



NJDOE News

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DOE Issues 2003-2004 Early Childhood Education End of Year Report to State Board

New Jersey remains the leading state in providing preschool with the highest standards for low-income children, according to an annual Department of Education (DOE) report issued to the State Board of Education today.

DOE's targeted efforts continue to expose New Jersey's three- and four-year-olds to intellectually challenging activities so that they enter kindergarten and first-grade prepared to learn, according to the report, issued by the DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education.

"We continue to support early childhood programs that allow for better social skills, better communication skills, better literacy skills and better problem-solving skills," Commissioner of Education William L. Librera said. "We want these children to experience the thrill that comes with understanding and achieving. This leads to greater success and self-fulfillment for them in school and throughout their lives.

"I am so very pleased to report that our Office of Early Childhood Education's efforts in supporting our Abbott districts' early childhood education programs are second-to-none," Commissioner Librera continued. "An important piece of this equation, though, is ELLI, and what it means for all children in the state: it means we will continue support programs that enhance literacy from the youngest ages possible."

Governor McGreevey introduced the Early Launch to Literacy Initiative (ELLI) in his FY 2005 Budget Address in order to provide a high quality preschool education for all four-year-olds in the state. The Governor's budget included \$15 million to begin this new program in the fall.

As part of its report, found online at www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/eoy.htm, the Office of Early Childhood Education said the DOE continues to emphasize three broad categories:

- Increasing capacity so that all eligible children have access to preschool programs;
- Establishing clear guidelines for what children should learn and how they should be taught; and
- Holding districts accountable for maintaining high-quality preschool programs.

The Office of Early Childhood Education report also emphasized the Early Learning Improvement Consortium – a multi-year initiative in which participating New Jersey colleges assist the DOE in monitoring and tracking early education progress – found that New Jersey is providing a quality preschool education for Abbott children.

In Abbott districts, the DOE continues to develop facilities construction guidelines and improving outreach and recruitment strategies.

During the 2003-2004 school year, the fifth year of Abbott preschool implementation, the 30 Abbott districts enrolled 38,000 three- and four-year-old children in preschool, which is more than half of the 53,000 eligible children. The total cost of such programs was \$407 million, according to the report to the State Board.

Of the Abbott children enrolled, 32 percent were served in school-based programs, 8 percent were in federally funded Head Start centers, and 60 percent were enrolled in private child care centers.

In the February report, which evaluated state-funded preschools throughout the nation, the Early Learning Improvement Consortium found that in New Jersey:

- Program quality has improved significantly, especially in the areas of early language and literacy; and
- Children are entering kindergarten as better speakers and readers.

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