

TRACKING PROGRESS

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Abbott Indicators Summary Report

Camden

NEW JERSEY



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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 academic standards. Until all of New Jersey's children receive the same high-quality education, this constitutional promise is not realized.

Introduction

Several years ago, education stakeholders recognized that children did not receive the same education throughout our state. Urban and suburban school districts did not have the same resources to support their schools. Thanks to the efforts of education professionals, parents, and advocates, the state legislature now provides the lowest income cities with the same funding as the wealthiest suburbs to support general education. The poorest urban school districts are also required to undergo a series of reforms and improvements to ensure that the funds are used to fulfill the constitutional promise.

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

We wrote this report with Camden'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.

Camden Abbott Indicators Project and Report

Camden is one of 31 urban school districts in New Jersey known as Abbott districts. The name comes from a series of lawsuits, collectively known as *Abbott v. Burke*, in which the New Jersey Supreme Court directed the state to implement a series of interlocking remedies designed to provide children with a thorough and efficient education.¹

As an Abbott district, Camden receives funding to equalize its per student general education budget with the most successful suburban school districts in the state. Camden's young people are also entitled to universal, high-quality preschool; reforms to

help them meet the state’s rigorous standards for academic achievement in Kindergarten through Grade 12; safe, healthy, and educationally adequate school facilities; and many other programs and services to ensure that they come to school ready to learn. Through a series of indicators, the Camden Abbott Indicators Report presents the status of these reforms and student progress to date.

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

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

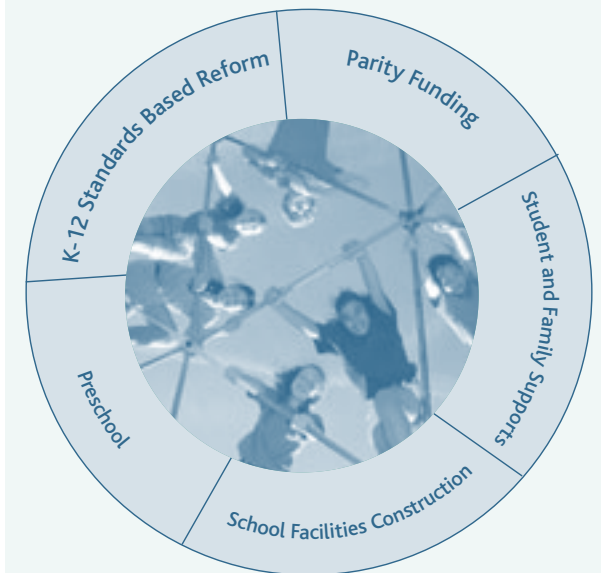
4. *Establish* a system of accountability practices that local education stakeholders can use in years to come.

This is a summary version of the full Camden Abbott Indicators Report. In it, we first list indicators about Camden as a community and the students who are enrolled in the public schools. The remaining findings are organized by Abbott remedy: preschool, K-12 education (including standards-based reform and supports for students and families), and school facilities construction. All of the remedies we have in place in New Jersey are intended to work together to ensure a seamless plan for school improvement. They are presented separately because they have distinctive logics and requirements.

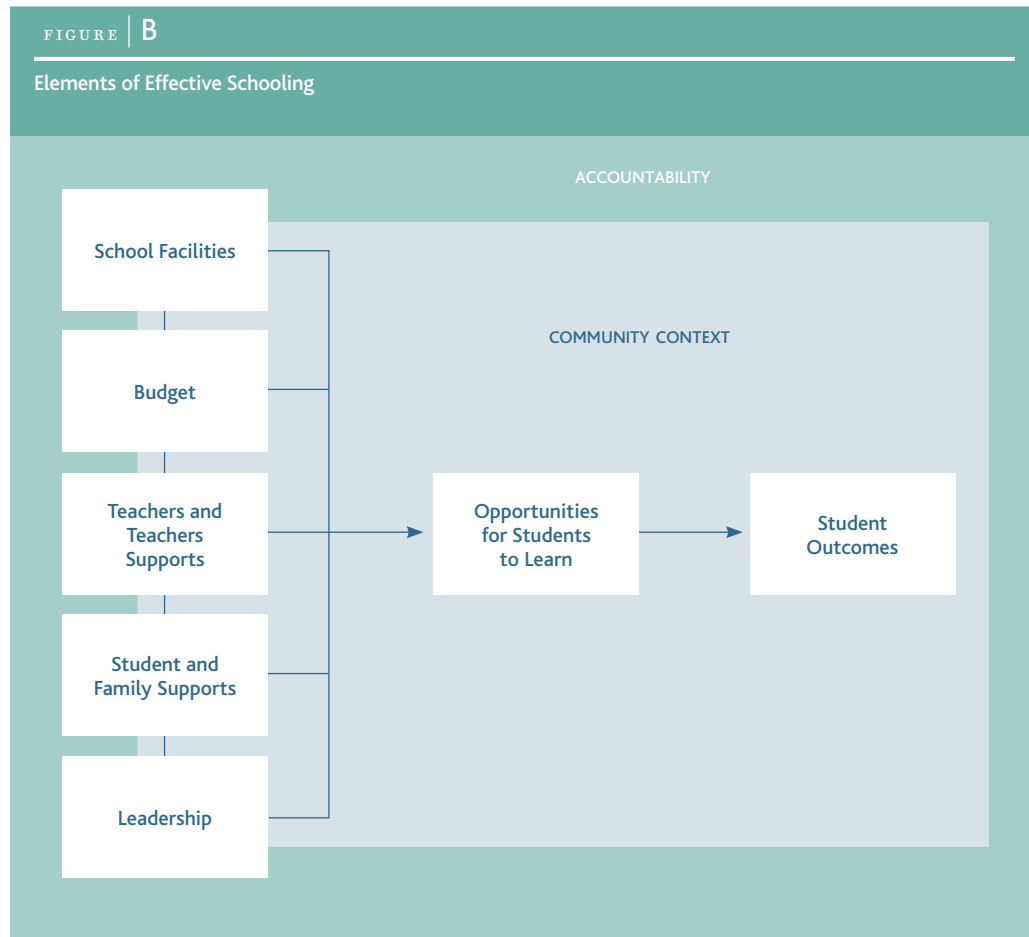
The indicators cover a broad range of topics about school practices and a number of student outcomes. We break down school practices into six “elements of effective schooling.”² Ultimately, maximizing *opportunities for students to learn* is the main focus of school improvement efforts. Other elements of effective schooling are needed to provide

FIGURE | A

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



Introduction



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 technical report (available at www.edlawcenter.org), the findings from the full set of more than one hundred fifty indicators are presented with figures and more detailed discussion. We also refer readers of this report to the technical report appendices for data sources and definitions, data collection and analysis methodology, and a glossary of terms.

Endnotes

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

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

Research shows that living in concentrated poverty negatively affects the well-being and academic performance of children and youth. If our schools are to help all students meet the state's academic standards and grow up to take meaningful roles in their communities, these effects will need to be countered.



1

The Community and Students

FIGURE | 1.1

Conditions of Living and Learning in Camden

Municipal Characteristics	Camden	New Jersey
Population	79,904	8,414,350
Female Head of Household Families With Children 17 and Under	58%	18%
Highest Educational Attainment of Adults 25 and Over		
Less Than High School Diploma	49%	18%
Diploma or GED	29%	29%
Some College	17%	23%
Bachelor's Degree	4%	19%
Graduate or Professional Degree	2%	11%
Labor Force Participation	50%	64%
Unemployment Rate	15.9%	5.8%
Median Household Income	\$23,421	\$55,146
Population Below Poverty Level	36%	8%
Population 17 and Under Below Poverty Level	45%	11%
Rent-income Ratio	30%	26%
Renter-occupied Housing	54%	34%
Violent Crime Rate (Per 1000)	18.6	3.8

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

Here, we present indicators of community distress that inform the elements of effective schooling:

- At 15.9 percent in 2000, the unemployment rate is almost three times higher in Camden than it was statewide.
- In 2000, more than one in three Camden residents lived below the poverty level compared to eight percent of residents statewide. That same year, nearly half of Camden's children were in families earning below the poverty level compared to 11 percent throughout New Jersey.
- In 2002, the violent crime rate was almost five times higher in Camden than it was throughout the state.

The students who attend the public schools reflect the families who live in Camden.

Their unique characteristics inform the educational content, the staff needed to teach and support teaching, the space and facilities in which teaching and learning occur, and the leadership that guides the whole educational process. Programs that meet the needs of Camden's children and youth—such as bilingual programs and nutrition programs—also have different budget needs.

- In 2003–04, nearly 80 percent of Camden's public school students were eligible for free-or reduced-price lunch compared to about one in four students statewide.
- 244 Camden children did not have a permanent home in 2003–04.
- Camden students move a great deal more than New Jersey students on average—nearly one in three entered or left school at least once during the 2002–03 school year. High student mobility disrupts educational progress and has negative effects on student learning.

FIGURE | 1.2
Characteristics of Students in Camden

	Camden	All Other Abbott Districts	I and J Districts	New Jersey
Total Enrollment	18,982	–	–	–
Eligible for Free-/Reduced-price Lunch	79.0%	67.8%	3.3%	26.2%
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	54.1%	40.9%	4.4%	17.1%
Latino/a	42.9%	42.2%	3.6%	17.1%
White	1.1%	13.6%	80.3%	58.5%
Asian	1.7%	2.9%	11.5%	7.1%
Native American	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	6.7%	11.9%	1.5%	4.8%
Students with Disabilities (IEP)	12.0%	12.6%	12.0%	13.1%
Homeless	1.4%	–	–	–
Student Mobility Rate	31.8%	22.2%	5.2%	12.2%

SOURCE | Fall Survey, 2003-04; School Report Card, 2002-03

The Abbott preschool remedy is based on research showing that intensive, high-quality preschool programs can help children perform better in school and participate more productively in the life of their communities as adults. Abbott preschool began in 1999–00; by 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to serve 90 percent of the eligible population.

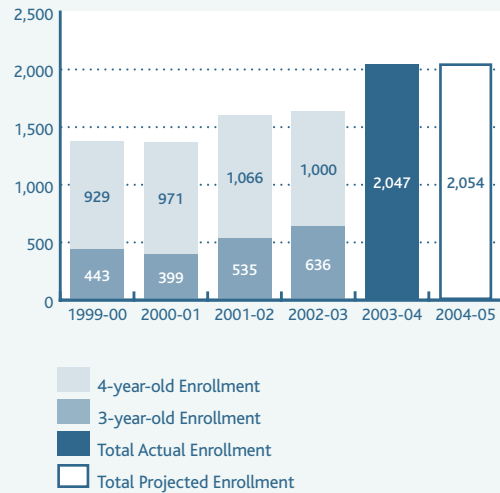
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2

The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.1

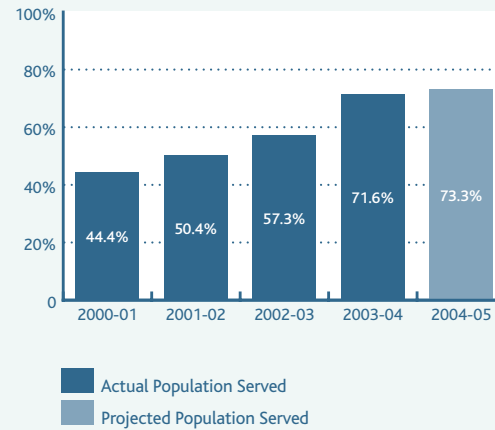
Preschool Enrollment: Camden, 1999–00 to 2004–05



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

FIGURE | 2.2

Preschool Population Served: Camden, 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.

The major features of Abbott preschool are:

- Six-hour school day, 182 days a year;
- Provisions for full-day, full-year wrap-around child care services;³
- 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.⁴

Opportunities for Students to Learn

Program Enrollment. By 2005–06, all Abbott districts are required to enroll 90 percent of their eligible populations of three- and four-year-olds.

- In 2003–04, the Camden preschool program was near capacity in its existing facilities. Yet, about three-quarters of the city's eligible children were in the preschool program that year.

