

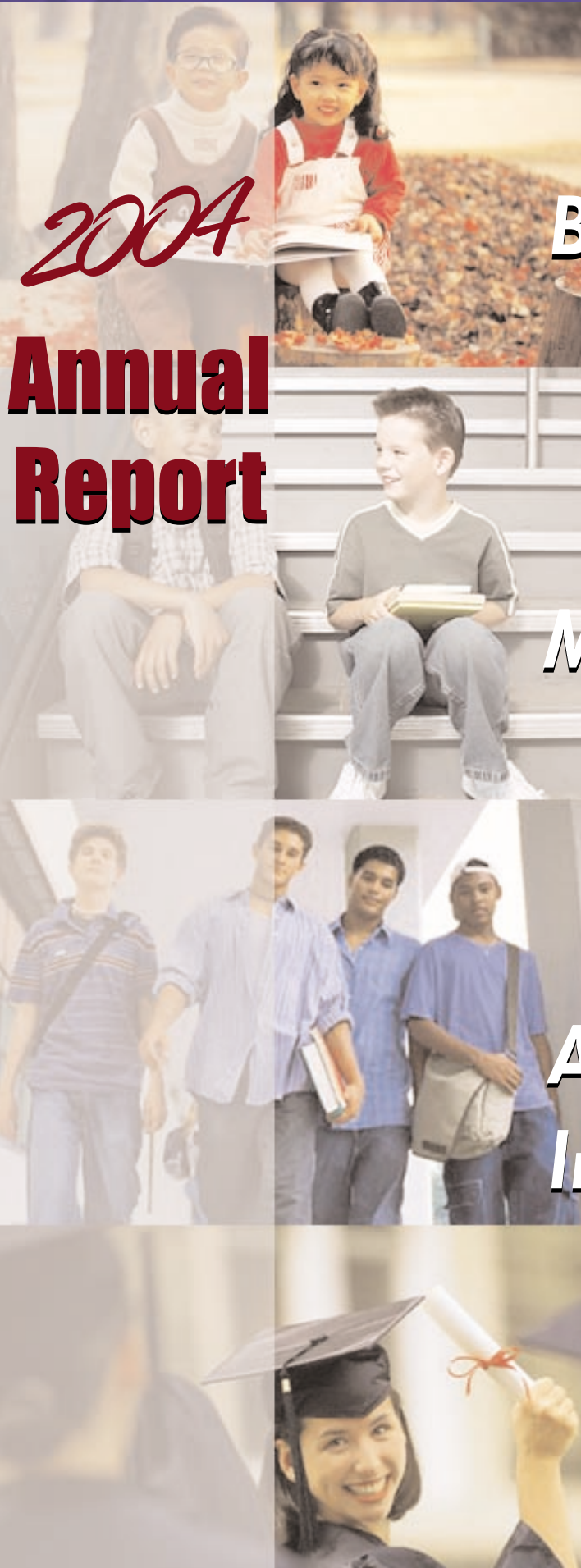
2004

Annual Report

Better Teaching

More Learning

Accountability and Innovation



Acting Governor Richard J. Codey
Commissioner William L. Librera

Mission Statement

The New Jersey State Department of Education will provide leadership for a superior education by utilizing multiple and diverse paths to success for all children in New Jersey.



To carry out its mission, the NJ Department of Education has defined five areas of focus for all of its actions and initiatives:

- ▶ **Teacher and administrator quality**
- ▶ **Raising student achievement**
- ▶ **Diverse and multiple paths for student success**
- ▶ **Innovative and outstanding practices and programs**
- ▶ **Public communication, engagement, and accountability**

Acting Governor Richard J. Codey

Governor's Message

As New Jersey's Acting Governor, I am proud to assume responsibility for the state's education system that includes many high-performing schools in our 600 local districts. Our schools are among the finest in the country. However, in maintaining such a complex system, we can never rest on our laurels. We must constantly move toward higher educational goals for our children, so that every one of them is fully prepared for life after graduation from high school.

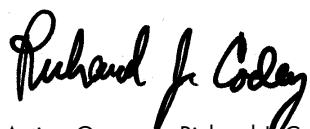
Over the last three years, the Department of Education has vigorously pursued the goal of improving early language arts literacy with the expectation that every child would be able to read by the end of third grade. Our test indicators show that we have moved significantly toward that target in many schools.

As our success with the focus on literacy has become apparent, we have seen that we must apply a similar effort to the teaching and learning of mathematics. Math is a form of language that also requires literacy in order to produce proficient problem-solvers. Our state math test scores lag behind those in language arts, as well as the math scores of other countries in international comparisons. I feel it was time to reverse that trend.

Understanding math is vital to our children's future success. Math skills are critical when it comes to securing a job or getting into college. A strong foundation in math built now will help our children throughout their lives. Therefore, in early December, I signed an executive order establishing a Mathematics Task Force, charged with addressing the need to improve student performance in math.

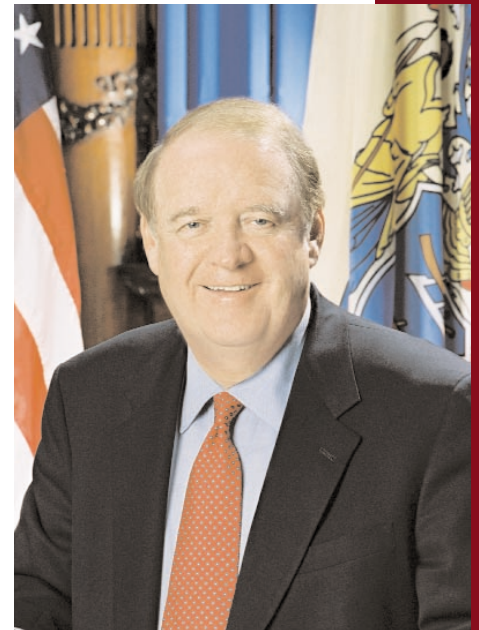
The task force will be administered by Education Commissioner William Librera, who has named two New Jersey educators with advanced degrees in mathematics to head it. The task force will have representation from K-12, higher education, business, foundations, and the Legislature, and it will report its findings to me by May 1, 2005.

