



NJDOE News

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Abbott Preschool Report Shows Unprecedented Progress in Classroom Quality and Student Preparation

Note: Call-in news conference with Commissioner Librera on this topic at 12:00 p.m. today. Reporters only, please. Contact DOE/PIO at 609-292-1126 for access information.

New Jersey's Abbott preschool program has made significant progress in terms of classroom quality and student preparation for kindergarten according to a new report issued by the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC), a partnership between the DOE and academic experts at several state colleges and universities.

Entitled "[Giant Steps for the Littlest Children: Progress in the Sixth Year of the Abbott Preschool Program](#)," the report is an update of the initial findings of the third year of the ELIC study.

"The results of this report clearly documents the trends that this department has recognized for some time now—that as our preschool program expands, the quality of the program continues to improve as well," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "It is now very apparent that the success of our preschool efforts represents one of the hallmark achievements of this administration and illustrates our adherence to the mandates of the Abbott decisions for early childhood education."

The report details the marked improvement in Abbott classroom quality as the program has expanded from serving 19,000 children in the 1999-2000 school year to a projected enrollment for 2005-2006 of 43,000 children—over 80% of the total population of three and four year olds in Abbott districts.

Based on a seven point rating scale (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale/Revised-ECERS-R), the percentage of classrooms scoring in the inadequate to minimal range has dropped from over 17% in 2003 to 2.5% in 2005, while the percentage of classrooms scoring in the good to excellent range has increased from 13% in 2003 to nearly 40% in 2005.

In 2002-2003, over 50% of the classrooms scored below the midpoint on the rating scale compared to only 15% in 2003-2004. In the 2004-2005 school year, 85% of the classrooms scored above the midpoint.

In measuring the extent to which classroom materials, activities and interactions support children's early literacy development (Support for Early Literacy Assessment-SELA), the percentage of classrooms scoring in the very low quality range has dropped from 12% in 2003 to 2% in 2005, while the percentage of classrooms scoring in the good to ideal range has increased from 10% in 2003 to 24% in 2005. In 2002-2003, 83% of the classrooms scored below the midpoint on this scale and in 2005, 75% scored above the midpoint.

The report also details the results of a new research design that provides a more direct means of measuring the effects of the Abbott preschool program on entering kindergartener's academic and social skills. This "regression-discontinuity" statistical design study found that New Jersey's preschool program significantly improved the language and literacy skills of the participating children, but not their math skills.

"The results of the literacy assessments not only shows children are learning from a real curriculum, but also that the participating children are better prepared for kindergarten," added Commissioner Librera. "We will continue our intensified training efforts in math to better prepare our early education teachers for the challenges identified in the report."

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.