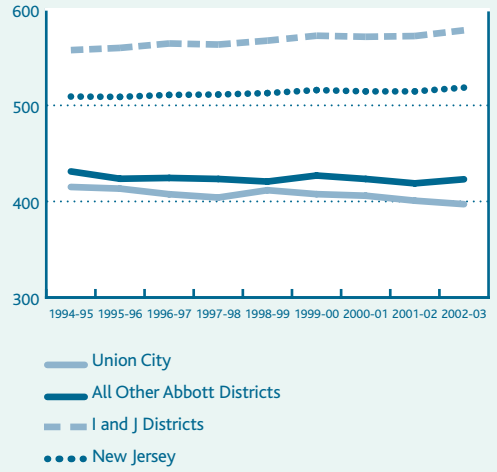
- Every school in the district has a Support Services Task Force, that helps students who have health, mental health, academic, or behavioral problems. The task force coordinates support services at school and makes referrals to community-based agencies. A districtwide task force coordinates the schoolwide support teams and monitors student progress.

K-12 Teacher Qualifications and Supports

- Union City faculty attendance improved between 1994–95 and 2002–03. At 97 percent in 2002–03, the faculty attendance rate was at about the same level as the wealthiest suburban districts.
- Union City did better than other Abbott districts, the state average, and even the most successful suburban districts in the state in the percent of elementary school teachers who were highly qualified under the federal defini-

FIGURE 3.67

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



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

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FIGURE 3.68

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

Benchmark	Status
Kindergarten-Grade 3 maximum class size: 21	Met
Grades 4 and 5 maximum class size: 23	Met
Grades 6 through 12 maximum class size: 24	Not Met
Abbott districts have funding parity with the I & J districts	Met
Student to computer ratio is 5 to 1	Met
2003-04 Grade 4 Achievement Tests*: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 68% percent score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 53% score at least proficient in math.	Met in: Roosevelt School Robert Waters School
2003-04 Grade 8 Achievement Tests: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 58% score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 39% score at least proficient in math.	Met in: Roosevelt School Christopher Columbus School Robert Waters School
2003-04 Grade 11 Achievement Tests: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 73% score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 55% score at least proficient in math.	Not Met

* 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 analyzed through 2002-03.

tion. Almost all of the district's high school teachers were also highly qualified in *one* or *all* of the subjects they teach, and almost all *classes* are taught by these highly qualified teachers.

- The Union City Board of Education provides a variety of opportunities for teacher professional development throughout the year. Development opportunities are ongoing: teachers take part in mandatory, full-day activities throughout the year. Voluntary activities are available on Super Saturdays, and during the summer. The district uses methods that stretch its professional development budget and capitalize on the expertise of more experienced teachers.
- School and district administrators have many opportunities for professional development including, after-school workshops, administrative retreats, and conferences.

K-12 Budget

- Property wealth is an important indicator of local capacity to support its public services including education. In 2003, New Jersey's wealthiest suburbs had more than four times more property wealth per student than Union City. That same year, the state average was triple that of Union City.
- At $10,933 per student, Union City had as much as the most successful suburban districts to support general education in 2003–04 as it has since Abbott parity funding began.

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- In 2003–04, Union City received $819 per student in supplemental program aid to support the second half-day of Kindergarten and other programs and services to meet the needs of students and families. This figure is lower than the $2,017 that the other Abbott districts received because Union City did not request any Additional Abbott Aid from the state.
- Over the years, the district has received grant funds to support technology initiatives and student services. According to the district, these grants make up a small portion of the budget.

K-12 Student Outcomes

- Elementary school attendance rates were about the same as the wealthiest districts in the state, while high school attendance was consistently better than in the other Abbott districts.
- Union City compared poorly with the state on two indicators of child and youth well-being. The teen birth rate remained steady, but was almost double the state average. The number of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases more than doubled between 1998 and 2002. 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."
- None of Union City's schools qualify as persistently dangerous under federal law.
- At four percent, the district's 2002–03 elementary school suspension rate was just above the average rates in the wealthiest suburbs.
- At seven percent, Union City's 2002–03 high school suspension rate was about the same as the wealthiest suburbs on average. The high school suspension rate rose from about four percent in 1995–96.
- Union City's general education fourth graders made gains in language arts literacy and math, and scored well above the proficiency threshold between 1999–00 and 2002–03. Union City's general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores in many districts throughout the state.
- On average, language arts and math achievement scores in Grades 8 and 11 have stayed at or slightly above the proficiency threshold between 2000 and 2003. About 90 percent of eighth graders scored proficient on language arts literacy in 2002–03. Abbott has truly yet to provide for students in middle and high school.
- In New Jersey, there was no official graduation data until recently. In this report, we estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index. Our estimates suggest that half of Union City's class of 2001–02 graduated from school. The district's promotion index declined from a high of 61 percent seven years earlier. By this measure, high schools across the state have graduated about 80 percent of

3 K-12 Education

their students and the wealthiest suburbs have graduated about 90 percent.