We are pleased to share with the public in this annual report the many initiatives that have been launched by the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the New Jersey Legislature on behalf of improving achievement for every child in New Jersey.



Acting Governor Richard J. Codey

December 2004



"We must constantly move toward higher educational goals for our children, so that every one of them is fully prepared for life after graduation from high school."

William L. Librera

Commissioner's Message



"The department is extremely proud of the progress it has made in advancing early literacy through a variety of initiatives that provided the necessary resources and expertise to make a difference in student achievement."

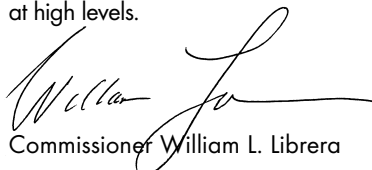
In 2001, Anne Lewis, a leading education journalist wrote, "We face a national dilemma: we cannot afford to lose another generation of children to unenforced and mediocre standards. We must provide educators with the skills, knowledge, and resources to construct classrooms that educate all students to high standards."

This quote begins a draft proposal for quality professional development that I have recently placed on the Department of Education's Web site entitled, *Ensuring Quality Teaching and Learning for New Jersey's Students and Educators*. The paper lays out a proposal for the coming year that would focus department action on strengthening classroom teaching, because the primary responsibility for producing higher levels of student learning rests with the teachers.

The department is extremely proud of the progress it has made in advancing early literacy through a variety of initiatives that provided the necessary resources and expertise to make a difference in student achievement. We will continue to pursue the goal of having every child able to read by the end of grade three. The added thrust to improve classroom teaching will strengthen the literacy program, as well as have a positive effect on Acting Governor Codey's concerns about the lagging math scores.

I have proposed three new initiatives as follows: recognizing and rewarding our best teachers and teams of teachers and utilizing their talents more widely and creatively; addressing the deficiencies of substandard teachers with the state taking a more active supporting role in helping struggling teachers; and reorganizing to provide quality professional development that is less individual-based and more team-based. We must create an integrated system where the state works with the local districts to provide high-quality professional development as the key to increasing student achievement.

Once we receive feedback on the initiatives proposed in the paper, I will establish a task force with representatives from each stakeholder group to consider all comments and recommend the next steps to pursue. The recommendations will be far-reaching and include policy changes, legislative recommendations, and program design issues that will be delegated to the appropriate entities for resolution. I know that with our combined forces, we can have all students and educators learning and performing at high levels.



Commissioner William L. Librera

December 2004

Teacher & Administrator Quality

In January 2002, Commissioner William Librera began to shape the state's education agenda by grouping the efforts toward educational improvement in New Jersey into five major areas to be developed simultaneously. Teacher and administrator quality is first, because research clearly shows that high academic achievement is largely dependent on the quality of instruction in classrooms. It is also dependent on the quality of administrative leadership that provides for the development of the instructional skills of teachers and motivates them to seek constant improvement in their own and their students' performance.

Over the last three years, the focus has been on four main areas: professional standards, preparation and credentials, professional development, and recruitment. The integration of the work accomplished so far is the subject of a paper issued by Commissioner Librera in December 2004 entitled, *Ensuring Quality Teaching and Learning for New Jersey's Students and Educators*. It sets forth a proposed vision for professional learning and advancement that would enable all teachers to be successful in their classrooms. The proposal has three parts that include recognizing and rewarding outstanding teachers; supporting and addressing struggling and substandard teachers; and reorganizing for quality professional learning. In 2005, this proposal will be submitted to a task force to organize public feedback and develop action steps.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

In 2002, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) began working with the State Board of Education on developing new Professional Licensure and Standards regulations. That work culminated in adoption of new rules by the State Board in December 2003. The new licensure rules are built around a common set of standards that were designed by teachers who serve on the department's Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB).

To help accelerate the work on administrative standards, the department won a 2002 grant award from the Wallace Foundation to develop national professional standards for school leaders, as well as national professional accreditation for preparation programs in conjunction with the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) consortium. These standards serve as the foundation for college administrator preparation programs, as well as mentoring and professional development.



**Teacher of the Year
2004 – 2005
Peggy Stewart
Vernon Township High School**

Major provisions of new licensing regulations:

- ▶ **New professional standards linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards.**
- ▶ **National accreditation requirements for standards-based teacher and administrator preparation programs.**
- ▶ **A continuous path of teacher training from college preparation to mentoring to ongoing professional development.**
- ▶ **Certification requirements that result in highly qualified teachers.**

T e a c h e r & A d m i n i s t r a t o r Q u a l i t y

SAELP is a consortium of national education organizations led by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Other members are:

- ▶ **Education Commission of the States**
- ▶ **National Association of the State Boards of Education**
- ▶ **National Conference of State Legislatures**
- ▶ **National Governor's Association**

In 2004, the department received an additional Wallace Foundation grant for \$600,000 to fund the second phase of SAELP that will focus on improving educational leadership and conditions of leadership practice in the state. New Jersey was one of only fifteen states awarded this funding.

During the next three years, the state standards for school leaders will be incorporated into educational policies and processes across the state, district, and school levels. In addition, the project will address the conditions of leadership practice for school leaders to assure their successful recruitment and retention.

TEACHER PREPARATION AND CREDENTIALS

The NJDOE has initiated new programs into the state's highly successful alternate route system. Two of these involve four-year institutions of higher education - the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), offered at New Jersey City University and the Summer-to-Summer Program, developed by the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. The third is the Community College Provider Plan, developed in conjunction with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. It features a uniform curriculum at 16 community colleges and a pre-employment course that counts toward the 200 hours required for certification.

In 2002, the state provided new incentives for teachers to seek the rigorous national board certification through a collaborative arrangement among the Governor, the Department of Education, the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The program includes payment of the application fee, mentoring while enrolled in the program, and receipt of a master's degree upon completion. By the end of 2004, there were 97 teachers in New Jersey with national board certification.