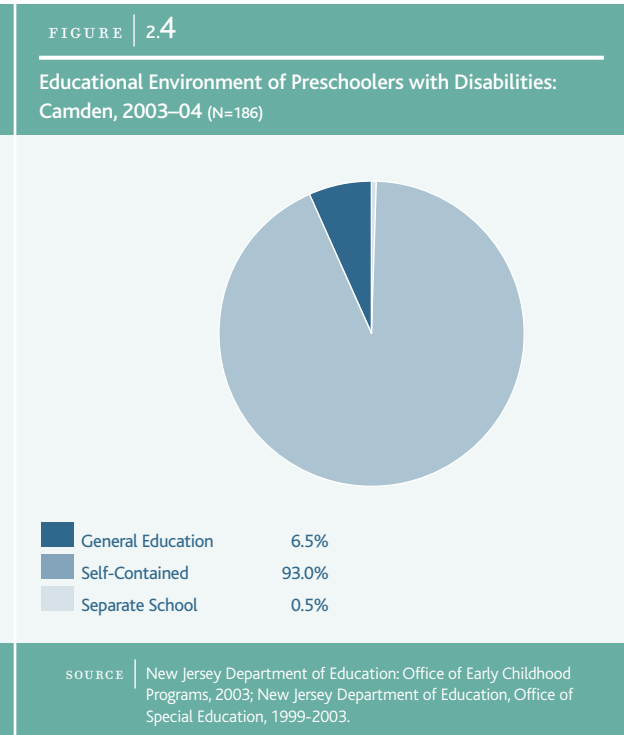
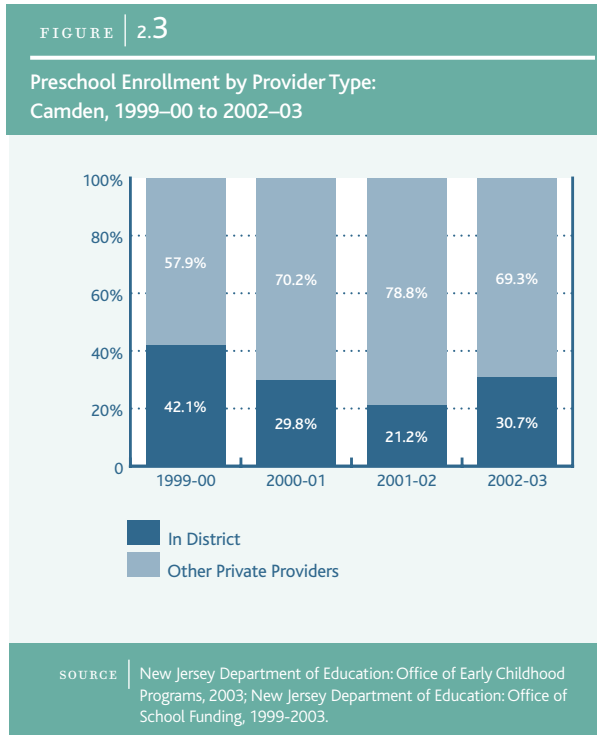
According to district estimates, most of the remaining children were in Head Start programs that had not yet met Abbott standards. Barriers preventing these providers from meeting the standards include insufficient space and facilities and too few teacher-mentors to help their teachers earn certification.

- The Camden Board of Education contracted with 24 other private providers to offer Abbott preschool in 36 sites (including two Head Start programs in five sites). The district runs 18 preschool programs in its own buildings. Since the Abbott preschool program began in 1999–00, the district has placed more children in community-run programs than in district-run programs. The percentage of children served in community programs has grown over the years: 69 percent were in community programs in 2002–03 compared to 58 percent in 1999–00 (Figure 2.3).

Programs for Children with Disabilities.

The law requires that school districts provide children with disabilities with educational experiences and services tailored to their individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be in an environment with general education students and not in self-contained settings.

- Nearly all of Camden’s 186 preschoolers with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms. The district reports that more



2

The Preschool Program

More data on program quality are needed so that we can understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by Abbott preschool programs.

inclusion classrooms will be operating in the Early Childhood Development Center, slated to open in Fall 2006.

Curriculum. The 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.

- Before Abbott, the district operated a small preschool program and used the Scholastic preschool curriculum. For a few years, the district purchased supplements and provided additional professional development to teachers to ensure that the curriculum met the state’s *Expectations*.
- In 2004–05, the district adopted a new curriculum in district-run programs called the Bank Street Model (also known as the Developmental-Interaction Approach). Developed by the New York-based college of education of the same name, the Bank Street Model views children as active learners and helps them develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Program Quality. One good 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.

- State-supported university-based researchers assess preschool program quality in several Abbott preschool programs. Unfortunately, there were too few classrooms assessed in Camden to use this information. Education program specialists in Camden assess classroom quality in all district classrooms with the same rating instrument, called the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). The district uses the ECERS-R as a quality assurance and professional development tool. This information was not compiled or made available for public release, however. More data on program quality—such as the results of reliable measures like the ECERS-R—are needed in all Abbott districts so that we can understand the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges confronted by their preschool programs.

Preschool Teacher Qualifications and Supports

Educational Attainment of Preschool Teachers. Abbott preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor’s degree. This standard applies immediately to all teachers

working in district-run programs. Teachers in community programs who need fewer than 30 credits may be eligible for an extension until September 2006. Head Start teachers have four years from the date when their program first contracted with an Abbott district to complete these requirements.

➤ In 2004–05, nearly all teachers in district-run, Head Start, and other private provider programs had earned their four-year college degrees as required.

Preschool Teacher Certification. In addition to earning a bachelor’s degree, Abbott preschool teachers must also be certified.⁵ Preschool through Grade 3 (P-3) is the standard certification 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

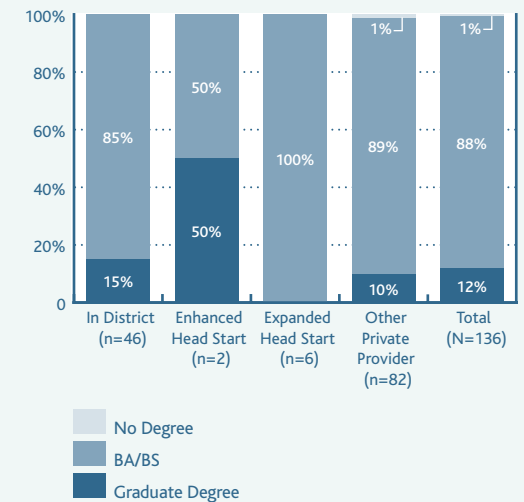
in nursery school through Grade 8 (N-8) and at least two years of full-time teaching experience in an early childhood setting also fulfill the certification requirement under a “grandfather clause” in the regulations. Teachers with special education certification may only teach self-contained early childhood classrooms or serve as a second teacher in an inclusion classroom.

➤ Camden’s preschool teachers were on their way to meeting the Abbott certification requirement. In 2004–05, all teachers in district-run and Abbott Head Start programs had at least provisional certification. Five out of 82 teachers (6.1%) in the other private provider programs still needed to fulfill this requirement.

Preschool Teacher Salary. All other things being equal, school districts that pay teachers well are more likely to attract a broader pool of applicants for teaching positions. Improving preschool teacher pay may also help to improve preschool program quality by reducing teacher turnover and boosting teacher morale. The New Jersey Supreme Court recognized this in 2002 when it ordered the New Jersey Department of Education to provide funds to help Head Start and other

FIGURE | 2.5

Preschool Teacher Educational Attainment:
Camden, 2004–05



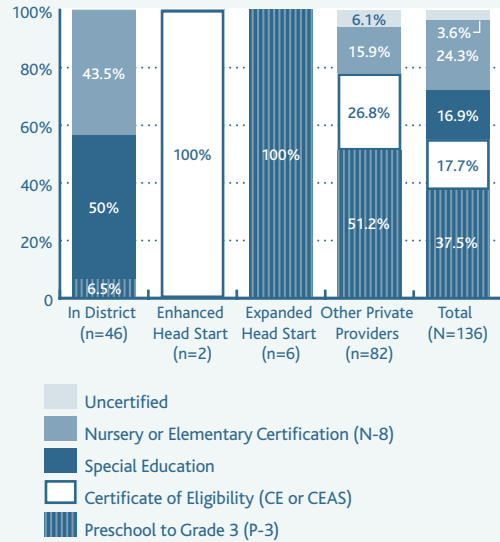
SOURCE | Camden Board of Education, 2004-05

2

The Preschool Program

FIGURE | 2.6

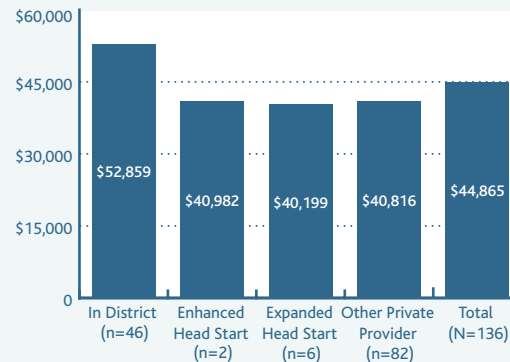
Preschool Teacher Certification by Provider Type: Camden, 2004–05



SOURCE | Camden Board of Education, 2004-05

FIGURE | 2.7

Average Preschool Teacher Salary: Camden, 2004–05



SOURCE | Camden Board of Education, 2004-05

private provider programs raise their teacher salaries to levels equal to those of teachers in district-run programs.

In Camden, the average preschool teacher salary was \$44,865. On average, preschool teachers in district-run programs earned \$12,000 more than did teachers in any other provider type. Teachers in district-run programs had more years of experience as lead teachers than their counterparts in the other provider types (with the exception of the two teachers in Enhanced Head Start programs). The district reports that all preschool teachers are paid on the same salary scale.

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.

At \$12,374 per preschooler in 2003–04, Camden’s preschool aid was comparable to the district’s combined per student budget for Kindergarten through Grade 12. When asked to explain why Camden’s preschool budget was higher in 2003–04 than in the previous year, district staff told us that it had been instructed by the New Jersey Department of Education to include special education costs in its 2003–04 preschool budget. Normally, special education costs are funded through another source of state aid. Indeed, the state instructed the Camden Board of Education to remove special education costs from the 2004–05 budget.

Preschool Leadership

State regulations require each Abbott school district to establish an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC). The ECEAC is a group of community stakeholders who are interested in the education and welfare of preschool-age children. The purpose of the ECEAC is to meet regularly, review the school district’s progress towards full implementation of high-quality preschool programs, and participate in program planning, budget development, and early childhood facilities planning.

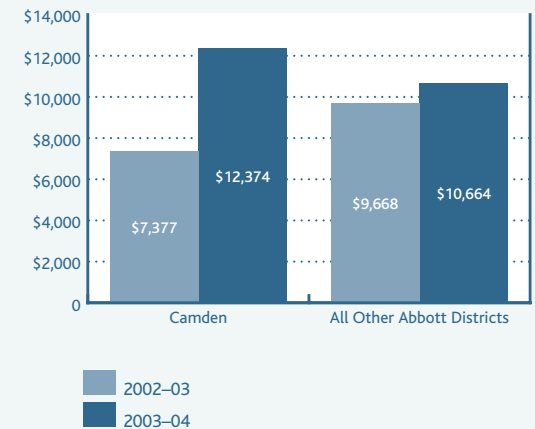
- Camden City’s Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC) was formed during the 2003–04 school year. It is made up of district early childhood supervisors, a parent and community involvement specialist, teachers, parents, elementary school principals, and representatives from the Mayor’s Office, Rutgers University, the Hispanic Family Council, the Division of Family Development (DFD), United Way, private providers, mental health agencies, and churches. Members serve for at least two years. District staff told us that meetings are held monthly.
- In the short-term, this new ECEAC was slated to take part in the selection of the new preschool curriculum and the development of the 2005–06 budget. The ECEAC has identified four long-term goals: 1) participate in the development of the Three-Year Operational Plan; 2) increase the participation of parents, guardians, and other family members; 3) facilitate communication between the district, families, and other city agencies; and 4) educate community members about the benefits of high-quality preschool.

Preschool Student Outcomes

We turn to outcomes to ask if the elements discussed so far—student and family characteristics, opportunities for students to learn, teacher qualifications and supports, budget,

FIGURE | 2.8

Per Student Preschool Aid: Camden 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 | 2.9

Abbott Preschool Program: Benchmark Status In Camden

Benchmark	Status
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
Head Start teachers have four years from the date their program contracted with the district to earn certification	Met
District teachers required to have certification	Met

and leadership—have worked together to improve student learning among the district's three- and four-year-olds.

- Camden's preschoolers are assessed regularly, although these assessments are not used to evaluate the district's preschool program overall. Instead, they are used to ensure that students receive the proper services and instruction customized to their needs.
- In keeping with the Bank Street philosophy followed by the district, all teachers are required to observe and record observations on a minimum of three students each day. These observations become part of each child's student portfolio.
- 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. We need to strike a balance between the concerns of early childhood education specialists about widespread assessment on young children and the need to know exactly how well the programs are serving Abbott preschoolers. Outcome measures are needed to help stakeholders to identify programs that work and those that need more assistance.

Endnotes

3. The New Jersey Department of Education covers the cost for six hours, 180 days per year of preschool education. The New Jersey Department of Human Services funds before- and after-school "wraparound" care and care during the summer to provide a ten-hour, 245-day per year program.

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

5. 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.

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.

