



# New Jersey

## Abbott Program

The Abbott preschool program was created with the fifth decision of the landmark *Abbott v. Burke* school funding case, in which the New Jersey Supreme Court required that all 3- and 4-year-old children in the highest-poverty school districts receive a high-quality preschool education. As a result, all children in 31 school districts are eligible to receive a full-day/full-year pre-k program from teachers certified in early education.

### Eligibility

**Income:** none; eligible districts are primarily low-income

**Age:** 3- and 4-year-olds

**Priority:** none; all children living in the designated districts are eligible

### Length of Program

**Hours/day:** 10 hours per day

**Days/year:** 245 days per year

### Eligible Providers

Public schools, Head Start agencies, child care programs

### Number Served<sup>1</sup>

38,000 (2003-04): 32 percent in school-based programs; 8 percent in Head Start centers; 60 percent in private child care centers

### Total Annual Budget

\$407 million (2003-04)

### Monitoring

The department of education is responsible for ensuring all programs meet Abbott standards. The Self-Assessment Validation System is one of the tools for monitoring quality. Child care programs must be licensed by the department of human services. Districts also use the ECERS or a similar tool to evaluate every classroom for professional development and program improvement. Programs are required to use a curriculum that conforms to The Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality. They must also provide transportation, health, and other services as needed. Teachers must have a Bachelor's (B.A.) degree and P-3 certification or be working towards a B.A. if hired prior to September 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

## Governance

### **How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?**

The court ruling states that programs should be delivered in the community “when practical.” The lack of space in the public schools means contracting with community-based providers is almost a mandate. However, a few school districts do not contract, and serve all the eligible children in district-run schools.

School districts decide whether to contract and are responsible for selecting providers. School districts are primarily responsible for the provision of high-quality preschool education and related services that meet the standards. To this end, the school districts are required to conduct local needs assessments to develop program plans that meet the specific needs of their children. Each district has an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council to review and provide comment on the operational plan, but this body is strictly advisory.

### **Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?**

There is no requirement to integrate at the state or local level. However, state departments work together out of necessity. There are monthly meetings between the department of education, the Head Start collaboration coordinator, and the child care administrator.

The school district is in charge of integration at the local level. Each district must establish an Early Childhood Advisory Council, but it is strictly advisory. The Early Childhood Advisory Council provides an opportunity for local stakeholders in the education and welfare of preschool-age children to participate in community-wide planning, as conducted by the school district, to review progress towards full implementation of high-quality programs, regardless of venue, and to consider and propose resolution of issues that arise during implementation. The council might include representatives of the following groups: child care providers, pediatric medical day care providers, Head Start agencies, child and family advocates, municipal government, health professionals/agencies, social service providers, higher education, philanthropic community, mental health agencies, and other stakeholders.

Suggested responsibilities of the Council include participation in the community assessment of specific community needs and resources, including facilities, as they pertain to the implementation of high-quality preschool services; participation in the development of the Three-Year Operational Plan as organized by the district preschool leadership; reviewing and commenting on preschool budgets proposed by the district.

## Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

### **What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?**

The pervasiveness of the Abbott program and its high visibility mean there is no longer a need to advertise the opportunity. The market of eligible providers has been saturated. Historically, the local child care resource and referral agency was involved in spreading the word, and there were

several outside advocacy efforts to educate providers about the opportunity to become an Abbott provider.

School districts are in charge and are encouraged to contract with community-based providers. Newly contracted providers must meet the Abbott standards and provide at least six pre-k classrooms. School districts determine which providers to partner with and the process will vary by district. Head Start providers have first priority in order to avoid competition over the same children and leverage federal funds.

**What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?**

The budget guidelines provide up to \$12,000 for each new Abbott classroom for durable materials, supplies, and equipment. This includes furniture and other startup costs needed to set up a startup classroom. Existing classrooms already equipped with durable items may receive prorated annual amounts—up to \$4,000 per classroom for 2004-05 and \$2000 for 2005-06—for replacement, repair, and upgrade.

The state department of education provides extensive technical assistance to fulfill the mandates of the state court's decisions. In monthly meetings with the early childhood supervisors from each school district, collaboration with child care and Head Start is always a topic. The department trains the master teachers (i.e., the curriculum coaches) on how to work with child care directors; the fiscal specialists in school districts work with child care directors on budget issues.

**Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?**

Yes. The department of education requires that salaries and the amount spent on benefits must be comparable.

## Supports for Working Families

**Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?**

Yes. The guidelines and budget documents include explicit discussion of using funds from the Department of Human Services to extend the day in order to provide a full 10-hour day year round.

**What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?**

Programs are required to provide wraparound child care services, along with family support services, health and nutrition services, and referrals to additional services when necessary. In school-based programs, the school social worker fulfills these duties. Most schools have one social worker for every 250 children. Community-based programs hire a family worker who is a paraprofessional that works year-round to define the resource families need and promote access to these resources. There is one Family Worker for every 45 children.

Each district has a Parent and Community Involvement Specialist who coordinates district-wide parent involvement and staffs the Early Childhood Education Advisory Council.

Funding for transportation is available through the school districts as needed. Transportation is a district-wide cost for which districts must request funds, as needed, through their operational plans. Districts are responsible for all preschool transportation planning, including an assessment of need and the coordination transportation among their providers. Districts may delegate transportation responsibilities to providers, but transportation costs and justifications must be part of the district operational plan and budget. Funding comes from state transportation funding and pre-k funds.

## Funding

### **What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?**

There is no per-child rate. Funding is negotiated at every level depending on the teacher credentials, facility, number of children, etc. On average in 2004-05, child care programs receive \$9,700 for the six-hour Abbott portion of the day, and \$3,700 for the wraparound.

### **How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?**

Districts are strongly encouraged to contract with federal Head Start agencies that can meet the Abbott standards. In such cases—referred to as Enhanced Head Start—Abbott funding is provided to supplement federal resources and enable federal Head Start classrooms to meet Abbott standards. Enhanced Head Start children continue to receive services they would ordinarily receive from the federal Head Start program, but they also receive additional services governed by Abbott standards. In cases where Head Start grantees serve children who are not funded through the federal Head Start program, those children are treated as if they are in a community-based child care setting.

All programs, including child care centers, receive child care subsidy funds to pay for the wraparound child care at a predetermined rate.

## Sources

- Interview: Ellen Frede, 09/01/2004
- Website: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/index.html>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/abbott/guidelines/>
- Sub-contracting requirements: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/abbott/contract/contract.doc>
- Budget documents: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/abbott/provbud.doc>

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at [http://www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).