Over the years, there has been a tendency to lower standards for teachers in order to ensure that there were enough people to fill the positions. The department worked with the State Board of Education to tighten the following requirements to become a teacher, so that the quality of instruction will continually improve:

- ▶ Changed the grade point average needed for certification from 2.5 to 2.75, effective September 2004;
- ▶ Raised the passing scores on the tests that teachers must pass to obtain state certification; and

Teacher & Administrator Quality

- ▶ Established a new endorsement and new tests for middle school teachers to ensure that they are highly qualified in every subject they teach as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*.

In addition to our own state initiatives to upgrade teacher quality, the department has assisted in district implementation of the Highly Qualified Teacher provisions required by *NCLB*. The department developed the New Jersey High Objective Uniform State Evaluation (HOUSE) Standard – an alternative way that veteran teachers can satisfy the definition of the Highly Qualified Teacher provision in the federal legislation – that has become a model for several other states. There also have been efforts to collaborate with the professional educational organizations to develop the framework for a performance-based portfolio assessment for existing paraprofessionals to meet *NCLB* requirements.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The NJDOE has worked vigorously to transform the current professional development requirement of 100 hours every five years into a more rigorous and coherent approach to professional development for all teachers. To help teachers have access to high-quality professional development, the department has:

- ▶ Sponsored numerous preschool conferences and other sustained professional development on topics such as the roles of the master teacher and early childhood education administrator; enhancing continuity and transition from pre-K to grade 3; inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms; facilitating English language acquisition; and literacy development.
- ▶ Inaugurated a French Resource Center at Rutgers University to develop and conduct professional development programs for New Jersey's French teachers and provide the latest materials and resources for the teaching of French from preschool through the university.
- ▶ Signed a memorandum of agreement with the Italian Consulate to promote the teaching of the Italian language and culture in New Jersey schools, including an incentive program for K-8 Italian instruction, especially for districts with large Italian-American populations; a visiting Italian teacher program; professional development opportunities and exchanges; and development of a resource center for the teaching of Italian.



First Lady Mary Jo Codey, a teacher in New Jersey, emphasizes the importance of intensive reading development in helping the state reach its goal of having every child able to read by the end of third grade.

T e a c h e r & A d m i n i s t r a t o r Q u a l i t y

- ▶ Produced an online tutorial for teachers of English Language Learners entitled *English Language Learners in the Mainstream*. It summarizes research findings on English-language acquisition and provides sample strategies and lessons for working with limited English proficient students.
- ▶ Developed a partnership with New Jersey Network (NJN), Verizon, and New Jersey Professional Education Port (NJPEP) to develop a ten-segment video-based professional development program that includes classroom demonstrations by New Jersey teachers. The modules also feature experts describing research and multipoint videoconferencing with NJ school districts.
- ▶ Sponsored, along with the Gifted Program of Montclair State University and Passaic County Community College, "Symposium V – Mining Giftedness and Discovering Diverse Gifts – Identifying Giftedness in Minority Populations," targeted to staff development needs of teachers and administrators in the northern region.
- ▶ Conducted a two-day state conference on early literacy assessment in 2003 with 300 participants, and in 2004, 200 educators participated in a two-day early literacy conference devoted to curriculum and instruction.
- ▶ Provided over 80 days of direct professional development and capacity-building in 2003-04 at the district level in primary literacy to Abbott districts, reaching thousands of teachers, support staff, and administrators.

RECRUITMENT

In 2004, the department organized the following recruitment events in addition to a variety of career fairs that department recruiters routinely offer:

- ▶ Two world languages recruitment events on March 16 and 19, 2004 – one in the north and one in the south of the state – to assist districts in finding qualified world language teachers. This is the fifth year that the department has hosted world language recruitment events.
- ▶ Bilingual preschool teacher recruitment events in October 2004.
- ▶ Three presentations designed to promote the Troops to Teachers Program to retired members of the military.

Raising Student Achievement

In 2002, the DOE established literacy in preschool through third grade as a primary educational goal for this state. The objective is to have all students reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Teaching and learning must include all aspects of literacy – understanding, speaking, reading, and writing effectively.

The department has worked toward meeting this objective by launching a series of integrated initiatives over the last three years that concentrate heavily on early literacy, but are beginning to extend into the middle and high school grades, as well.

EARLY LITERACY

In order to ensure that early literacy initiatives would have an immediate impact, the 2002 Task Force on Early Literacy Education identified best practices and approaches in early literacy and making recommendations about ways to meet the early literacy goal. The task force's report, *Improving the Quality of Early Literacy Education in New Jersey*, offered guidance about how to provide high-quality literacy instruction to all students.

As the task force met, the department worked on revision of the Core Curriculum Content Standards in all areas, including language arts literacy. The original 1996 standards had given the state a common core of learning objectives, but there had been some criticism that they were too general. The revised and readopted literacy standards reflect the work of the task force in that they are much clearer and more specific. There are individual grade-level cumulative progress indicators (CPIs) in kindergarten through fourth grade for all five elementary language arts literacy standards – phonemic awareness, explicit and systematic phonics, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. The standards are an important foundation on which to build a high-quality literacy program that has continuity through all of the grades.

ABBOTT MANDATE

The Abbott preschool programs were mandated under the NJ Supreme Court's *Abbott v. Burke* decision of 1998, which required the Commissioner of Education to implement "whole-school reform and full-day kindergarten and half-day preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds as expeditiously as possible."