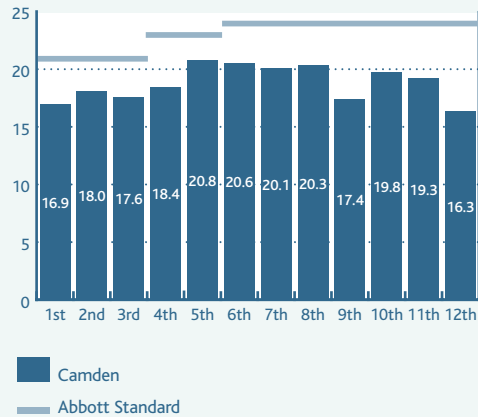
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3

K-12 Education

FIGURE 3.1

Average Class Size by Grade: Camden, 2002–03



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

These include:

- Funding at the same level as the wealthiest (“I and J”) suburban districts in the state;
- Class size limits;
- Comprehensive, or “whole-school” reform;
- Programs and services to meet the needs of students and their families;
- Assessment in each content area to measure student improvement at the classroom, school, and district levels; and
- Ways to help “low-performing” schools improve.

Opportunities for Students to Learn

Class Size. Research suggests that smaller class sizes can help teachers spend less time on behavior management and more time on instruction that is better attuned to students’ needs. In fact, there is strong evidence that smaller class sizes help students in the early elementary grades to perform better in school. Evidence on the benefits of smaller class sizes for students in later grades is less clear. In recognition of the potential benefits to students of all ages, Abbott schools have class size standards as follows:

Kindergarten through Grade 3: 21

Grades 4 through 5: 23

Grades 6 through 12: 24

- Abbott funding has had some immediate, clear effects on conditions in the Camden schools: average class sizes are smaller than the Abbott standard in all grades.
- In Camden, average class sizes were slightly larger than the other Abbott districts in 1994–95, but decreased by more than 25 percent to between 16 and 17 students per class in 2002–03, smaller on average than class sizes in the other Abbott districts. Elementary school class sizes across the state and in the wealthiest districts have stayed at about 20 students during the same period. Class sizes in the Abbott elementary schools—other than Camden—have decreased from 21 to just under 19.
- High school class sizes in Camden have remained more constant than elementary school class sizes. Camden’s high school class sizes were below 15 for several years, and rose in 2001–02. Still smaller than the average in the other Abbott districts, the average class size in Camden high schools was 17 in 2002–03, 39 percent larger than they were at their lowest point.

Programs for Children with Disabilities.

The law requires that school districts provide children with disabilities with educational experiences and services tailored to their

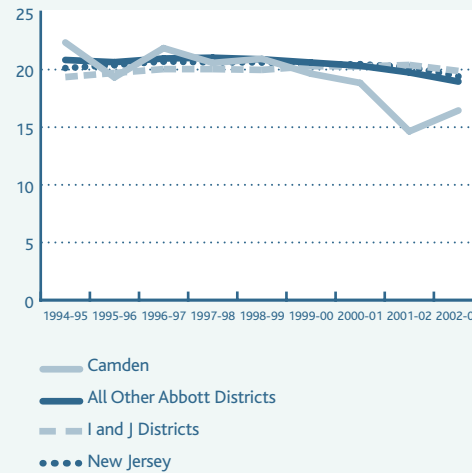
individual needs. For as much time as possible, this education must be in an environment with general education students and not in self-contained settings.

- 7 Camden has about 2,900 special needs students ages six to 21. Only about one in four students with disabilities goes to school in a “very inclusionary” setting where they are educated with general education students for 80 percent or more of the school day. Almost two in five (39%) students with disabilities in Camden are in self-contained classrooms for a major portion of the day (spending less than 40 percent of the day in general education classrooms)—a much greater percentage than in the state as a whole (17%) and the wealthiest districts (8%).

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 that would make them more competitive applicants.

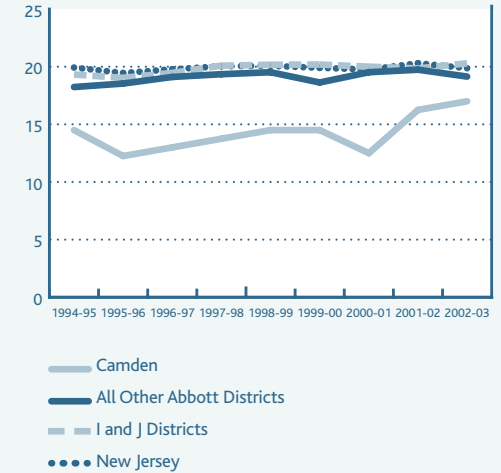
- 7 Camden’s high schools offer honors and advanced placement courses to help students become more competitive applicants and prepare them for college. We compared Camden’s honors and AP course offerings to those in Cherry Hill, a nearby “I” district. In 2003–04, Camden offered four advanced placement

FIGURE | 3.2
Elementary School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.3
High School Average Class Size by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



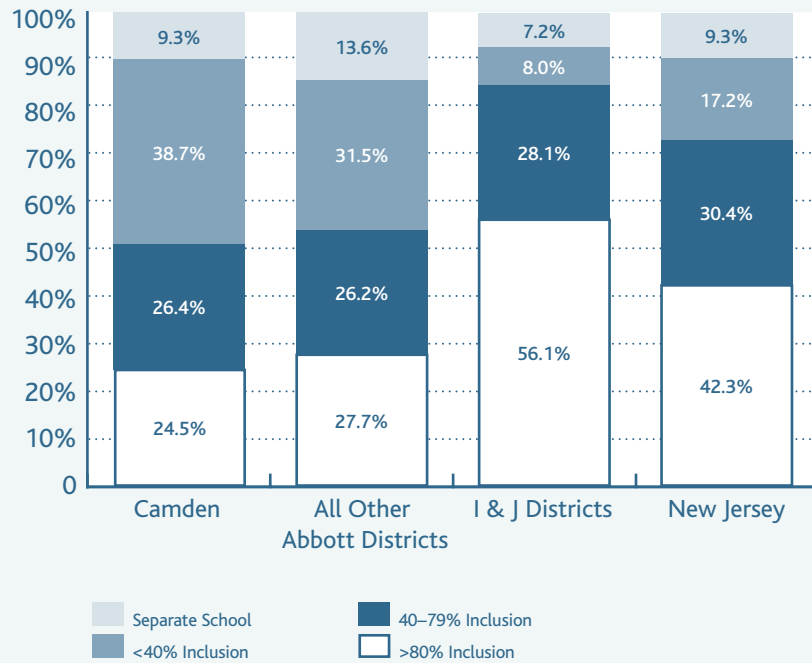
SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994-95 to 2002-03

3

K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.4

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



courses compared to Cherry Hill's 17. Camden's advanced placement courses were Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, and English Literature and Composition. The district's high schools are now implementing a five-year plan to add advanced placement courses, increase enrollment in existing courses, and improve student performance on advanced placement tests.

Student and Family Supports

Under Abbott, the state funds and the districts 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; funding to support other programs is available if a school or district can show that the students need them. Below, we present information on some of the supplemental programs and services available in Camden's public schools: intensive early literacy, parent involvement, access to technology, and alternative education and dropout prevention. More supplemental programs are described in the technical report.

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

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

➤ We reviewed early literacy programs in three schools that serve students in the early elementary grades. Washington School offered daily, one-on-one tutoring to students in Grades 1 through 3 who participated in the after-school program (for high academic need students); and small-group tutoring to students in Grades 4 and 5 in the after-school program. Parkside provided small-group tutoring to about half of the students in Grades 3 and 4 reading below grade level, but not on a daily basis. Only Riletta Cream Elementary School said that it provided daily tutoring to any student who needed it. Kindergarten and Grade 1 students were tutored by BookMates volunteers, through an interfaith alliance of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey and the Catholic Diocese of Camden. Daily small-group tutoring was offered to Grade 4 and 5 students. Each grade level also had a teacher's aide or instructional assistant to work with students needing help with reading.

Parent Involvement. Emerging research suggests that children with parents who are engaged in their *learning* are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, improve their social skills, graduate from high school, and go on to college. Parent involvement in the *school* can be important too if it is linked to improving learning, developing specific skills, or encouraging children to take more challenging classes. Parent involvement can also build a sense of community accountability for student learning. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, districts are required to use a portion of their federal funding to form and support a district parent advisory council. Abbott schools are required to make efforts to involve parents and caregivers in their children's education and in general school decision-making. At the very least, each school should have a parent-community coordinator (or family liaison) and parent representation on its SLC.

➤ Five out of six schools we visited had parent-community coordinators (called community school coordinators in Camden) who served as liaisons between the school and children's

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K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.5

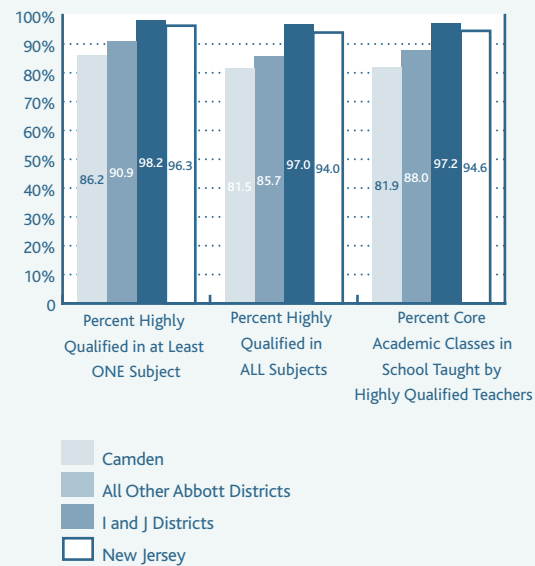
Student–Computer Ratio by District Grouping, 1997–98 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.6

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



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

homes to bring more parents into the school building and to change the belief that parents are not welcome in the school. The parent-community coordinator provides workshops for parents addressing student academic and health issues, and works with families to address individual student needs. Woodrow Wilson High School did not have a parent-community coordinator in 2003–04. SLC chairs at all six of the schools we visited reported that there were parent representatives on their management teams.

Access to Technology. Under Abbott, there should be no more than five students to each computer in each school throughout the district. Abbott districts are required to have staff to 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.

➤ Camden students had easier access to computers than their peers in the other Abbott districts or throughout the state in 1999–00, and access to computers continued to improve. By 2002–03, Camden students had the same access as did their peers in the wealthiest suburbs. Computer access improved dramatically in the other Abbott districts too. The average number

of students to every computer decreased from 11.3 to 4.8 in the other Abbott districts, better than the Abbott standard. Access to computers in school improved throughout the state and in the wealthiest districts as well. Community members who reviewed this report noted that the information presented here does not tell us how well the use of technology is integrated into student instruction.

Alternative Education. Abbott districts are also required to identify and provide services to students at risk of failing and dropping out. At a minimum, the districts are required to provide alternative programs for young people in middle and high school, and be adequately staffed with dropout prevention specialists.

7 The Camden Board of Education runs five alternative education programs for students in Grades 6 through 12 who need an alternative learning environment because of academic or behavioral problems: South Camden Alternative School, Camden Alternative Motivational Program (CAMP), Project: AFFIRM, Camden City Academic Laboratory Program (CCALP), and Port of Re-Entry. Special education students may take part if the programs meet their individual needs as specified in their Individualized Education Plans (IEP). All of the district's programs are small learning communities with no more than 15 students to any teacher and a maximum

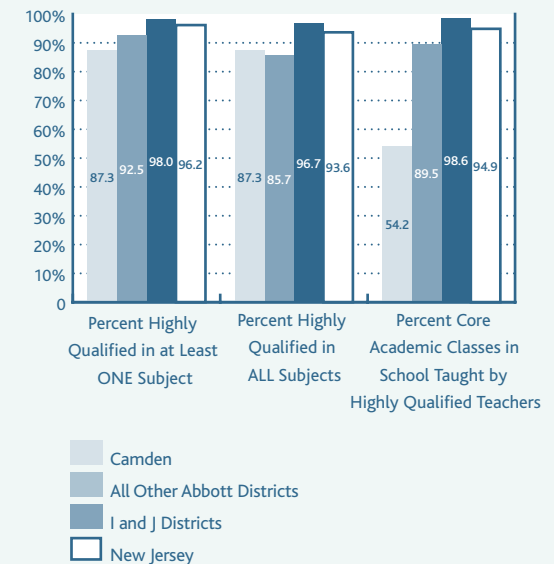
total enrollment of 60 students. Each program has its own entry and exit criteria.