- Less than half of the class of 2002–03 in Union City graduated by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam (HSPA). Most of the remaining graduates that year took the alternative test (SRA).
- In 2002–03, Union City surpassed the state average, with 83 percent of high school seniors taking the SAT. Union City student performance on the verbal and math tests has remained below the state average between 1994–95 and 2002–03.

Endnotes

16. The state did not require middle and high schools to adopt Whole School Reform models, because there was not sufficient evidence of their effectiveness at those grade levels. The state did recommend the following models, however, Success For All (Preschool to Grade 7), 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.

17. We describe models used in Union City 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).

18. 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.

19. Union City 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.

20. The Maculaitis Assessment of Competencies II (MAC) measures English language proficiency in non-native speakers of English in grades K-12. It can be used for identifying students who are eligible for English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education services; and for placement, achievement, and program evaluation purposes.

Endnotes

21. The English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) is designed to assess English language proficiency in academic language, as well as in social language. It consists of assessments of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with a composite score of listening and reading to indicate a level of comprehension as required by No Child Left Behind. The ELDA assesses students in the following grade clusters: K-2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.

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

23. The New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program, in 45 schools statewide, helps students address problems in their lives so that they can succeed in school and gain skills for college or work. Students participate in the program by referral from school staff, representatives of the juvenile justice system, family or foster family members, or mental health service providers. Typical school-based programs include family, substance abuse, and employment counseling; health care; pregnancy prevention; after-school tutoring and computer literacy classes for students and their families; and after-school recreation programs. The program is funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services through a competitive application process.

24. 21st Century Community Learning Centers are centers that offer academic, artistic, and cultural opportunities to students and their families when school is not in session. The goal of the program is to supplement education in low-performing schools in high-poverty areas. Centers must offer literacy and other educational services to the families of the participating students. Funding for these centers is provided by the U.S. Department of Education, through a highly competitive application process.

25. The purpose of the Even Start Family Literacy Program is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities for families. This is accomplished by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy, adult basic education, and parenting education into a single unified program. Even Start is implemented nationally through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources, creating a new range of services for children, families and adults.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. The figures shown in the Figure (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.

29. 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 by the total school enrollment in each district grouping.

30. 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.

31. 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).

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Endnotes

32. 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.

33. 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.

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

35. 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.

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

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

38. 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.

39. 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.

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

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

42. 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.

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

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

45. The Terra Nova is a nationally normed test that is aligned to the state's CCCS. The Complete Battery is used in Kindergarten; the Basic Multiple Assessments with Plus, Second Edition (also known as the California Achievement Test) is used in Grades 1 and 2. A Spanish version is also administered, but the results presented here are for the English-language version.

46. 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, was being piloted in 11 districts. If adequate funding is secured, it is expected to roll out to the state level in one to two years.

47. The CPI estimate may be less accurate in the Abbott districts than in the other district groupings because Abbott districts have higher mobility rates.

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; 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. 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 Union City. Understanding the successes and challenges encountered to date will help to inform and improve the district's second-round efforts.

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;
- 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 that would accommodate children's needs and improved instructional practices. The development of the first-round LRFPs did not go very smoothly for a number of reasons. Most districts did not have time to assess their current educational programs. They also did not have the expertise to translate educational practices into new building designs. As directed by the Supreme Court, the New Jersey Department of Education set standards for the numbers and sizes of educational spaces plus office and other noninstructional spaces. These standards provided very little flexibility for districts to forward innovative designs. The state treated these facilities efficiency standards (FES) as strict guidelines, rather than the minimum standards the Supreme Court intended. In sum, the time frame, lack of expertise, and rigid standards worked together to undermine the quality of many district LRFPs.