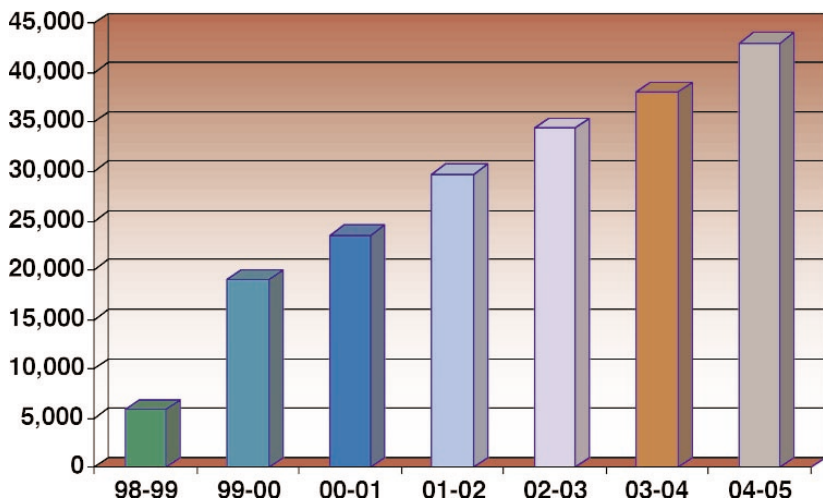
According to the National Research Council, "Research affirms that quality instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades is the single best weapon against reading failure. Indeed, when well done, classroom instruction has been shown to overwhelm the effects of student background and supplementary tutoring."



The Department of Education has strengthened Abbott preschool programs by:

- ▶ increasing the enrollment of eligible preschool children;
- ▶ upgrading the quality of the programs provided by the school districts and the contracted centers licensed by the Department of Human Services;
- ▶ developing the Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines and the Three-year Operational Plan that began in the 2003-04 school year;
- ▶ working with the State Board of Education to adopt uniform standards for state-funded preschools in *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*;
- ▶ offering three comprehensive year-long courses for 200 master teachers who have trained, mentored, and coached over 12,000 classroom teachers and assistant teachers in the Abbott districts.

Preschool Children Served in Abbott Districts, 1998-2005



The very tight implementation timeline made it difficult to ensure that the hundreds of quickly launched programs would meet the high quality demanded by the court. In 2002, it was time to assess the Abbott preschool programs and make the refinements that would guarantee high standards and consistency.

To better evaluate program quality, the Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) created and funded the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC), a group of New Jersey universities – currently William Paterson, Rutgers and New Jersey City University – to conduct preschool classroom observations and kindergarten assessments. This three-year study began in the fall of 2002 and will continue through the 2004-05 school year.

Abbott district children with preschool experience are entering kindergarten with better language skills but are still behind their more affluent peers. However, there are promising indications of early literacy readiness abilities as a result of having been in a preschool program. The DOE and the Abbott districts have been concentrating on professional development activities and other initiatives to strengthen any areas of program inadequacy.

In order to capture information about children’s language and literacy development and to assist teachers in using valid classroom assessment to improve teaching, the OECE, with the help of the ELIC, created a language arts literacy

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performance-based assessment to help preschool and kindergarten teachers recognize children's emerging literacy skills and use this information to adapt and individualize interactions and activities. The department developed and piloted the system over the 2003-04 school year with 600 teachers in seven Abbott school districts: Bridgeton, Garfield, Gloucester, Long Branch, New Brunswick, Union City, and West New York. In 2004-05, all districts are receiving training with full implementation expected in 2005-06.

There are over a hundred non-Abbott districts that qualify for Early Childhood Program Aid because they contain pockets of poverty, and some of these programs have also been in existence for five years or more. To expand our reach for children who can profit from high-quality preschool programs, the Legislature approved \$15 million in the 2005 budget for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI). This funding will expand our nationally recognized preschool programs to four-year-olds in non-Abbott districts who qualify by income level but are not in existing programs. The department is absolutely convinced that a great start leads to a great future.

LITERACY FOCUS

Three offices within the DOE interact to foster best practices and work together to provide professional development at the classroom, school, and district levels – Early Literacy, Urban Literacy (established to support literacy in the Abbott districts) and Reading First. All three are championing one message with a single goal – to have all children reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.

In the fall of 2003, the first literacy coaches began working in eligible school districts. At the same time, the department's Division of Abbott Implementation published revised rules and regulations with "Intensive Early Literacy" requirements. In response to the NJ Supreme Court's order of June 24, 2003, which identified districts in which 50 percent or fewer of the students achieved proficiency on New Jersey's fourth-grade state assessments, the Office of Urban Literacy began to work with schools and districts identified as low-performing.

Currently, the Office of Urban Literacy works in the 31 Abbott districts containing over 300 schools and more than 150,000 students. In addition, Literacy Assessment Teams focus on the needs of the 12 districts with the 42 lowest-performing schools. After extensive research, educators have identified and replicated educational practices and strategies that work.



At the end of 2003-04, over 38,000 – or over 70% of the eligible three- and four-year-olds – were enrolled in Abbott preschool programs. That number is expected to grow to 43,000 for 2004-05. Ninety-five percent of preschool teachers are fully certified.

New Jersey was recognized in the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) report as a national leader in quality standards in the Abbott preschool programs two years in a row.



Acting Governor Richard J. Codey and First Lady Mary Jo Codey, a teacher in New Jersey, promote literacy through participation in the Governor's Book Club

The Reading First program began in July of 2002 when the NJDOE received approval for a six-year \$120 million federal grant. Currently, 62 schools in 22 school districts with grades K-3 are working with Reading First grants. The goals of the grant reinforce the Intensive Early Literacy mandates with programs and practices in K-3 classrooms based on scientifically-based reading research. The funded schools must reduce the number of students who are partially proficient in language arts by 10 percent a year.

Another extremely supportive literacy initiative is the reading coach program, created in 2002. The Legislature committed \$10 million a year for four years to provide the coaches to districts most in need of assistance. The DOE trains the coaches and assigns them to teachers who work with nonachieving students to help find the most effective ways to reach at-risk readers.

Reading Coach Program

- ▶ **2002-03 – 30 coaches worked in 80 schools with nearly 700 teachers and approximately 25,000 students.**
- ▶ **2003-04 – 60 reading coaches worked in more than 120 schools with approximately 2,000 elementary school peers and 45,000 students.**
- ▶ **Additional professional development opportunities planned and delivered by reading coaches using best practices in literacy instruction were available to more than 50 selected schools.**

Once students begin to experience success with reading, it is important to help them learn to enjoy reading. The Governor's Book Club, launched in 2002, has grown to include more than 60,000 students and 1,500 teachers.