K-12 Teacher Qualifications and Supports

Highly Qualified Teachers. The Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) outlines several measures that schools and districts must take to ensure a quality public education to all of their students. One provision requires that certain teachers must be “highly qualified” in each subject they teach.⁶ The requirements of becoming highly qualified vary depending on when the teacher is hired and what type of school he or she teaches in. In general, a teacher must hold a four-year college degree, be fully certified, and show a level of knowledge in his or her subject matter by passing a state test. New middle and high school teachers must also have a certain amount of college credits in the subject matter they teach. The law applies equally to teachers who teach many core subjects (such as many elementary school and special education teachers), those who specialize in a single subject (such as many

FIGURE | 3.7

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



SOURCE | Highly Qualified Teacher Survey, 2004

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FIGURE | 3.8

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

Elementary Schools Staff	Camden		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Instructional Facilitator	87.0%	66.7%	98.0%	97.4%
Social Worker	39.1%	70.8%	72.0%	68.6%
Teacher Tutor	0.0%	0.0%	26.4%	43.5%
All Positions	0.0%	0.0%	21.8%	36.3%

Middle and High Schools Staff	Camden		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Attendance/Dropout Prevention Officer	61.5%	60.0%	48.6%	51.2%
Health-Social Service Coordinator	0.0%	84.6%	36.7%	34.3%
All Positions	0.0%	53.8%	26.2%	29.5%

All Schools Staff	Camden		All Other Abbott Districts	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
Family Liaison (Parent-Community Coordinator)	0.0%	40.6%	73.9%	73.4%
Guidance Counselor	84.4%	84.4%	94.6%	94.3%
Librarian/Media Specialist	90.6%	87.5%	89.4%	91.4%
Nurse/Health Specialist	93.8%	87.5%	97.5%	97.8%
Security Officer	93.8%	93.7%	87.7%	88.7%
Tech Coordinator	0.0%	87.5%	88.9%	86.2%
All Positions	0.0%	34.4%	61.8%	67.0%

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

middle and high school teachers), basic skills teachers, and bilingual and ESL teachers.

All districts must submit a “highly qualified teacher” report. Many districts, including Camden, had difficulty compiling the information needed to fulfill this reporting requirement. The Camden report review team discussed these problems and confirmed that the following information was what the district had submitted. They concluded that local stakeholders should view this information—despite potential reporting problems—because of the importance of this indicator as a proxy for teaching quality. Reading left to right, the three sets of grouped bars in Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show the percent who are highly qualified in at least *one* subject, the percent who are highly qualified in *all* core subjects, and the percent of core subject area *classes* taught by a highly qualified teacher.

➤ In 2003–04, more than four out of five of Camden’s elementary teachers were highly qualified in at least one subject and highly qualified in all of the core academic subjects they taught, and four out of five core classes were taught by a highly qualified teacher. However, Camden had the lowest percentage of highly qualified

teachers in its elementary schools of all of the district groupings we examined.

- A large majority of New Jersey's high school teachers are highly qualified and Camden's high school teaching staff compared well with the other district groupings. Eighty-seven percent were highly qualified in at least one subject they taught and 87 percent were highly qualified in *all* of the subjects they taught. There is a real gap between Camden and the other district groupings in the percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers, however. Slightly more than half (54%) of Camden's core high school classes are taught by highly qualified teachers, compared to about 90 percent in the other Abbott districts and even more in the other district groupings.

Staffing Patterns. 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.

- In 2002–03, the district was not funding several staff positions required under Abbott. Some of these positions were filled in 2003–04, including health and social service coordinators, family liaisons, and technology coordinators. Camden schools did not employ any teacher tutors to assist children having problems with reading in either year, however.

K-12 Budget

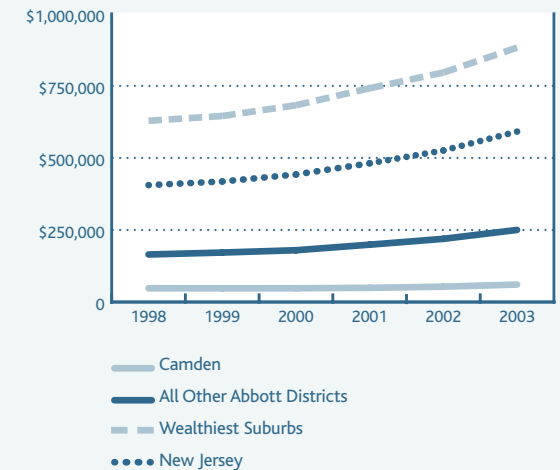
Public education is, of course, an essential service provided by local governments and education costs are higher in school districts with high concentrations of low-income households. Because local taxes are based on property values, property wealth is a good indicator of the availability of money to support education.

- The wealthiest suburbs had 15 times more property wealth per student than Camden in 2003. That same year, the state average was almost ten times that of Camden.

General Education Funding.⁷ The basic source of general education funding in New Jersey is the local tax levy. In many school districts, the local tax levy is supplemented by state aid. Several sources of state aid—available to all New Jersey school districts on a formula basis—come out of the school funding law called the *Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act of 1996 (CEIFA)*. “Core Curriculum Standards Aid” (CCSA) makes up the difference between what school districts can afford and what the state estimates to be an adequate

FIGURE | 3.9

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



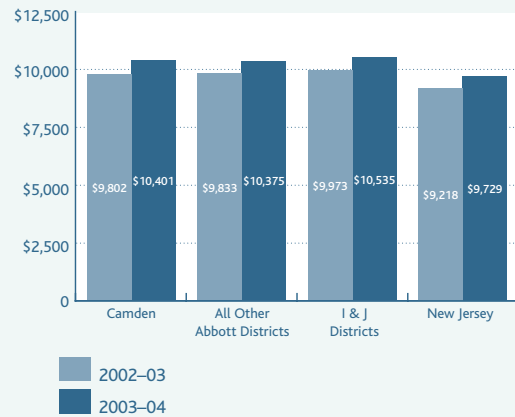
SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Community Affairs: Office of Local Government Services, 1998–2003

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FIGURE | 3.10

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



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

level of school funding to support a thorough and efficient education. Some districts also receive “Supplemental CCSA” to ease their local tax burdens. “Stabilization Aid” goes to districts that might otherwise lose too much CCSA from year to year because of enrollment changes.

A key feature of Abbott is the requirement that general education funding in the poorest urban school districts be at a level *equal* to what is spent on average in our state’s most successful suburban districts. In recognition of the low property wealth and high tax rates in these districts, the state is required to provide the funding needed to achieve this equality. Abbott districts receive this funding—called “Abbott Parity Aid”—from the state every year since 1997–98.⁸

➤ On a per student basis, Camden and the other Abbott districts have as much money as the successful suburban districts to support general education. In fact, there has been equity in funding for general education between the poorest cities and the wealthiest suburbs in New Jersey since 1997 when Abbott parity began.

Supplemental Programs Funding. To be ready and successful learners, the children

and youth of Camden 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. It 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.

➤ In 2003–04, Camden received an additional \$1,802 per student in supplemental program aid to support the second half-day of Kindergarten and other programs and services to meet the needs of its students and their families. Since 2002–03, however, the district's supplemental programs support decreased by about \$1,000 per student. The per student amount Camden received in 2003–04 was much closer to the average of the other Abbott districts than the per student amount it received in 2002–03.

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 neighborhood residents. Their primary pur-

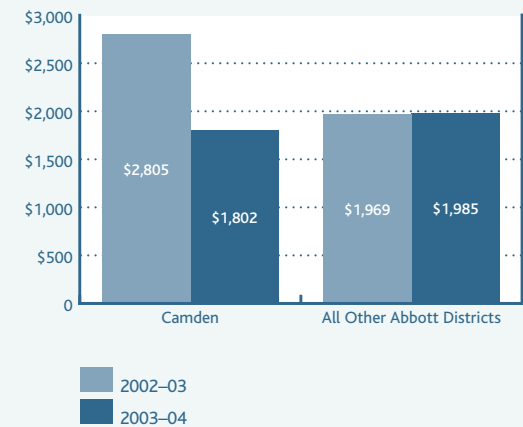
pose is to help improve teaching and learning. They do this by taking part in program planning and decision-making and encouraging broad participation by school staff and neighborhood stakeholders. SLC members serve at least two years with staggered terms. SLCs should meet at least once a month.

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.

Along with the other Abbott districts, Camden 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

FIGURE | 3.11

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



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

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

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 of the 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, the process has begun with the district’s business administrator, who sets school budgets based on a state template, previous spending levels, and a three percent cost-of-living increase. The district’s business administrator sends a copy of each school’s budget to its SLC for review and modification. 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.

➤ The SLC representatives we spoke with expressed concern about the loss of decision-making authority and talked about the negative effect it has had on member participation. The process of budgeting and planning was described as more constrained than it used to be: SLCs are now seen more as “rubber stamp organizations” and places where teachers can

discuss what they would like to see, but have little power to make anything happen. We also learned that SLC meetings in some schools were put on hold several times in 2003–04 while the school board determined what types of decisions SLCs would be allowed to make.

➤ All six SLCs had the opportunity to cast votes for or against their schools’ plans and budgets, as required by Abbott.

Abbott Advisory Council. Each Abbott district should have an “Abbott Advisory Council,” a steering committee that represents the district and its community stakeholders. The primary responsibilities of the Council are to review district policies and procedures to implement the Abbott reforms.

➤ As of September 2004, Camden did not have an Abbott Advisory Council. A community reviewer of this report noted that the absence of a districtwide Council limits the district’s ability to carry out its policymaking and oversight functions under Abbott.

K-12 Student Outcomes

As education stakeholders, we need to ensure that educational success is not determined by where a student lives. We need to ensure that the schools provide opportunities for

students to learn; staff to teach students, and supports for that staff; financial resources to work with; a sound educational environment; and leadership to guide the whole process. The Abbott remedies were intended to support efforts of schools, districts, parents and advocates to improve these elements of schooling. We cannot understand how schools or districts are doing—or help them to do better—unless we consider all of these elements. We encourage readers to review and consider the student outcomes presented below in light of the material presented up to this point.

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 indica-

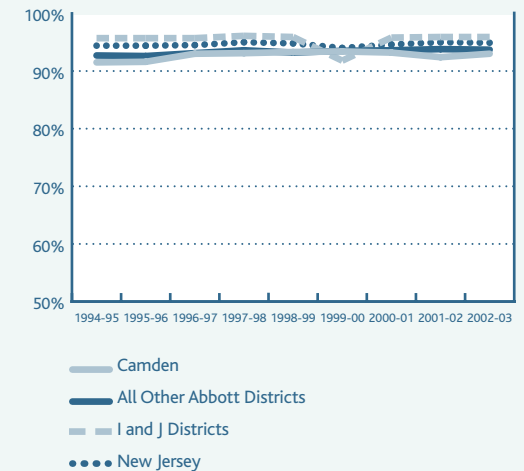
tor: students can only benefit from opportunities to learn if they attend school regularly.

- Camden's elementary school student attendance was at 92 percent in 1994–95 and has remained at about 92 or 93 percent through 2002–03. At the elementary school level, attendance across New Jersey was about 95 percent in 1994–95 and remained steady through 2002–03.
- Attendance rates in the high schools were lower than in the elementary schools across the state. In every year between 1994–95 and 2002–03, fewer students attended Camden high schools on an average day than in any other district grouping we analyzed. High school attendance was higher in the other Abbott districts and improved from 86 to 89 percent over the years. The high school attendance rate remained at about 92 percent across the state. High school attendance was highest in the wealthiest suburbs at about 95 percent in all years except 1999–00.

Child and Youth Well-Being. Children and youth who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy are better able to learn at school. Many of Abbott's supplemental programs have as their purpose to improve the well-being of children and youth of New Jersey's cities. School staff either provide direct services to children and their families or

FIGURE | 3.12

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



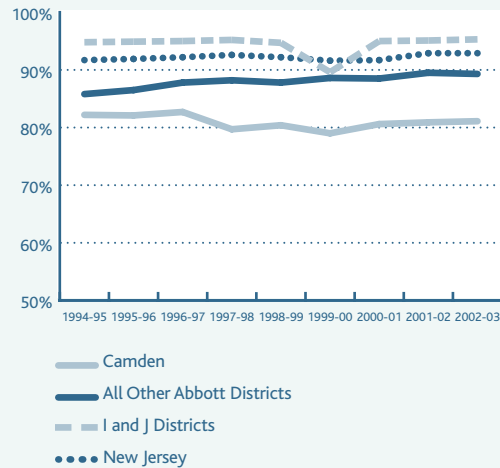
SOURCE | School Report Card, 1994–95 to 2002–03

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FIGURE 3.13

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



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

help them to link with needed services already provided in the community. Service provision and linkage are essential parts of the jobs of health and social services coordinators, parent-community coordinators, family liaisons, social workers, and guidance counselors, to name a few. As a central public institution of the urban community, schools play a critical role in ensuring the well-being of children and youth. Schools are not alone in their responsibility—parents, elected officials, and public and private agencies in the city must all play a role. As the African proverb so famously says: “It takes a whole village to raise a child.”