The Union City Board of Education contracted with Rivardo, Schnitzer, and Capazzi, an architectural/planning firm to help them develop their first-round LRFP following the guidelines issued by the state. The firm also served as advisors to the district's Facilities Advisory Board (See description in Leadership, below).

Figure 4.1 summarizes the school construction projects outlined in Union City's first-round LRFP. Union City's first-round LRFP contained 18 projects. In the initial plan, there were to be 11 new schools constructed, one existing school rehabilitated, and six schools to be converted from another use.

The LRFP reflects whether and how the district used the opportunity to not only meet Abbott requirements, but also incorporate good educational practices. In addition to constructing new school buildings, the district has decided to change the grade structures in existing elementary schools from preschool to Grade 8 to preschool to Grade 5;

FIGURE 4.1

Union City's First-Round Facilities Plan Overview

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

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

4 School Facilities Construction

another middle school will be built to accommodate students in Grades 6 through 8.

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.

LRFP guidelines required that districts assess their preschool facilities for educational adequacy. The same assessment was not required for facilities run by private preschool providers. Across the Abbott districts, 70 percent of preschoolers attend private provider programs. In Union City, 93 percent attend preschool in 37 other private provider and Head Start program locations. 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 Union City, and indeed in most districts, we do not know if these buildings are adequate.

Our community reviewers noted, however, that all private providers had to meet requirements set out by the New Jersey Department of Human Services prior to becoming part of the Abbott preschool program, with its more demanding space and facilities requirements.

Under the law, private preschool 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 Union City, only nine percent own their buildings.[48] One private provider-owned building in Union City was renovated in 2000–01 under the district's LRFP. To date, it is the only provider-owned building that has been renovated in the state.

The district's plan is to eventually bring all four-year-olds into district-run programs; three-year olds will remain in private pro-

vider programs. The 1999 LRFP also outlines a plan for a new Early Childhood Center to serve the increasing number of young children in the district.

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 specialist and architect and recommend the plan for adoption by the school board. The Education Law Center has recommended that FABs continue to meet until plans are fully implemented to seek input and guide the districtwide planning, design, and construction of school facilities.

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

Community and Other Input

In Union City, the district has strived to keep the public informed and engaged throughout the facilities planning process. Jose Marti Middle School, which opened in September 2004, is one example of this. In addition to the actual school, the Marti complex has a health center and a public library for community use. The North Hudson Community Action Corporation assisted in the development of the health-screening program at the health center and the library board was involved in planning the public library.

The Mayor conducted meetings in neighborhoods where projects are developing to

The LRFP process was a unique chance to assess existing schools and plan to build better ones that would accommodate children's needs and improved instructional practice.

4 School Facilities Construction

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.

talk with residents and businesses about the potential impact of the school construction. Meeting participants can raise any issues they have.

In assessing Union City's educational needs, the district also received input from the school board. The district's Early Childhood Education Advisory Council provided recommendations for the design of the new Early Childhood Center and members of the council also usually attend bimonthly design meetings with the NJSCC.

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.[49,50]

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 is outlined in the text box on the facing 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

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 Union City's Current Projects

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

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

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.

The Union City Board of Education has made great progress with their facilities projects. Figure 4.2 lists current projects. Figure 4.3 shows that, as of September 2004, eight (44%) of Union City's 18 projects are already in the pipeline toward completion: two (11%) are in predevelopment, five (28%) are in design, none are in construction, and one (6%) has been completed. Out of 532 planned projects across all Abbott 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.

Union City is one of the few Abbott districts that has completed any buildings.[51] The Jose Marti Middle School opened in September 2004. Architects have been identified for three other Abbott school projects, including two new elementary schools and an Early Childhood Center. Construction is expected to begin in early 2005.

Union City was one of six districts in the state awarded a Demonstration Project. Districts submitted proposals to the SCC in 2003–04 to build demonstration projects, community schools coordinated with citywide redevelopment efforts. Union City's demonstration project will be a new high school to replace Emerson High School and an athletic complex at the site of Roosevelt Stadium.

Union City has also been designated by the New Jersey Department of Education as a School Renaissance Zone. The focus of this program, led by the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the New Jersey Department of Education, is on encouraging private investment in the neighborhoods around new schools. A new arts magnet school, located in downtown Union City will be developed as part of the city's Renaissance Zone. The school will include a theater that will be used for performances by both the school and a local theater group.