As a result of all the intensive literacy efforts, the NJASK 3 and NJASK 4 test scores for 2004 show clear signs of progress. Once there are consistent trends of increases in test scores, the department will know that our state and district efforts are working.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Literacy is the key to understanding every subject offered in school. To reach the goal of having literate New Jersey graduates, schools must extend the intensity of the early literacy program to older children and build upon the reforms being implemented in the early grades.

In May 2004, a 19-member middle grades task force issued a report entitled, *Improving the Quality of Literacy Education in New Jersey's Middle Grades: Report of the Task Force on Middle Grade Literacy Education*. The task force was charged with initiating a statewide conversation about literacy education in grades 4-8; producing a consensus document containing background information to guide future policy and practice, and making specific recommendations for action to improve the quality of literacy instruction in grades 4-8.

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The department realizes that there is a need to also address high school literacy. Our ultimate goal is to have each student able to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and receive a high school diploma that enables the student to attend the college of choice or begin a career with upward mobility. To accomplish this, students must meet New Jersey's standards and demonstrate proficiency on the HSPA.

When students were required to pass a high school test to graduate, the department created an alternate test called the Special Review Assessment (SRA). This is a test based on judging proficiency in alternative ways. It was intended that students who had tried multiple times to pass the high school assessment would have an alternate route as a last resort.

The SRA was intended to be the exception and not the rule. However, by the spring of 2004, nearly 15 percent of New Jersey's high school seniors received their diplomas via the SRA. In some districts, more than 30 percent graduated by that route. In one high school, the figure was 90 percent.

During the summer of 2004, the NJDOE conducted the Intensive Learning Summer Pilot Program that offered the opportunity to selected students who had not passed the HSPA to receive five weeks of intensive instruction and then retake the HSPA. The institutes were located in Englewood, Hillside, Jersey City, Franklin, and Vineland. In September 2004, the NJDOE summarized the results as follows: of the 137 summer institute students who took the language arts portion of the test, 74.5% achieved proficiency; and out of the 215 who took the math portion of the test, 35.8% achieved proficiency. Math performance has been a problem on all state tests.

Other NJDOE literacy-related initiatives include:

- ▶ An award of \$4,000,000 of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* – Title II, D funding to 24 school districts to implement the three-year Students Using Technology to Achieve Reading and Writing (STAR-W) grant program in grades 3-5.
- ▶ The state's first two-day early literacy conference in August 2003 entitled, "Keeping the Promise: Literacy for all Children." More than 700 educators, reading and literacy coaches, principals, and Reading First coordinators



Students in an Abbott preschool program.

"The department is absolutely convinced that a great start leads to a great future."

R a i s i n g S t u d e n t A c h i e v e m e n t



In the 1998 decision of Abbott vs. Burke, the NJ Supreme Court mandated preschool programs in Abbott districts for all eligible three- and four-year-olds.

learned about research-based teaching practices focused on literacy. In 2004, there were additional literacy conferences to reinforce the importance of early literacy, covering early childhood education, technology, bilingual/English as a second language, special education, the six critical components of literacy, and educational leadership.

- ▶ The \$15 million New Jersey After 3 initiative to create a public/private partnership that will bring quality educational and recreational after-school programs to 20,000 children. After 3 is the first state-sponsored after-school program in the nation. It will be administered by a nonprofit organization. In the first round of funding, grant awards ranged in size from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for programs begun in October 2004.

- ▶ Awards totaling a little over \$4.5 million to 28 continuation and one new Even Start Family Literacy Programs – 15 in the northern region, five in the central, and nine in the southern region. The awards, granted to local education agencies, community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education, ranged from \$86,000 to \$260,000. Grant funds will be used to provide a seamless system of services, consisting of early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education to low-income families throughout the state to assist children in reaching their full potential.
- ▶ Participation by Even Start directors and coordinators in the use of a parenting education assessment tool called the Parent Education Profile (PEP) in October 2004, and the use of a new Program Activity Review System (PARS) in December 2004.

STANDARDS

In 1996, the State Board of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards in seven academic areas, along with five workplace readiness standards to establish a state-wide set of academic expectations for all students.

The standards define what students should know and be able to do in order to graduate from high school. They must be reviewed every five years, and after the 2003-04 review, the State Board adopted standards in nine content areas – language arts literacy, math, science, social studies, visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, and world languages. The

R a i s i n g S t u d e n t A c h i e v e m e n t

two additional areas, technological literacy and career education and consumer, family and life skills, have replaced the 1996 Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards. The technology standards are to be incorporated into all of the academic standards.

In 2004, the State Board also adopted the revised preschool standards that are contained in the department's *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*. The standards describe the social, emotional, and learning skills that are to be developed in the state's full-day preschool programs.



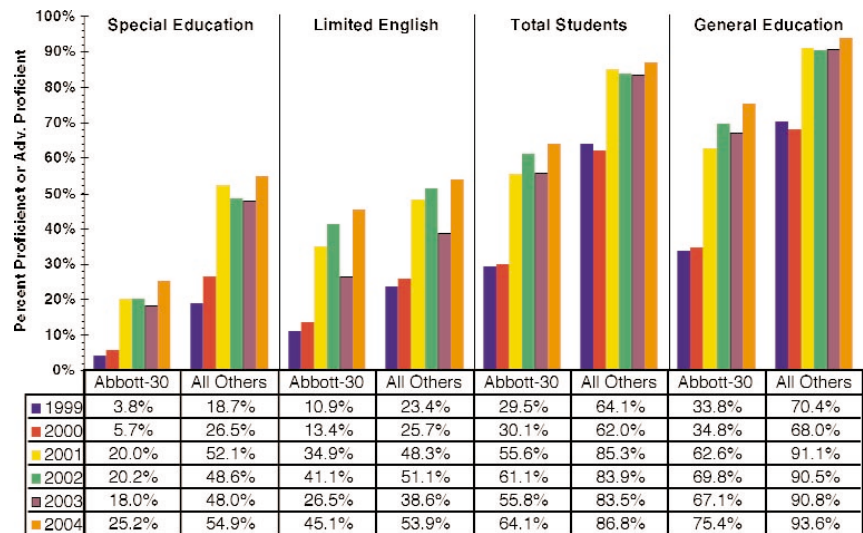
In addition, the NJDOE:

- ▶ Revised the New Jersey English Language Proficiency Standards for English as a second language students to conform to changes in the revised language arts literacy Core Curriculum Content Standards and requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.
- ▶ Amended the Standards and Assessment code that contains the Core Curriculum Content Standards and the statewide assessment system. The amendments create greater flexibility for high school students to select courses and establish new paths to a high school diploma that place priority on demonstrating proficiency in required content areas. They also accommodate the new senior year project that allows students who have passed the High School Proficiency Assessment more flexibility to pursue other experiences in high school.