➤ The City of Camden compared poorly with the state on two indicators of child and youth well-being. Although there has been some improvement in teen births and child abuse and neglect, both rates are still high at almost four times the state average. In 2002, the Camden teen birth rate for young women ages 15–19 was 102 per thousand, compared to a state average of 28.8 per thousand. Camden’s child abuse rate was 12 per thousand compared to a state average of 3.4 per thousand that same year.

School Safety. For many years, federal law has required every school and district to

report the violence and vandalism that occur in schools. The New Jersey Department of Education compiles annual counts and reports them publicly. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) specified a standard of safety beyond which schools are defined as “persistently dangerous.” Under the “Unsafe School Choice Option,” the law provides that families of children who are victims of violence or who go to a persistently dangerous school may choose to send their child to another public school in the district or a charter school in the same city.

The New Jersey Department of Education considers how many violent and disruptive incidents occur over a three-year period to identify persistently dangerous schools. There are two types of incidents counted. They are:

- 1) *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) *Category B Offenses*: 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 main 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.⁹ The new regulations do not outline what powers the New Jersey Department of Education has to penalize school districts who knowingly falsify reports.

➤ None of Camden’s schools qualified as persistently dangerous because of the number of Category A incidents. Three elementary or middle schools in Camden sustained a high enough

FIGURE | 3.14

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

Indicator	Time Period	Camden				New Jersey	
		Time 1		Time 2		Time 1	Time 2
		NUMBER	PER 1,000	NUMBER	PER 1,000	PER 1,000	PER 1,000
Child Death	1997-2001	10	0.5	3	0.1	0.2	0.1
Teen Death	1997-2001	18	2.5	6	0.8	0.4	0.3
Births to Teens (10–14)	1998-2002	15	3.9	16	4.1	0.6	0.5
Births to Teens (15–19)	1998-2002	524	143.1	374	102.1	34.1	28.8
Child Abuse and Neglect	1998-2002	596	19.0	375	12.0	4.2	3.4

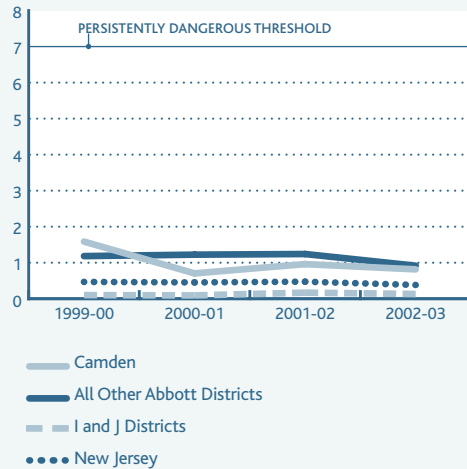
SOURCE | New Jersey Center for Health Statistics, 1998-2002; 2000 US Census; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004 Kids Count; Association for Children of New Jersey, 1997-2002 Kids Count.

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FIGURE | 3.15

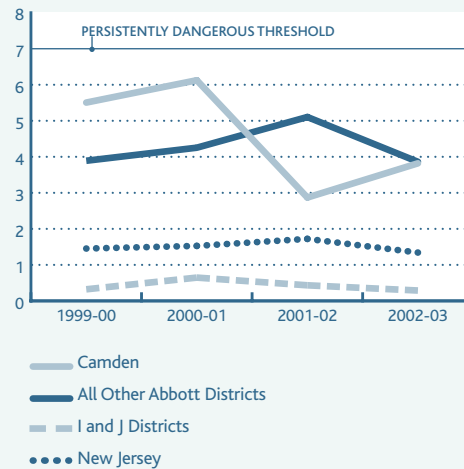
"Category A" Offenses by District Grouping: Elementary Schools, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.16

"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

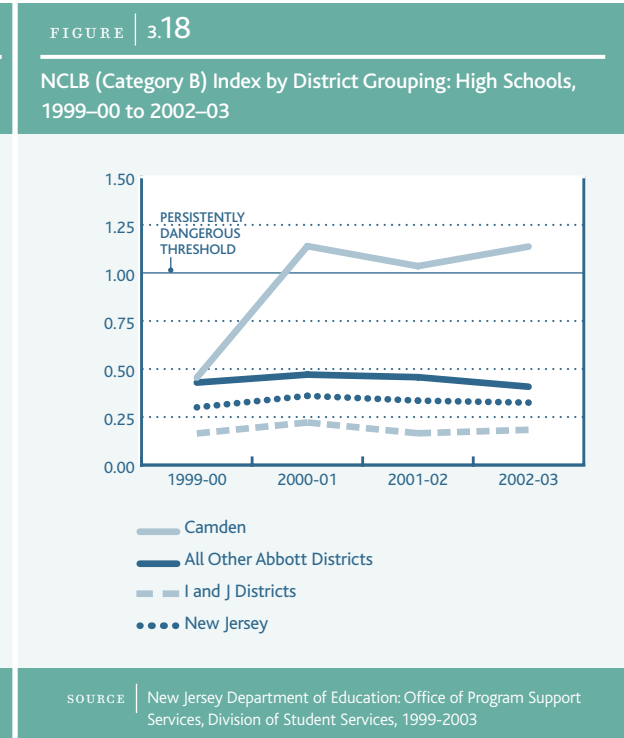
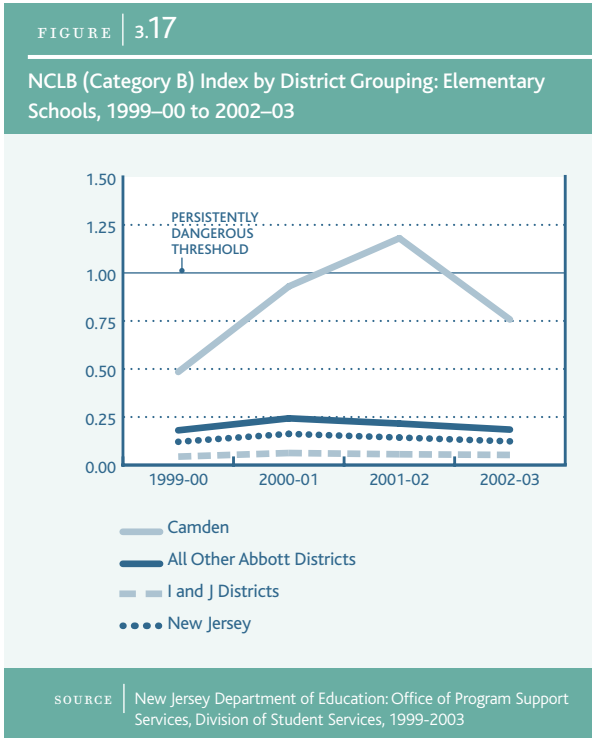
number of Category B offenses to place them in the persistently dangerous category under federal law, however. Camden High School was designated persistently dangerous by this measure too.

Student Achievement. In New Jersey, the fourth grade test is called the ASK₄ (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge). It is essentially the same test as the former ESPA (Elementary School Proficiency Assessment). The 8th grade test is called the GEPA (Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment). The 11th grade test is the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). Before 2001–02 high school students took a different test called the HSPT (High School Proficiency Test).

There are many ways to examine achievement test results; each way tells a part of the story. *Proficiency percentages* tell us how many students met standards for their grade level, but do not tell us about small or large changes that did not cross the state's official proficiency cutpoints. *Average test scores* show changes that may not register in a proficiency analysis, but do not tell us how many students met the state's standards.

Below, we present proficiency percentages and average scale scores for the language arts literacy and math tests at Grades 4, 8, and 11, respectively. We report test results for all available years for each test through 2002–03. (Statewide 2003–04 test results became available too late to be incorporated in this report.) First, we compare average scores over time for general education students in Camden, all other Abbotts, the wealthiest (I and J) districts in the state, and the state overall. Second, we show the percent of Camden’s general education students scoring within the three proficiency categories over time. Finally, in recognition that district averages may mask important differences between schools, we highlight schools that did well on each test in 2002–03 and schools that improved the most over time.¹⁰

- The district’s fourth graders have made gains in language arts. Camden’s general education scores rose most dramatically in 2000–01, as did the scores in many districts throughout the state, and stayed at about the same level through 2002–03.
- In 1998–99, only 20 percent of Camden’s fourth graders met state standards in language arts

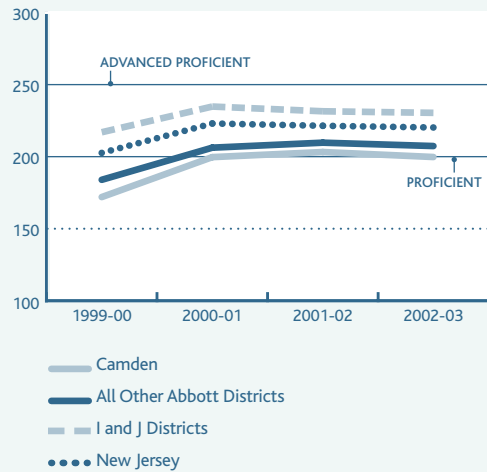


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FIGURE | 3.19

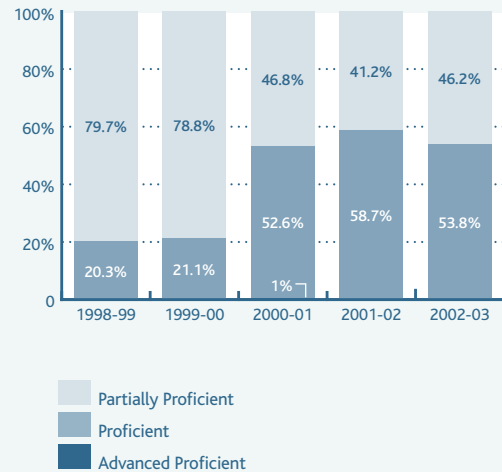
Grade 4 Language Arts Literacy Score by District Grouping, 1999–00 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.20

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

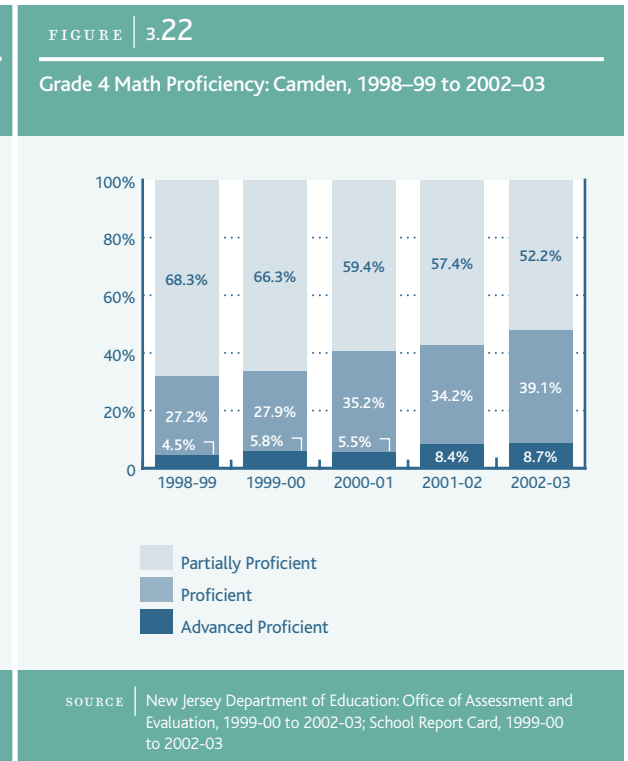
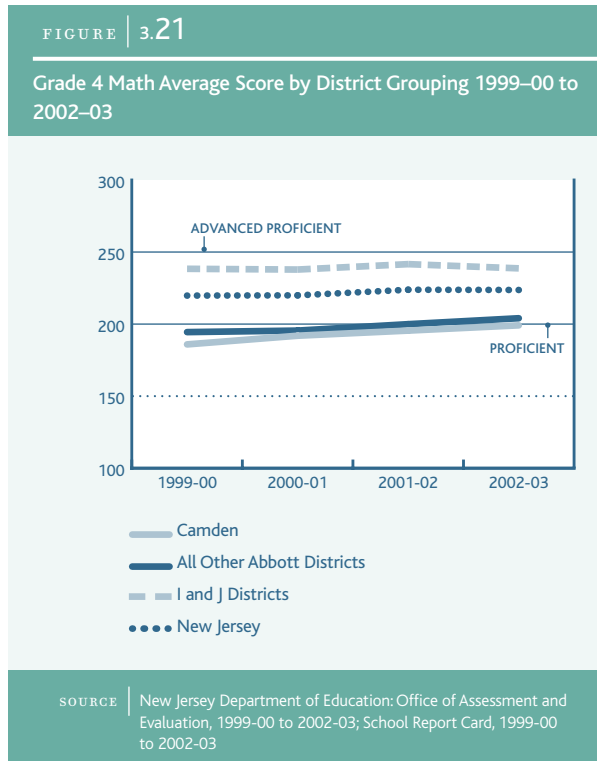


SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 1999–00 to 2002–03; School Report Card, 1999–00 to 2002–03

literacy, compared to 54 percent in 2002–03. Most of the improvement in Camden occurred in 2000–01 as it did across the state, but it has been sustained through 2002–03

- Grade 4 math scores also improved over time. Camden's math scores improved by seven percent from 186 in 1999–00 to 199 in 2002–03. The fourth graders in the other Abbott districts scored slightly higher over time and improved by five percent. Grade 4 math scores throughout the state and in the wealthiest districts were higher, but improved less.
- More and more Camden fourth graders scored proficient and advanced proficient on the math test with each passing year. In 1998–99, about one in three fourth graders (32%) met the state's standards in math. In 2002–03, nearly half (48%) scored at least proficient on the same exam.
- There was a great deal of variation among the schools on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test. Whittier and Lanning Square Schools were the highest-performers.
- On the other hand, in three schools, fewer than 40 percent of the general education students scored at least proficient on the Grade 4 language arts literacy test: Dudley, Parkside, and Wiggins Elementary Schools.
- Improvement over time is, of course, an important indicator that a school is moving in the right direction: Parkside, Bonsall, and Riletta Cream Elementary Schools showed the biggest gains in the Grade 4 language arts literacy test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.