4 School Facilities Construction

Aside from community input, another remarkable feature of Union City's school facilities construction planning is the close involvement and support of Union City's Mayor and City Council. This is especially positive, given the squabbles that have occurred between the district offices and city halls in some cities, especially over site acquisition. In Union City, the Mayor has helped the district find suitable land sites, particularly those that will also provide a needed boost to neighborhoods. The site of the new Renaissance Zone is an example of this.

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.

In Union City, the Columbus and Gilmore projects were initially delayed because the New Jersey Historical Preservation Society wanted these buildings to be renovated instead of demolished due to their historical/landmark status. This issue was resolved in April 2004 when an agreement was made to remove and preserve certain parts of those buildings. These include: the terracotta arches at Columbus and the War Memorial at Gilmore. The eagle facade at Roosevelt Stadium will also be preserved.

FIGURE 4.3

Status of Facilities Projects: Union City & All Other Abbott Districts*

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

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

* As of September 2004

4 School Facilities Construction

The Status of School Facilities Construction: A Summary

We conclude this section with an overview of key findings about school facilities construction in Union City: both the progress that the district has made and the challenges that still remain.

- Union City was the only district in New Jersey to renovate a community provider-owned building under its first-round Long Range Facilities Plan.
- Union City is one of the few Abbott districts that has any completed school buildings and has made good progress in getting projects through the pipeline.
- At least part of the district's success with school facilities construction can be credited to the strong, close involvement and support of the Mayor and city council, particularly around finding suitable land sites.
- Union City was one of six districts awarded a Demonstration Project: a new school to replace Emerson High School and an athletic complex at the site of Roosevelt Stadium.
- Through its designation as a School Renaissance Zone, Union City will also have a new magnet school.
- Two school projects (Columbus and Gilmore) were initially delayed because the state wanted the existing buildings to be renovated instead of demolished due to their historical landmark status. This issue was resolved when an agreement was made to remove and preserve certain parts of those buildings.

4 School Facilities Construction

Endnotes

48. This data was collected by the New Jersey Department of Education from 2003–04 provider budgets. This figure reflects the 35 Union City providers who responded to this specific question.

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

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

51. Veterans' Memorial Elementary School, a project started and funded by the district before the state provided full-funding for Abbott School Construction, also opened in September 2003.

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

↗ College Entrance
- SAT participation
- Verbal and math mean scores

School Facilities Construction

Healthy, Safe and Educationally Adequate Schools

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

↗ **LRFP approval status**
↗ **Number and type of planned projects**
↗ **Process of development**

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

↗ **Plans to upgrade preschool facilities**
↗ Status of projects (complete, construction, design, predevelopment, not yet submitted)
↗ Estimated completion dates
↗ **Cooperation with municipal partners**
↗ **Community input**
↗ **Barriers to progress**

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

↗ **Facilities Advisory Board**
- Representation of stakeholder groups
- **Frequency of meeting (beyond LRFP submission)**
- Involvement in plan development
- Transparency to public
- Other activities

District and Community Reviewer Letters

UNION CITY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
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STANLEY SANGER
SUPERINTENDENT
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201.348.5851 • FAX 201.330.1736

March 17th, 2005

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

Re: Union City Public Schools 2004 State Standardized Test Scores

Dear Dr. Applewhite-Coney:

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

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

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

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

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

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

District and Community Reviewer Letters

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

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

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

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

Sincerely yours,

Stanley Sanger
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: D. Sciarra
L. Hirsch

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 Figures and charts; another Appendix contains a detailed treatment of data sources and definitions of terms used in the Figures and charts.

Interviews. We conducted semi-structured interviews with district and school staff in each of the four pilot districts.[52] 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.

Endnotes

52. Copies of interview protocols are available from the Education Law Center upon request.

Data Sources and Definitions

1. The Community and Students

Figure 1.1 Conditions of Living and Learning in Union City

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 Union City

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 Union City Public Schools, 2003–04.

Figure 1.3 Languages Spoken by English Language Learners

SOURCE: Union City Board of Education, Bilingual Education Department, 2003–04 Home Language Report.

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

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.

Data Sources and Definitions

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: Union City Board of Education, Early Childhood Department, 2004–05

Figure 2.7 Preschool Teacher Educational Attainment

SOURCE: Union City 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 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 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 have two years teaching experience in an early childhood setting are also certified to teach in a preschool setting through a "grandfather clause" in the regulations.