- ▶ Endorsed the State Board's *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement in Public Education in the State of New Jersey*. The five-year plan covers assessment as a measure of the Core Curriculum Content Standards; exemplary educational practices; literacy in language arts and math; and teacher preparation and professional development.

Percent Proficient or Advanced Proficient on the Fourth Grade Assessment Language Arts Section by Group by District Type by Year



- ▶ Created an international leadership team to encourage students to read about cultures and traditions from their own and others’ heritage, learn about world affairs, and learn one or more world languages. In October 2004, the department co-hosted the first International Education Summit that featured a roundtable discussion, international speakers, and a town meeting.

ASSESSMENT

Assessments are instruments that show educators where the successes, as well as the achievement gaps, exist. It is extremely important to use the information learned from the state testing program at grades three, four, eight, and 11 to analyze local and state achievement gaps and then to overcome them.

While the national implementation of *No Child Left Behind* has been a flawed, complicated, and difficult process, New Jersey has no disagreement with the goal of high standards and high levels of success for every student, regardless of his or her background. The department has worked on improving communications concerning test scores to districts, teachers, parents, and students with special emphasis on giving teachers information they can use to shape classroom instruction and provide special attention to those students who are not meeting the proficiency standards.

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The department also has established a partnership with the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE) and the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) consortium for a five-year pilot project involving nine school districts to create performance-based assessments. The assessments will be used in conjunction with standardized tests in all core content areas beginning with math, language arts and science and will include student projects, demonstrations, competitions, and problem-solving tasks. The project has received a \$750,000 grant, supplemented with \$100,000 from BCEE and \$400,000 of in-kind support from CREATE.

Other measures that the department has taken to help districts overcome achievement gaps and raise student achievement include:

- ▶ A commitment to creating NJ SMART (Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching), a state-wide student-level database, to be able to track student performance individually from year to year;
- ▶ A shift in emphasis in the three state-operated school districts to steady improvement toward achievement goals that are reachable, so that the districts can be returned to local control and be accountable for results.
- ▶ The establishment by Acting Governor Richard J. Codey of a Mathematics Task Force charged with addressing the need to improve student performance in math. Recommendations for addressing the teaching and learning of mathematics in New Jersey are due to the Acting Governor by May 1, 2005.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* the NJDOE has adopted a policy that gives children and parents in New Jersey an Unsafe School Choice Option. The first provision of the Unsafe School Choice Option Policy applies only to schools that are identified by the NJDOE as being persistently dangerous. Under this provision, any student attending a school that has been so identified by the NJDOE has school choice.

The second policy provision, which applies to all schools receiving funds under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, provides school choice to any student who is a victim of a violent criminal offense, as determined by law.

Additional health and safety measures include:

- ▶ Participation in launching the **Fitness for Life Campaign** to motivate students to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles.
- ▶ Creation of a nine-minute video on fitness in collaboration with the New Jersey Council for Physical Fitness and Sports and New Jersey Network.
- ▶ Collaboration with the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services on the Governor's **Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids** and the **Actions for Healthy Kids** initiatives that focus on healthy eating and physical activity.
- ▶ Collaboration with the Violence Institute of New Jersey (VINJ), at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, to continue implementation of the **Positive Student Discipline Reform Demonstration Project**. Three pilot districts are implementing research-based approaches to school safety, including student discipline and positive student development.

Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement



“Educational research indicates that there is no single successful path to student achievement.”

Educational research indicates that there is no single successful path to student achievement. There are many ways to motivate students, provide incentives to learn, create innovative programs based on sound educational concepts and standards, and devise exciting strategies for presenting knowledge and skills to students.

In order to encourage districts to consider diverse and multiple paths to student achievement, the department worked with the State Board of Education to develop new high school graduation requirements that took effect with the 2004-05 freshman class.

The regulations, adopted by the State Board in January 2004, permit greater flexibility in teaching and learning the skills and knowledge required for high school graduation, and they represent a shift away from seat-time course requirements in favor of optional ways for students to demonstrate proficiency in required subject matter.

The new regulations set a total minimum graduation requirement of 110 credits linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards. There are two options open to districts.

- ▶ The first option modifies existing credit requirements for the visual and performing arts, practical arts, and world languages, allowing 5 credits for courses in career education and consumer, family, and life skills or vocational-technical education. It also calls for technological literacy to be taught across all curricula.
- ▶ The second option allows schools to choose from an array of models for developing activities or programs linked to the standards, such as theme-based programs, independent study, magnet programs, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities, internships, student exchange programs, distance learning, community service, or other structured learning experiences.

The NJDOE also has introduced a 12th-Grade Pilot Program to encourage high school seniors who have finished all graduation requirements to enroll in col-

Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement

lege-credit courses or seek other program options for both personal and intellectual growth. The pilot program encourages districts to offer high school seniors a variety of out-of-school options.

The NJDOE convened representatives quarterly from schools throughout the state to share senior year best practices, and encouraged a select group of schools to design innovative ways to restructure the program options in grade 12. Some of the best practices include:

- ▶ College courses offered at the high school or on campus to earn dual credits;
- ▶ Certificate/noncredit college courses that allow students to explore medical and technology fields such as certified nursing assistant or office systems technology;



- ▶ Service-learning projects supervised by school personnel in collaboration with community organizations to allow exploration of a career in service;
- ▶ Work-based internships/apprenticeships that are supervised alternatives in a profession that may become a student's career choice; and
- ▶ Senior projects that involve students in long-term research and evaluation around a theme chosen collaboratively between the student and teacher.