- Camden schools also varied widely on the Grade 4 math test. Five schools were high-performers in math: Whittier, Wilson, Riletta Cream, McGraw, and Cramer Elementary Schools. Students at Whittier, Wilson, and Riletta Cream out-performed the state average on the test that year.
- On the other hand, in six schools, fewer than 40 percent of the general education students scored at least proficient on the Grade 4 math test: Sharp, Wiggins, Sumner, Yorkship, Parkside, and Dudley Elementary Schools.
- The four schools with most improved Grade 4 math scores were: Riletta Cream, Bonsall, Lanning Square, Parkside, and Molina Elementary Schools. They showed the biggest gains on the Grade 4 math test between 1999–00 and 2002–03.
- When compared to the array of instructional programs and reforms for elementary school students, Abbott has yet to provide for students in the middle and high school grades. Overall, Grade 8 average scores and proficiency percentages have remained stable although lower than the state on average.
- Performance on the Grade 8 tests varied widely among Camden’s schools. Two schools stood out as high performers on both the language arts literacy and math tests: Forest Hill and Riletta Cream. All (100%) of the general education students at Forest Hill scored proficient or better on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test.

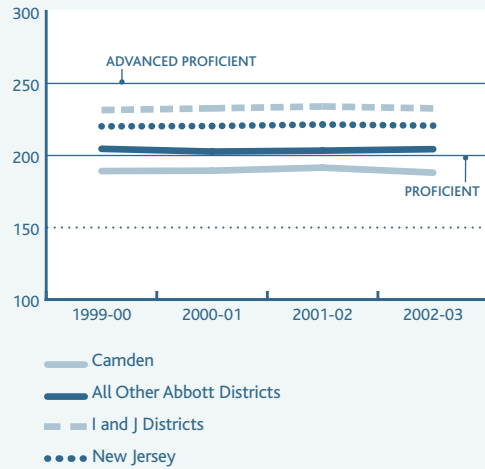


3

K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.23

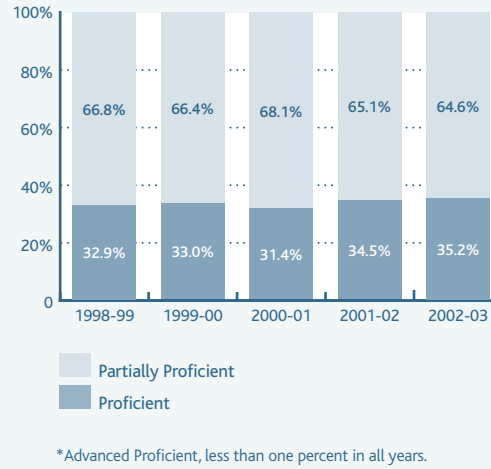
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Score by District Grouping, 1999-00 to 2002-03



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 | 3.24

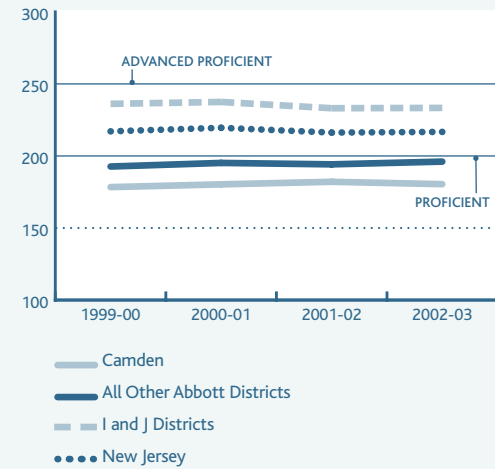
Grade 8 Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Camden, 1998-99 to 2002-03



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

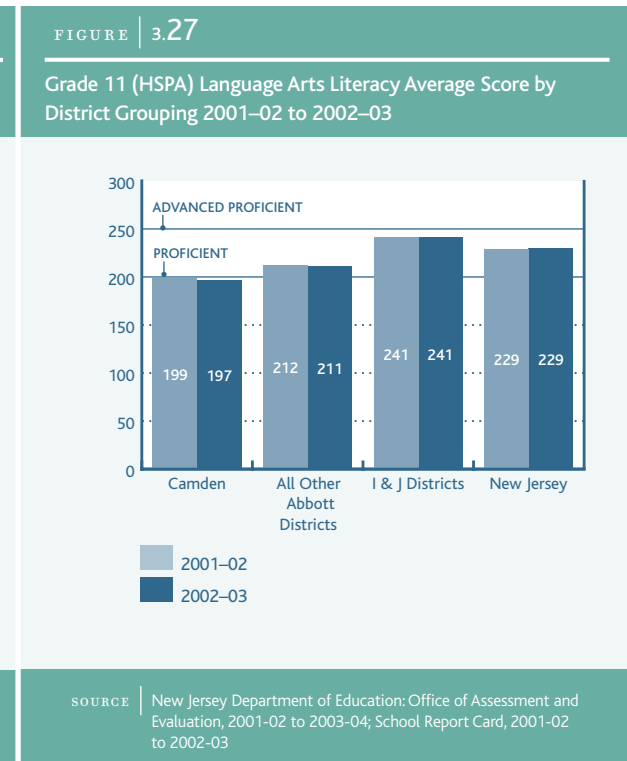
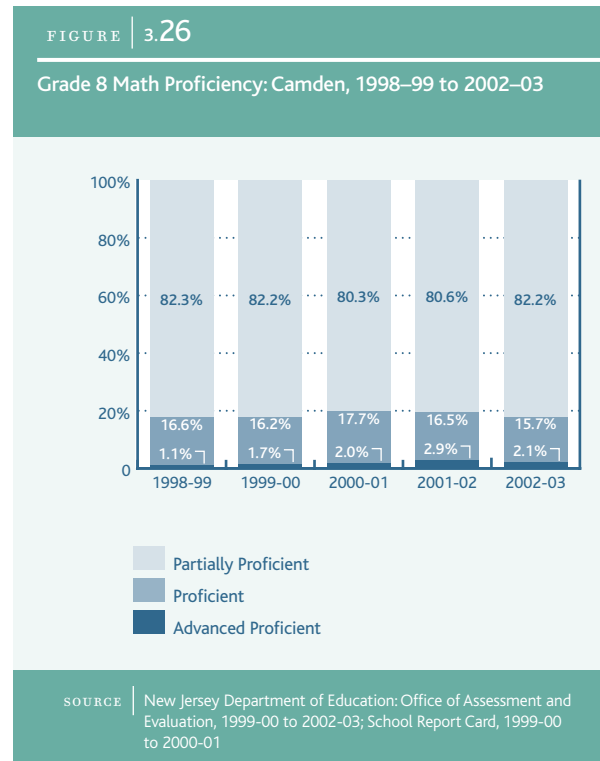
FIGURE | 3.25

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

- In four schools, fewer than 40 percent scored at least proficient on the Grade 8 language arts literacy test: Veterans Memorial, East Camden, Pyne Poynt, and Morgan Village.
- In seven schools, fewer than 40 percent scored at least proficient on the Grade 8 math test: Veterans Memorial, East Camden, Pyne Poynt, Morgan Village, Hatch Middle School, Cooper's Poynt, and Bonsall Elementary Schools.
- Two schools showed general education gains on both Grade 8 tests between 1999–00 and 2002–03: Hatch Middle and Riletta Cream Elementary School. Grade 8 math scores also improved at Veteran's and East Camden Middle Schools.
- On average, Camden's Grade 11 language arts literacy scores were just under the proficiency level in 2001–02 and 2002–03 with just half of Camden 11th graders meeting the state proficiency standard. District wide, Grade 11 math scores also remained just below the proficiency level, with about 30 percent of the student body meeting state standards. Like the nationwide stagnation in Grade 11 test scores, this lack of progress is likely the result of the relative lack of attention given to reforming high schools in New Jersey. 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.
- Grade 11 students at Dr. Brimm Medical Arts High School were high performers on both exams (language arts literacy and math). Creative

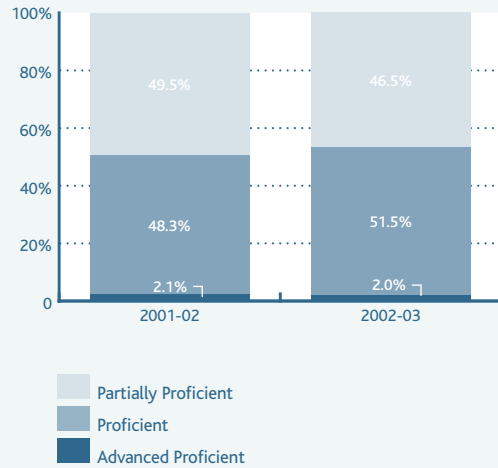


3

K-12 Education

FIGURE 3.28

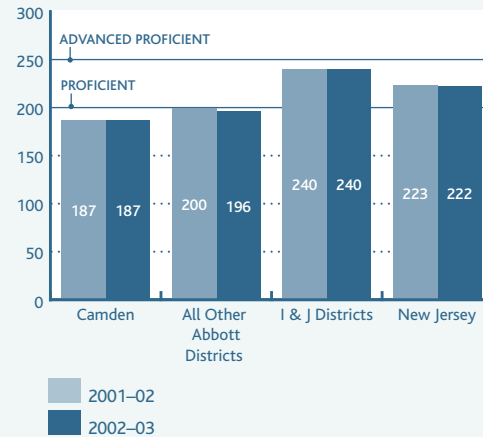
Grade 11 (HSPA) Language Arts Literacy Proficiency: Camden, 2001-02 to 2002-03



SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2003-04; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

FIGURE 3.29

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 2003-04; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

and Performing Arts High School was a high performer in Grade 11 language arts.

At Camden High, however, fewer than two in five general education students scored at least proficient on the Grade 11 language arts exam. On the math test, fewer than two in five met the state standards at Creative and Performing Arts, Camden, and Woodrow Wilson High Schools.

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, graduation is a major indicator of educational success. In New Jersey, there was no official way to estimate graduation rates until recently. We estimated historical graduation rates using a cumulative promotion index.

Our estimates suggest that fewer than half of Camden’s class of 2001-02 graduated from school. Although alarming, the district’s promotion index improved from a low of 35 percent seven years earlier. By this measure, high schools across the state have graduated about 80 percent of their students and the wealthiest districts have graduated about 90 percent.

The other Abbott districts graduated about 56 percent in 1996–97 but that figure rose to about 62 percent in 2001–02. More needs to be done to assess the true graduation rates in New Jersey high schools.

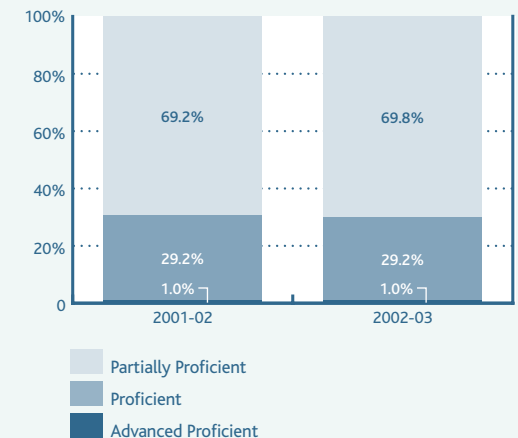
Routes to Graduation. High school achievement tests assess if students have mastered the content and skills outlined in New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards. Before 2001–02, it was assumed that graduating general education students mastered the content standards and passed a traditional Grade 11 exam. Since then, New Jersey high school students who fail one or more sections of the traditional exam can still earn a standard, academic diploma if they take and pass the alternative exam, the Special Review Assessment (SRA). 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 the 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.

