



NJDOE News

**For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:
Kathryn Forsyth, Director
609-292-1126**

For Release: February 13, 2007

Assistant Commissioner MacInnes to Leave DOE March 30

Assistant Commissioner for Abbott Implementation Gordon A. MacInnes today submitted his resignation, effective March 30, to Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy.

"I want to thank Assistant Commissioner MacInnes for his many years of service, not only to the Department of Education but also for the time he spent as a state legislator and advocate for improved educational opportunities for at-risk students," Commissioner Davy said. "His leadership of the Department's Abbott Division has resulted in improved and expanded preschool opportunities and the narrowing of the achievement gap.

"Our state is a better place because of Gordon's unwavering commitment to public service and helping those in need. He is an example for all of us and we wish him the best," the Commissioner said.

STATEMENT OF GORDON MacINNES Assistant Commissioner for Abbott Implementation New Jersey Department of Education February 13, 2007

Today I announce my intention to resign as the Assistant Commissioner for Abbott Implementation, effective March 30.

It has been an honor to create the Abbott division and to spend more than five years focusing the attention of 31 district communities on using Abbott's resources to close the achievement gap. In looking back at the significant progress we have made in realizing this objective, I extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Department of Education and laud the leadership of three Governors who have supported our work.

A special thanks to everyone who has worked with me in the Abbott division. We embarked on a course for which there was no blueprint or precedent. Since 2002 our work has been framed by eight decisions published by the New Jersey Supreme Court and by the priorities set in five governors' budgets. Through all of this change and uncertainty, my colleagues have been steadfast in keeping our focus on improving academic achievement, particularly early literacy.

The following are highlights of the past five years:

- We brought together, in our office, work that had been scattered across five divisions in the department: early childhood education, educational programs, budget review, state-operated districts, and, in 2006, facilities;
- We added to the emphasis on compliance and oversight of highly specific court-mandated programs and procedures a sharp focus on improved academic performance, particularly in early literacy;
- Fred Carrigg from Union City, a high-performing Abbott district, joined us to create the office of literacy that works with cooperating districts to implement effective practices to teach reading and writing in the K-8 grades. In particular, significant and sustained gains were achieved in Orange, Jersey City, Keansburg, Perth Amboy, Pleasantville, and Vineland as a result of these collaborative efforts. Orange moved from 26th among Abbott districts in 1999 to 9th in 2005; Pleasantville from 25th to 11th.
- For five years under the leadership of Ellen Frede and Jacqueline Jones, the Office of Early Childhood Education has worked with all 31 Abbott districts to improve the quality of pre-kindergarten learning. Progress as measured by internationally-accepted standards of classroom quality has been steady and sustained. The evidence of the huge pay-off in the investment in Abbott preschool is striking. Fourth-graders in West New York who participated in preschool achieved over 90% proficiency versus 68% for those who had not;
- The Secondary Education Initiative, led by Penelope Lattimer, has focused attention on breaking up large, unsuccessful comprehensive high schools, increasing academic rigor and personalizing the experience of

students and teachers. Re-directing something as complex as a large high school takes careful planning and much collaboration with faculty, staff, and students. Bridgeton, a pilot district, reports sharply reduced absenteeism and disciplinary problems in the first year of implementing smaller learning communities.

- We initiated an aggressive audit and review of preschool providers who were spending Abbott funds inappropriately. More than 50 providers have been terminated since the audit program began in 2002. At the same time we created a program of technical assistance to help the districts with accounting and business practices;
- We tightened the budget review standards for districts seeking additional funds. For the FY2007 budgets, districts that initially sought more than \$600 million beyond flat funding ended up receiving just \$10 million in additional aid. Over four years, the hard work of “on-loan” business administrators Pete Genovese from Long Branch and Mark Kramer from East Orange gave the division experienced counsel;
- As a result of assuming responsibility for the facilities office in February 2006, the division has introduced stronger project review standards in conjunction with the Schools Construction Corporation which will lead to realization of the Abbott and legislative priorities: healthy and safe schools, facilities for an expanding preschool program, and elimination of overcrowded classrooms (particularly in elementary schools).

The work we have undertaken—however easy to describe—is difficult, complex, and takes time to pay off. Attracting and retaining talented colleagues is at the heart of the effort, and they have my permanent gratitude.