Diverse and Multiple Paths for Student Achievement

The NJDOE has facilitated the following career academy programs:

- ▶ Pfizer and Morris School District building a career exploration laboratory for a medical/health program;
- ▶ PSE&G, the Trenton School District and Mercer County Community College developing a utility engineering program;
- ▶ The Academies at Englewood with Verizon offering programs in law and public safety and informational technology; and
- ▶ Commerce Bank and the Cherry Hill School District forming the Cherry Hill Business Academy for Studies and Experiences (BASE) involving Drexel University, Camden County Community College and Rutgers University.

Other ways that the NJDOE has encouraged the utilization of diverse and multiple paths include:

- ▶ A three-day summit in September 2004 on "Re-inventing New Jersey's High Schools" co-sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association. Teams of educators from 30 NJ high schools participated in workshops with national experts and practitioners.
- ▶ An annual conference for over 800 educators entitled "Generation Next" to address the vocational-technical needs of students in the 21st century, featuring workshop presenters from across the country covering various aspects of career preparation and workforce training.
- ▶ Sixteen new charter school applications in July 2004. New Jersey currently has 51 charter schools serving approximately 14,000 students.
- ▶ Seven hundred students participating in the interdistrict school choice program enrolled in 13 districts. The program must be reauthorized by the Legislature by June 2005. Benefits noted in the annual reports include smaller class size, innovative programs, expansion of classes such as art and music, adding diversity, and avoiding overcrowding or underutilization.

Innovative and Outstanding Practices and Programs

One way to encourage districts to consider diverse and multiple paths to student achievement is to publicly honor and commend highly successful programs and performances. The NJDOE has many programs that recognize and support innovation in education.

AWARDS

In addition to the annual awards by the NJDOE to teachers and schools for educational excellence, several new awards have been initiated to stimulate higher levels of achievement among schools.

One of these is the Governor's Schools of Excellence awards. In 2003, 25 schools received prizes of \$25,000 each, and in 2004, 22 schools were honored. The criteria were to demonstrate effective practices in preparing students for the future and for showing significant improvement during a two-year period. The funds can be used for educational purposes to be decided by the school, and there must be a report to the Commissioner at the end of the school year on how it used the award. The school also will serve as a demonstration center for exemplary programs.



Jill Stauffer, 2004 NJ Milken National Education Award recipient, a teacher at George Washington Elementary School, Wyckoff, stands with: (left to right) Arnold Hyndman, State Board president; Joseph Desiderio, principal; James Bender, superintendent; Aaron Graham, Bergen County Superintendent; Jack Moran, Jill's father; and Education Commissioner William Librera.



Theresa Bordo, 2004 NJ Milken National Education Award recipient, a teacher at Cunningham Elementary School, Vineland, stands with: (left to right) Arnold Hyndman, State Board president; Marie Adair, asst. superintendent; Patricia Phillips, principal; Rusty Phillips, director of human resources and Education Commissioner William Librera.

In addition, the department has presented the \$25,000 Milken awards to six individuals for educational excellence in 2002, two honorees in 2003 and two more in 2004. The department also held the first ceremony in December 2003 for Recognizing Educator Achievement and Leadership (REAL) to bring together honorees from a variety of education award programs during the year. In 2004, there were 27 educators honored.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

The department has provided the following programs to promote innovation in schools:

- ▶ Launched five projects under the \$500,000 P-12 Higher Education/Public School Partnership grant program where institutions of higher education (IHEs) in New Jersey have joined with public school districts in developing important innovations.
- ▶ Honored the first cohort of operational charter schools with pioneer awards and highlighted achievements of other charter schools that have received state and national awards.
- ▶ Awarded mini-grants under the Workplace Readiness Incentive for Demonstrating Excellence in Academic Standards (I.D.E.A.S) program to 14 educators for their proposals to implement the Core Curriculum Content Standards using innovative instructional models.
- ▶ Showcased 13 model programs designed to serve the needs of students for whom English is a second language or who are learning world languages.
- ▶ Designated over \$650 million in school construction funding to six Abbott districts that submitted winning proposals for Demonstration Projects to develop visionary school projects that boost the revitalization of an entire neighborhood. The six proposals were submitted by Vineland, East Orange, Trenton, New Brunswick, Camden, and Union City.
- ▶ Launched four of at least seven Renaissance Schools that incorporate small schools into the economic development of a neighborhood. Locations include the Roebling Elementary School to be built in Trenton on the site of a former factory; Neptune, where there are plans to build a \$35 million community school and a permanent home for the early childhood center; and Union City and Paterson. Plans are under way to build 21st century classrooms, featuring elements of Smart Growth, in over 1,300 schools around the state in urban or older suburban areas.

Innovative and Outstanding Practices and Programs

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Every day, schools must confront issues of violence, bullying, harassment, and students demonstrating a general lack of respect for others. The NJDOE has taken two approaches to these issues.

The first is to provide approximately \$4.75 million in state aid funds through the New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP) initiative to all public school districts to implement character education programs. The impact of this state initiative is described in the *NJCEP - Year-Three Outcomes Report*, released in December 2004. Since the beginning of the initiative in 2000, the number of schools offering character education programs and the number of students served by them has risen dramatically each year as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