➤ In Camden and the other Abbott districts the percentage of students who graduated by passing the traditional Grade 11 exam decreased since 1994–95. In Camden, 79 percent of the class of 1994–95 graduated after passing the traditional exam. By 2002–03, only about 40 percent graduated this way. Although fewer students are graduating by passing the traditional test, the graduation estimates we discussed above suggest that more students are graduating from Camden’s high schools.

FIGURE | 3.30

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



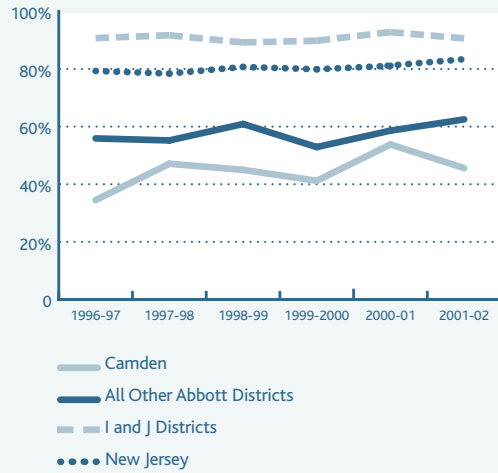
SOURCE | New Jersey Department of Education: Office of Assessment and Evaluation, 2001-02 to 2003-04; School Report Card, 2001-02 to 2002-03

3

K-12 Education

FIGURE | 3.31

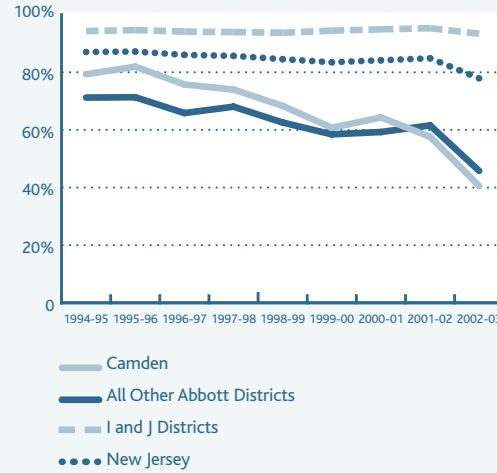
Cumulative Promotion Index by District Grouping, 1996–97 to 2001–02



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

FIGURE | 3.32

Graduation by Traditional Grade 11 Exam by District Grouping, 1994–95 to 2002–03



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

FIGURE | 3.33

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

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	Met
Abbott districts have funding parity with the I and J districts	Met
Student computer ratio is 5 to 1	Met
To avoid being considered "persistently dangerous", schools must have an average of less than 7 or more Category "A" offenses for three consecutive years.	Elementary School: Met Secondary School: Met
To avoid being considered "persistently dangerous" schools must have an NCLB Index rating less than 1.	Elementary School: Not Met Secondary School: Not 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: Dudley Elementary Parkside Elementary U.S. Wiggins Elementary
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.	Not Met
2003-04 Grade 11 Achievement Tests: For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, each of 10 demographic subgroups had to have: 1) 95% test participation; 2) 73% score at least proficient in language arts literacy; AND 3) 55% score at least proficient in math.	Not Met

* The New Jersey Department of Education provided 2003-04 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data several months prior to releasing statewide 2003-04 achievement test scores. Therefore, we include the 2003-04 AYP data to provide readers with the most updated information available, while achievement test score data is only analyzed through 2002-03.

3

K-12 Education

Endnotes

6. 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.

7. Here, 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 fund supportive programs and services for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other special needs populations.

8. 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).

9. 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.

10. Here, a school is identified as a high performer if its general education students met or exceeded the proficiency threshold set by the New Jersey Department of Education in compliance with the “adequate yearly progress” provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

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

4

School Facilities Construction

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

The key features include:

- Priority to health and safety repairs;
- Long range plans developed by districts with community partners;
- More classrooms to eliminate overcrowding;
- Space to provide preschool to all eligible three- and four-year-olds;
- 100 percent state-financed for approved costs; and
- Schools to accommodate state-of-the-art teaching and learning.

The First-Round Long-Range Facilities Plans

The first step of the Abbott school facilities construction program was to develop a district wide Long-Range Facilities Plan (LRF). 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. LRF development involved several procedures, including:

- Projecting future enrollments;
- Determining deficiencies in every building;
- Assessing the safety and educational adequacy of current schools;

- Planning future educational needs, with a set minimum standards as a guideline;
- Engaging parents and other community members in the process; and
- Planning for "swing space" while construction is under way.

The LRF process was a unique chance for school districts to assess their existing schools and, where needed, plan to build better ones to accommodate children's needs and improved instructional practices. The development of the first-round LRFs did not go very smoothly for a number of reasons. Most districts did not have enough time to assess their current educational programs. They also did not have the expertise to translate educational practices into new building designs.

- Camden's first-round long-range plan included a total of 34 projects. Nine of the original projects were to be new schools; the remaining projects were renovations or additions to existing schools. The district's first-round long-range plan was conditionally approved by the New Jersey Department of Education because the district proposed spaces that were not allowed under the published standards.

- Camden was one of six districts in the state awarded a "Demonstration Project." The new school will replace the existing Catto Elementary School and includes a community center run by the Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Camden was one of very few school districts to include upgrades to private preschool provider buildings in its first-round facilities plan. Because Camden's plan never received full state approval, it is unclear if the district still intends to upgrade these facilities.

Leadership

Facilities Advisory Board. 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 board 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 imple-

mented to seek input and guide the district wide planning, design, and construction of school facilities.

- District staff report that Camden had a Facilities Advisory Board (FAB) during the first phase of LRFP development, but it has not met in the past two years. The district also told us that they planned to reestablish the committee in January 2005 for the second-round planning process. We also learned that the district plans to initiate a separate committee for non-instructional facilities projects that are not state-funded through the Abbott program.

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.^{11,12}

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

FIGURE | 4.1

Camden's First-Round Facilities Plan* Overview

	PROJECTS	
	Number	Percent
New Schools	9	26.5%
Renovations/Additions	23	67.6%
Additions	2	5.9%
Total	34	100.0%

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

* Camden's first-round facilities plan was *conditionally* approved by the New Jersey Department of Education.

4

School Facilities Construction

FIGURE | 4.2

Overview of Camden's Current Projects

School	Type
Creative and Performing Arts	New School
Dudley	New School
H.B. Wilson	New School
Morgan Village	New School
Washington Street	New School
R.C. Molina	New School
Cooper's Poynt	New School
Early Childhood Dev. Center	New School
Lanning Square	New School
Powell	New School
Catto	New School / Demonstration Project
Woodrow Wilson	Addition/Rehab
Camden	Addition/Rehab
Pyne Poynt	Addition/Rehab

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

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.

From the outset, all parties acknowledged that the Abbott school construction program would be a vast undertaking. As with any effort this size, it will take a long time. Many schools operate year-round and the district must have the space to provide an adequate educational program while facilities projects proceed. Even though the state finances and oversees the process, the district must take great care in pacing the submission of its projects and moving them through the pipeline to completion.

➤ As of September 2004, 14 out of Camden's 34 school construction projects were in the pipeline toward completion, none were in construction or completed.

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 or the land may need to be remediated to ensure that it is safe for students and teachers.

- In the absence of a fully approved LRFP, Camden's projects are treated by the state as piecemeal "amendments" to the original plan.
- The district has been criticized for including too few community representatives too late in the game to allow meaningful input into school construction plans.
- The Camden Board of Education has managed to move several projects into predevelopment, but has run into several problems that have stalled their progress at that stage. In particular, the Camden Board of Education has had a difficult time finding and acquiring suitable sites because of land shortages, competition from private real estate development, and environmental problems.

Endnotes

11. 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, boiler repair, and asbestos removal.

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

FIGURE | 4.3
Status of Facilities Projects: Camden & All Other Abbott Districts*

	Camden		All Other Abbott Districts
	NUMBER	PERCENT	PERCENT
To Be Submitted to NJDOE	20	58.8%	61.3%
Pre-Development	13	38.2%	19.7%
In Design	1	2.9%	7.5%
Construction Contract Awarded	0	0.0%	9.2%
Completed	0	0.0%	2.3%
Total	34	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.

Next Steps for Education Stakeholders

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.

Abbott Indicators List

The following is the list of Abbott indicators in the technical version of this report. The indicators included in this 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**
- **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 Student Learning

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**

Preschool 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

Adequate Resources

Are the preschool programs adequately funded?

- Preschool budget

Informed and Inclusive 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 Student Learning

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)

Abbott Indicators List

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-on-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
 - 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

K-12 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

Adequate Resources

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

Informed and Inclusive 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

K-12 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 HSPA
 - Graduation via 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




Camden City Public School District, 201 N. Front Street, Camden, New Jersey 08102 • 856-966-2000

ANNETTE D. KNOX
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 4, 2005

TO: Lesley Hirsch and Erain Applewhite-Coney
Abbott Indicators Co-Directors

FROM: Annette D. Knox, Superintendent of Schools 

RE: Additional Information for Camden Indicators Report

As you prepare the Camden Abbott Indicators Report for publication, I am pleased to provide you with some additional information that should be of interest to all education stakeholders in Camden and throughout New Jersey.

The report will provide all of us with an opportunity to better understand the Abbott mission and to refine our planning for long-term success. As with the other three reports, Camden's will acknowledge our many successes, while also providing an indication of the work that remains to be done.


In this memorandum, I wish to share some additional, current information to help readers of the report gain an even fuller appreciation of the work we are doing in several key areas:

Student Achievement - Camden students have shown marked improvement in state assessments since the onset of Abbott reforms. Like most urban Abbott districts, we are currently seeing the greatest gains in the Grade 4 assessments, since these are the only students who have enjoyed the benefits of quality preschool programs and smaller classes for their entire academic experience.

- In 2003-2004, the number of fourth graders scoring proficient in language arts rose to 63% – an increase of almost 10% over the previous year.
- In 2003-2004, the number of fourth graders scoring proficient in math was 54% – an increase of 6% over the previous year.

Highly Qualified Staff – Almost nine in 10 of Camden's high school teachers – 87% – are highly qualified in all subjects, exceeding the Abbott average of 86%. At the elementary level, more than four in five (82%) of teachers are highly qualified in all subjects. As in other districts, many of Camden's middle school special needs teachers, who teach multiple subjects, are still working toward attaining Highly Qualified status in some areas. With one in five students enrolled in special education programs, we have a high number of staff in that category. I'm also pleased to report that the district has approved a portfolio assessment option for paraprofessionals, and is providing them with 20 hours of transportation for others to take the Praxis exam in locations outside Camden.

School Security – Camden Public Schools are much safer than public perception may indicate. With its successful emphasis on accountability, communication, and training, a firm seeking to provide school security in Washington, D.C. is modeling our security program. Our security officers have a state-of-the-art radio system, and receive extensive professional development throughout the year.



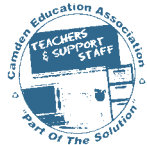
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School-Based Youth Services (SBYS) – We are enormously proud of this program. Both comprehensive high schools and our five middle schools have a team of professionals – a crisis counselor, an outreach specialist, a family therapist, a nurse-practitioner, and a health and human services coordinator – to assist students and their families. We are focused on family intervention and empowerment, which is vitally important in a city with high unemployment, a high crime rate, and six out of 10 homes headed by single women. In addition to counseling, we provide students with job placement and a large number of activities that are aimed at keeping them positively occupied outside of school. Two programs are worth mentioning in detail:

- A new curriculum, titled "Get Real About Violence," is about to be launched in all grades. Training in the program has already been provided to one teacher in each school, as well as the SBYS team members noted above. This program, based on solid research and woven into the curriculum, combines a focus on character development, respect and empathy for others, and non-violent problem solving with after-school programs and parent involvement. We are very excited about its potential.
- Our "Partners in Parenting" program, now in its eighth year, provides comprehensive support for pregnant students and those already with children. It offers parenting skills, along with a focus on developing a life plan for young parents, including the importance of effective co-parenting for mothers and fathers, regardless of their relationship. We also operate two Parent-Child centers, where students with young children can continue their education while receiving excellent childcare from trained community members. The staff ratio is 1:3 for infants, and 1:4 for toddlers.

Like all urban districts, Camden faces severe challenges. And, while we take satisfaction in the many successes we have enjoyed, we acknowledge and accept that there is still much work to be done. Ours is a community with enormous untapped human potential, and the public schools have a central role to play in developing that potential in our children and their families. Of course, we cannot do it alone, but we are determined to do our part, and to make the Camden Public Schools a leading force in the revitalization of this long-neglected city.