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

Figure 2.9 Average Preschool Teacher Years as a Lead Teacher

Average years as a lead teacher. The average number of years a teacher has been qualified to direct the classroom.

SOURCE: Union City 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, UNION CITY 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.

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.

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3. K-12 Education

Figure 3.1 Union City Schools, Grade Structure, and Enrollment

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

Figure 3.2 Total Instructional Time

Total instructional time. The amount of time per day students are engaged in instructional activities.

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

Figure 3.3 Average Class Size by Grade

Figure 3.4 Elementary School Average Class Size

Figure 3.6 High School Average Class Size

Figure 3.9 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 3.5 Elementary School Enrollment

Figure 3.7 High School Enrollment

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

Figure 3.8 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 3.10 Cumulative Percent Change in Kindergarten Enrollment

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

Figure 3.11 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.

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Figure 3.12 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 3.13 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 3.14 Highly Qualified Teachers: Elementary Schools

Figure 3.15 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 3.16 Percent of Schools with Abbott Required Staff 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 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 Tables, 2002–03 and 2003–04.

Figure 3.17 Average Property Value per Student

Figure 3.18 Average Equalized Tax Rate

Figure 3.19 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 3.20 General Education Funding by Source

Figure 3.21 Per Student General Education Funding

Figure 3.22 Per Student Supplemental Program Aid by Source

Figure 3.23 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 (CCS), Supplemental CCS,

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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 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 3.24 Student Attendance: Elementary Schools

Figure 3.25 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 3.26 Child and Youth Well-Being Indicators

Child death rate. The number of deaths to children between ages 1 and 14, from all causes, per 1,000 children in this age range.

Teen death rate. The number of deaths from accidents, homicides, and suicides to teens between ages 15 and 19, per 1,000 teens in this age group.

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.

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.

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

Figure 3.27 Category A Offenses: Elementary Schools

Figure 3.28 Category A Offenses: High Schools

Figure 3.29 NCLB (Category B) Index: Elementary Schools

Figure 3.30 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 3.31 Suspension Rate: Elementary Schools

Figure 3.32 Suspension Rate: 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 3.33 New Jersey's Adequate Yearly Progress Targets for Language Arts Literacy

Figure 3.34 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 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.

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Figure 3.35 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 3.36 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Average Score

Figure 3.39 Grade 4 Math Average Score

Figure 3.43 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Average Score

Figure 3.46 Grade 8 Math Average Score

Figure 3.50 Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Average Score

Figure 3.52 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Average Score

Figure 3.55 Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Average Score

Figure 3.57 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.

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Figure 3.37 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.40 Grade 4 Math Proficiency

Figure 3.45 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.47 Grade 8 Math Proficiency

Figure 3.51 Grade 11 (HSPT) Reading Proficiency

Figure 3.53 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency

Figure 3.56 Grade 11 (HSPT) Math Proficiency

Figure 3.58 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 3.38 Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.41 Grade 4 Math Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.45 Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.48 Grade 8 Math Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.54 Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency by Subgroup

Figure 3.59 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

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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 3.42 Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 4

Figure 3.49 Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: Grade 8

Figure 3.60 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 3.61 Percent Scoring Above National Median on TerraNova

TerraNova. A standardized test used to assess performance in Kindergarten through Grade 2.

SOURCE: Union City Public Schools, 2003.

Figure 3.62 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 3.63 Graduation by Traditional (HSPA/HSPT) Grade 11 Exam

Figure 3.64 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 3.65 SAT Participation

Figure 3.66 SAT Verbal Average Score

Figure 3.67 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 Union City'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 Union City'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: Union City 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.

Glossary

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 while 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 while 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 families may

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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

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school calendar days, a program 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

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government, 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 primary purpose is to help improve teaching and learning by participating in program planning

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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.

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

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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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Erain Applewhite-Coney is co-director of the Abbott Indicators Project at the Education Law Center (ELC) in Newark, New Jersey. As a licensed psychologist and certified school psychologist, Dr. Applewhite-Coney has worked in various capacities within schools, including counseling, teacher and parent consultation, assessment, and work in the implementation of prevention programs. In addition, she has provided consultation to school faculty and administration to assist them with the process of accreditation and strategic action planning. Dr. Applewhite-Coney also has experience conducting therapy with children and adolescents in hospital and community-based settings.

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