NEW JERSEY CHARACTER EDUCATION

• PARTNERSHIP •



Figure 1: Number of Participating Schools

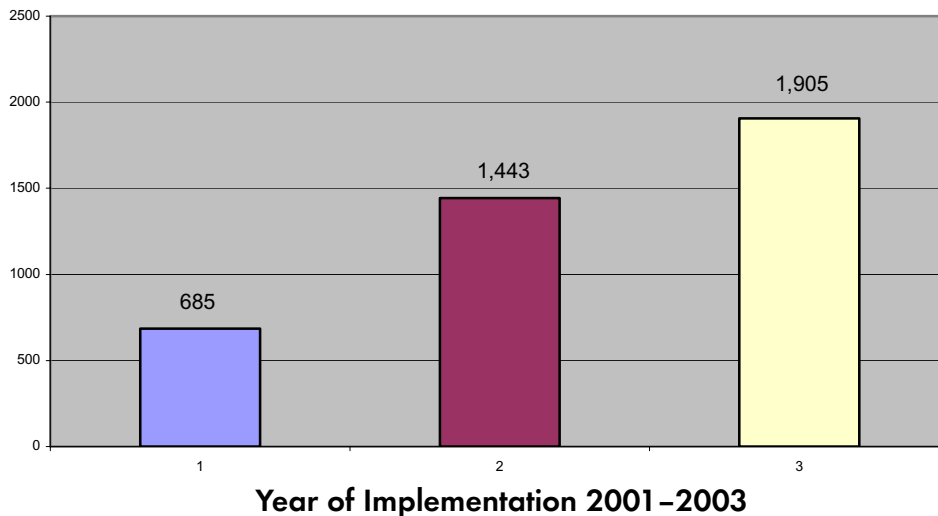
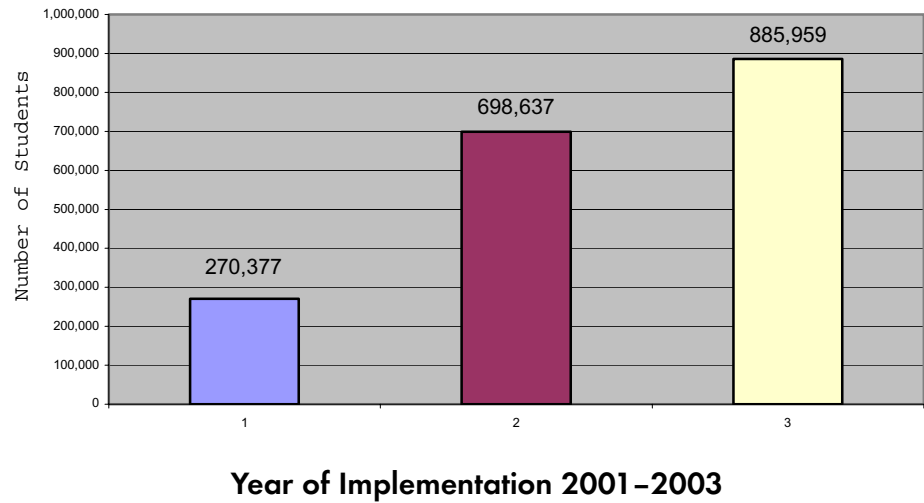


Figure 2: Number of Participating Students



The second approach to improving school culture was the establishment of the New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE) at Rutgers University in 2002 to assist districts with implementing innovative and effective character education programs. The NJCCE is funded through a \$2 million four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). The NJCCE has provided multiple trainings and technical assistance throughout the year to public and non-public schools in New Jersey.

Public Communication, Engagement and Accountability

The NJDOE was reorganized in 2002 to shift emphasis away from compliance and oversight, and toward support and technical assistance for local districts. This was accomplished by dividing the department into two sectors - central operations and field operations with three regional offices and the incorporation of the county offices into the regional delivery structure. Another part of the department with extensive field operations is the Abbott division, which works directly and extensively with the thirty-one Abbott districts.

In 2004, the department initiated a proposal for the NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC), a large-scale initiative designed to integrate all of the oversight functions of the department to reduce the burden of multiple accountability procedures on local school districts. NJQSAC will become the Department of Education's new evaluation system, designed to assess overall district effectiveness and performance as it relates to improving student academic achievement. It simplifies the existing system and integrates all of the requirements of existing code and statute, Abbott mandates, state takeover law, and *No Child Left Behind*. NJQSAC has cleared the education committees of the NJ Legislature and is on its way to becoming law.



To move the NJQSAC initiative forward, the department convened five work groups, involving local school board and district representation, to assist in developing recommendations for regulations, transitioning of districts, operational procedures, training guidelines, and evaluation criteria. The department is piloting NJQSAC in 2004-05 in 19 districts, including the three state-operated districts. It is anticipated that NJQSAC will be implemented statewide in 2005-06.

The NJDOE's most recent academic accountability initiative is the creation of Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) teams. The DOE has appealed to education professionals from all over the state to assist schools and districts that are identified as "in need of improvement" under NCLB to serve on these teams.

The CAPA concept is modeled after the Kentucky Scholastic Audit, and the Kentucky Department of Education is assisting the NJDOE in developing a process specifically designed for New Jersey. The CAPA teams are intensively trained to assess school needs and utilize data to help define solutions for school improvement. This is an effective collaborative process that gives many people a stake in the overall improvement of education in our state.



Public Communication, Engagement and Accountability



Another major effort in 2004 involved setting guidelines to help school districts to manage administrative costs, while directing more money into classrooms. The purpose is to help districts curtail excessive costs in order to serve children better and relieve an undue property tax burden. One way that the NJDOE has tried to provide assistance to districts in this area is by encouraging individual districts to explore service-sharing options with neighboring districts and municipalities. Such efforts have included sharing administrators, sharing classrooms for special education, collaborating on curriculum development efforts, purchasing textbooks, pooling resources to create new programs, and initiating discussion that leads to other ways to cut costs through collaboration.

Other measures that demonstrate public accountability include:

- ▶ Approval from the USDE for amendments to the state's *NCLB Consolidated Statewide Accountability Workbook* after input from key stakeholders and additional data analysis. The changes include: establishing a minimum subgroup size of 40 for participation rates only; increasing the subgroup size for students with disabilities only from 20 to 35; implementing the allowable flexibility for the English language learners' subgroup in the general assessment system, and implementing recent regulatory changes for special education students participating in the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA).
- ▶ The design and implementation of an online entitlement grant application process called NJ EWEG (Entitlement Web-enabled Grant Application) to expedite the submission, review, and approval of grant applications. Applications for FY 2005 under the *Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)* and *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* were submitted electronically. Entitlement grants are awarded to districts for specific programs based on eligibility formulas prescribed in legislation or regulation.
- ▶ The introduction of the new electronic teacher certification system to streamline the process from start to finish.

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