We appreciate the information provided by the Abbott Indicators Report. It will be an important element in the roadmap for future improvements, to which we are all committed.



**Camden
Education
Association**

Claraliene Gordon, President

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May 5, 2005

Mr. David Sciarra
Executive Director
Education Law Center
60 Park Place, Suite 300
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Mr. Sciarra,

On behalf of the Camden Education Association, representing more than 3,000 teachers, support professionals, and security officers working in the Camden Public Schools, I am pleased to offer some additional comments for inclusion in the 2005 Abbott Indicators Report for Camden.

Other than parents and caregivers, CEA members may have the closest relationship of anyone in our students' lives. We are their teachers and support professionals, but we are so much more; we are also the familiar faces who support them as they grapple with the reality of growing up in the poorest city in the United States of America. To people outside Camden, the statistics are simply numbers. But for our students, who live in neighborhoods crippled by a 16 percent unemployment rate, decades of neglect, and rampant crime, poverty, and violence, the public schools serve as a reliable haven in a sea of insecurity.

We know we provide our students with physical, emotional, social, and academic guidance when they have nowhere else to turn.

The Abbott Indicators Report is important snapshots of how far the Camden Public Schools have come – and how far they have to go. Since it relies on data that is a year old, we are encouraged to recognize that even more progress has been reported since that data was tabulated.

For example, the process of establishing a network of Parent Community Coordinators has advanced enormously since last year, when your data showed only 14 coordinators at our 33 schools. We now have 31 of them on board, ready to conduct community outreach and gather community feedback, both so essential to the success of urban districts under the Abbott reforms.

Research clearly indicates that family/parental involvement – particularly in urban districts – is vital to improving student achievement. These coordinators will play a central role in helping us to reach out to a widening circle of families and caregivers.

I am also pleased to serve as one of 15 members of the District Abbott Advisory Council, charged with providing oversight and advice in key areas of policy development and Abbott implementation procedures, to ensure full compliance with Abbott regulations governing School Leadership Councils in the district. The CEA takes this responsibility very seriously, and welcomes the accountability that comes with it.

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Much media attention has been paid of late to the issue of school safety in Camden. While we must openly acknowledge the fact that this community suffers from an unacceptable epidemic of poverty and violence – which inevitably washes into our school buildings – an honest appraisal must conclude that there has been precious little coverage or acknowledgement of the many positive steps this district has taken to secure our schools, and to guide students toward better behavior.

Again, CEA members are at the center of this effort. Approximately 125 of them are school security officers, reporting to Chief of School Security James Thornton. Thanks to his leadership and the enthusiastic participation of CEA members, Camden has gained a well-deserved reputation for state-of-the-art school security programs.

Central to that effort is a comprehensive and continuing program of professional development. Throughout the year, including during the last week of June (after students have left for the summer), security officers receive training in everything from CPR and gang vernacular to passive restraint and cultural diversity. The latter is critically important in Camden, where all too often, neighborhood conflicts between students of different cultural backgrounds find their way into the schools. The CEA also agreed to negotiate an earlier arrival time for security officers, in order for them to conduct “roll call” to ensure an orderly start to the day.

It may be a cliché, but it truly does take an entire village to educate children, and nowhere is that more true than in Camden, where the needs of our students are so great and the disadvantages they experience so obvious.

The Abbott reforms – and the resources they bring – are as vital to the future of Camden as the oxygen we breathe. We will always be able to identify shortcomings and areas in need of improvement. No human endeavor is ever perfect, and urban education in a city like Camden is certainly no exception. Our role as educational professionals is to stay the course, while continuing to address areas that require our full effort and attention.

But we are making progress – steady, encouraging progress – toward our goals. Test scores are rising. Dropout rates are declining. Families are becoming increasingly involved in the schools. More and more of our three- and four-year-olds are attending quality preschool programs, one of the most important contributors to later academic success. And our schools are getting safer, despite the media's willingness report on isolated events as if they were the norm.

The journey here is far from over. But let there be no mistake that it is well underway and that there can be no turning back for this city or its students.

Rest assured that the 3,000 members of the Camden Education Association will continue to be active, enthusiastic, and supportive participants in the struggle to achieve educational equity in this city. We are committed to working with all education stakeholders in the community toward that worthy goal.

Sincerely yours,

Claraliene Gordon, President
Camden Education Association

District and Community Reviewer Letters

Jose E. Delgado, Jr
503 North 36th Street
Camden, NJ 08110

March 22, 2005

Camden Abbott Indicators Project
Education Law Center
60 Park Place, Suite 30
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Erin & Lesley,

I want to thank both of you, the Education Law Center, committee members and all others responsible for the publication of this report. This type of independent and objective analysis of how well a school district is fulfilling its responsibilities to the children and taxpayers is critical to the planning process.

As you both know, I have a deep personal commitment to public education overall and to the Camden schools in particular. My many years on the board of education (BOE) give me insights about how school systems react to educational research and governmental mandates. I agree with the content of the report. However, I am concerned that some issues were either not included or not expressed strongly enough. I am therefore asking that you consider placing this correspondence in the published version of the report.

The Indicators Project attempts to analyze the impact that the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) Abbott Regulations had on the district's efforts to provide a "thorough and efficient" education. It is thus important that we keep in mind that the Abbott Regulations were written to "ensure that public school children . . . receive the educational entitlements guaranteed them by the New Jersey Constitution." We are clearly dealing with a very important and sober topic - the rights of tens of thousands of children and their future. My comments attempt to speak on behalf of the children and their parents.

My overriding concern is that the Camden School district did not carry out the lion's share of the Abbott Regulations. The most obvious exception being those sections related to Early Childhood Education mandates, which were carried out fully. It is therefore difficult to fully determine the actual impact that the regulations had, or could have had, on district operations and educational outcomes. Nevertheless, it is safe to say

that current test data and other information suggest that the district failed to make acceptable degrees of progress.

The record will show that the district failed to establish a district-wide Abbott Advisory Council. This advisory group's regulatory charge was to review "district policies and procedures to implement Abbott reforms, programs, and services" and to submit them for BOE approval. This group was also charged with developing "guidelines for School Leadership Committee membership, selection, training and operation consistent with" regulations. The group was expected to review the district's "three-year operational plan and budget," and conduct a district wide assessment of the status of "efforts to improve teaching and learning." Contrary to regulatory language the Superintendent never established the Abbott Advisory Council and, obviously, it was not submitted for BOE approval.

The failure to comply with just this one mandate made it impossible for the district to comply with other sections of the regulations. One major implication was that the BOE was unable to discharge its policy making and oversight function. To my knowledge the BOE neither reviewed nor discussed the regulations. Therefore, the knowledge that individual members may have had of the regulations was, at best, incomplete. My attempts to have the BOE discuss or to focus on the regulations met with no success. As a result, the BOE failed to "address student, staff and school needs through full, effective, and timely implementation of reforms, programs and services mandated and authorized in the Abbott decisions . . ." [6A:10A-5.1(a)]

One consequence of the failure to carry out the regulations was illustrated when several parents complained at a BOE meeting that principals had barred them from serving on their respective SLC. The parents reported that principals told them that the SLC's parent "quota" had been met. A central office administrator admitted that he had sent a memo "suggesting" a limit of three parents per 500-students. The ensuing discussion revealed that regulatory language related to the formation, membership and operation of the SLCs was ignored.

It is my contention that the district's administration either knowingly ignored, did not read, or did not comprehend, the regulations. I am not talking about mere technical violations that were eventually corrected. I am referring to the almost complete disregard of the regulations. The failure to use millions of tax dollars in the manner prescribed by regulation borders on professional malfeasance.

As usual, the students are the ones left holding the bag. It seems that court decisions and state regulations cannot protect them from adults that, for a whole host of reasons, fail to meet minimum professional standards of conduct and performance.

Finally, the results of this Indicators Report have the potential of providing the

District and Community Reviewer Letters

community with a tool useful to improve education in the city and too more effectively use tax-dollars. This letter is meant to ensure that all interested parties are aware of how the actions, or inaction, of a few individuals may have skewed the results herein. This awareness will in turn enable us to build prudent and active defenses that will protect the children's rights and opportunities. The best way to ensure full implementation of Abbott Regulations is to recognize past mistakes and oversights. Each of us must respect the critical role that each of us must play in the campaign to rid our city of an under producing school system

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Acknowledgements

The Abbott Indicators Reports were created through the efforts of a great many contributors. We list those contributors below, with apologies to the inevitable few whom we inadvertently left out.

This report was written by Lesley Hirsch and Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D, Co-Directors of the Abbott Indicators Project at the Education Law Center. Letitia Logan of the Education Law Center and Derek Ziegler of CAMConnect also made significant contributions to the writing.

Project consultants Alex Schuh, Ph.D. and Derek Ziegler; and Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D., conducted the Camden interviews. Lesley Hirsch and Letitia Logan collected and analyzed all data with guidance and assistance from Judith Pollack and Michael Weiss, of Educational Testing Services, Inc.

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School District Information, Interviews, and Access

We wish to extend special thanks to the many individuals at the Camden Board of Education without whose assistance and support this report would not have come together. Individuals who provided access to critical information were:

John Amato, Interim Business Administrator

Scott Boddie, Accounting Manager, Early Childhood Department

Lee Brockington, Assistant Business Administrator

Delia Brown, Director, Curriculum and Instruction

Judith Canulli, Director, Early Childhood Education

Deborah Johnson, Supervisor of Research

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Paul Mulle, Science Supervisor

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Fred Reiss, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent

David Weathington, Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Quality Control

Linnell Wright, Director, Office of Professional Development

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John Amato, Interim Business Administrator

Robert Banscher, District Architect

Judith Canulli, Director, Early Childhood Education

Ted Chandler, Don Todd Associates

Jan Gillespie-Walton, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction

Frank Ingram, Supervisor, Plant Services

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Brimm Medical Arts High School: Dr. Frederick Clayton and Maureen Lord Benson

Parkside Elementary School: Claudia Cream and Theresa Shields

Pyne Point Middle School: Daniel Edwards and Ruth Patterson

Riletta Cream Elementary School: Dorothy Gardner and Edith Wyatt

Washington Elementary School: Malcolm Adler and Kathleen Kornbacher

Woodrow Wilson High School: Dr. Mary Edwards and Gary Carpenter

Camden Indicators Project Steering Committee

Our sincere appreciation goes to the members Camden steering committee who assembled the community review team, made connections with Camden's residents and neighborhood organizations, and with whom we are committed to working to ensure that the Abbott Indicators are taken to the residents of Camden:

Gregory Allen, Ph.D. Camden City Youth Services Commission

Carol Dann, Camden Neighborhood Renaissance.

Jose Delgado, Community Resident

David Gonzalez, CAMConnect

Jerome Harris, CAMConnect

Lauren Hill, Alliance for the Revitalization of Camden City

Deborah Johnson, Camden City School District

Tom Jones, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Camden

Melissa Mundy, Camden County Prosecutor's Office

Josephine Norward, Ph.D., Camden City Youth Services Commission

Ali Sloan-El, City Council Member, City of Camden

Manthu Tekhna, HopeWorks Camden

Bill Whitlow, Rutgers University

Derek Ziegler, CAMConnect

Report Reviewers

Finally, several individuals have reviewed and given input to this Indicators Report. The report underwent internal review by Education Law Center subject-matter experts, Ellen Boylan, Ruth Lowenkron, and Joan Ponessa; project advisory committee members Cynthia Lamy, Ed.D., Bari Erlichson, Ph.D., Margaret Goertz, Ph.D., and Cynthia Savo; and our colleague at The Rockefeller Foundation, Fred Frelow. Education Law Center Executive Director, David Sciarra, and Assistant Managing Director, Theresa Luhm tirelessly reviewed all of the reports and gave their support and advice throughout their development.

At each pilot site, we provided district staff copies of the draft report for review and assembled an all-volunteer community review team. All reviewers were invited to

Acknowledgements

recommend changes. We incorporated some of their changes and invited reviewers to include any other changes in a letter. If submitted, these letters are including in an Appendix to this report. In Camden, the community-based review team members were as follows:

Jose Delgado, Community Resident

Jerome Harris, CAMConnect

Deborah Johnson, Camden Board of Education

Tom Jones, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Camden

Josephine Norward, Ph.D., Camden City Youth Services Commission

David Weathington, Camden Board of Education

Bill Whitlow, Rutgers University

Derek Ziegler, CAMConnect

The comprehensiveness and usefulness of this report are testaments to the many contributions listed here. Any errors or omissions are, of course, the full responsibility of the primary authors.

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.

Please direct any questions about this report or the *Abbott* Indicators Project to:

Lesley Hirsch or
Erain Applewhite-Coney, Psy.D.

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