

Developing a Diverse and Skilled Workforce:

Lessons from the New Jersey
Abbott Preschool Experience

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This presentation addresses several questions.

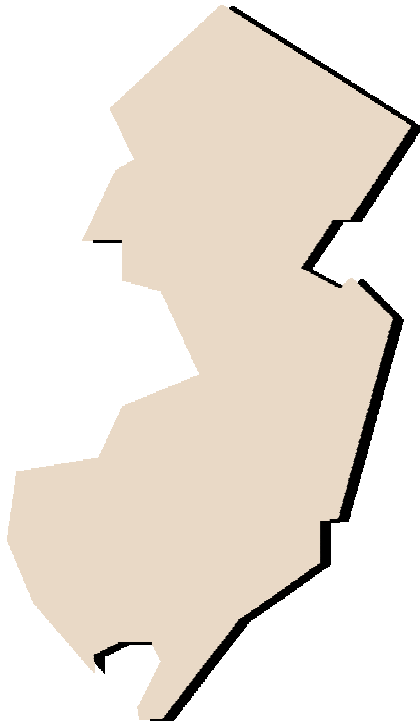
1. What is *Abbott* preschool?

2. How did NJ try to sustain teacher diversity in *Abbott* classrooms?

3. What happened to teachers?

4. What lessons does NJ offer?

The NJ Supreme Court case *Abbott v. Burke* mandated high-quality preschool in NJ's 31 poorest school districts.



Substantive Standards

Developmentally-appropriate curriculum

Teacher Qualifications

Qualified certified teacher and assistant in every classroom

Class Size

Maximum class size of 15 students

Facilities

Adequate space, facilities, supplies

Supplemental Services

Transportation, dental, health, and other social services; services for children with disabilities and limited English proficiency

Abbott preschool teachers had to get a BA and early childhood certification within four years.

Bachelor's Degree



P-3 Certification

Deadlines

For new hires, starting
September 2001

For existing teachers, by
September 2004 (four years)

Exemptions:

- *Licensed elementary teachers with 2 years experience*
- *Teachers with nursery school or K-8 certificates*

These mandates created big issues for the existing preschool workforce.

How would existing teachers in non-district settings be affected?

What would happen to the diversity of the workforce?

Select Indicators of High-Quality Programs

Teachers who understand and know the children's language

Teachers who reflect and understand the cultures and child rearing practices of the families served

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Teacher diversity was not addressed directly in response to the *Abbott* mandate.

New Jersey did put in place policies to maintain existing teachers' jobs.

New Jersey put in place supports for existing teachers.

Can I make it
in time?



- Alternate routes to certification
- Articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year colleges (voluntary at first; later mandated)
- Eventually, a 2-year extension

Can I afford
college?



- Scholarships for community-based teachers (\$5,000/year)

Will it be worth
it in the end?



- Originally, a “signing bonus” (\$3500-\$5000 and a laptop)
- Later, salary parity (but not for benefits and pensions in non-school district preschools)

New Jersey put in place supports for existing teachers.

Is training
accessible?



- State and foundation grants to higher education
- Alternative training options (in some locations)

How can I
manage school
and work?



- Release time from work
- Substitute pools
- Campus advisors/counselors

Several key actors also played supporting roles.

- State agencies worked together to meet the mandate (encouraged by the Governor).
- Higher education institutions came together quickly to agree on curriculum and certification.
- Advocates monitored implementation to determine whether adjustments were needed.
- Philanthropy got involved.

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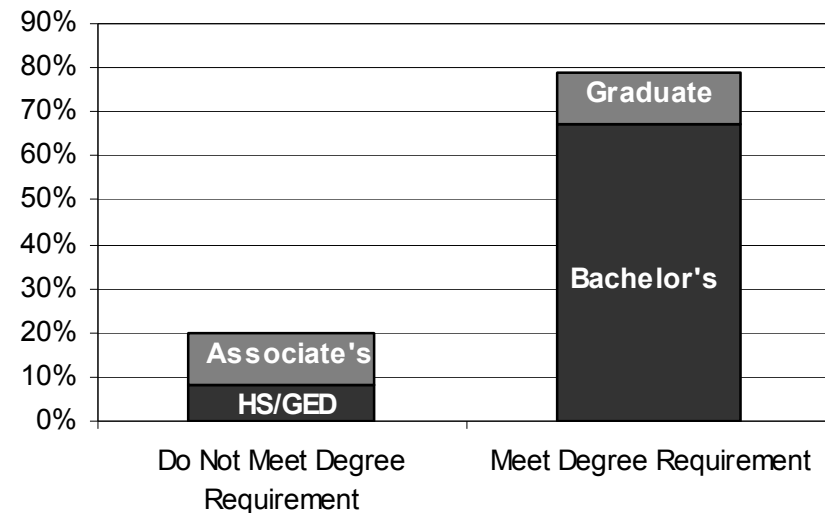
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Teachers in *Abbott* classrooms are qualified. We don't know how many are new hires.

By 2003 (with a year to go in the 4-year deadline), the NJ Department of Education estimated 80% of *Abbott* teachers in community-based programs had their BA, up from 35% in 1999-2000. More than half had obtained necessary certification.

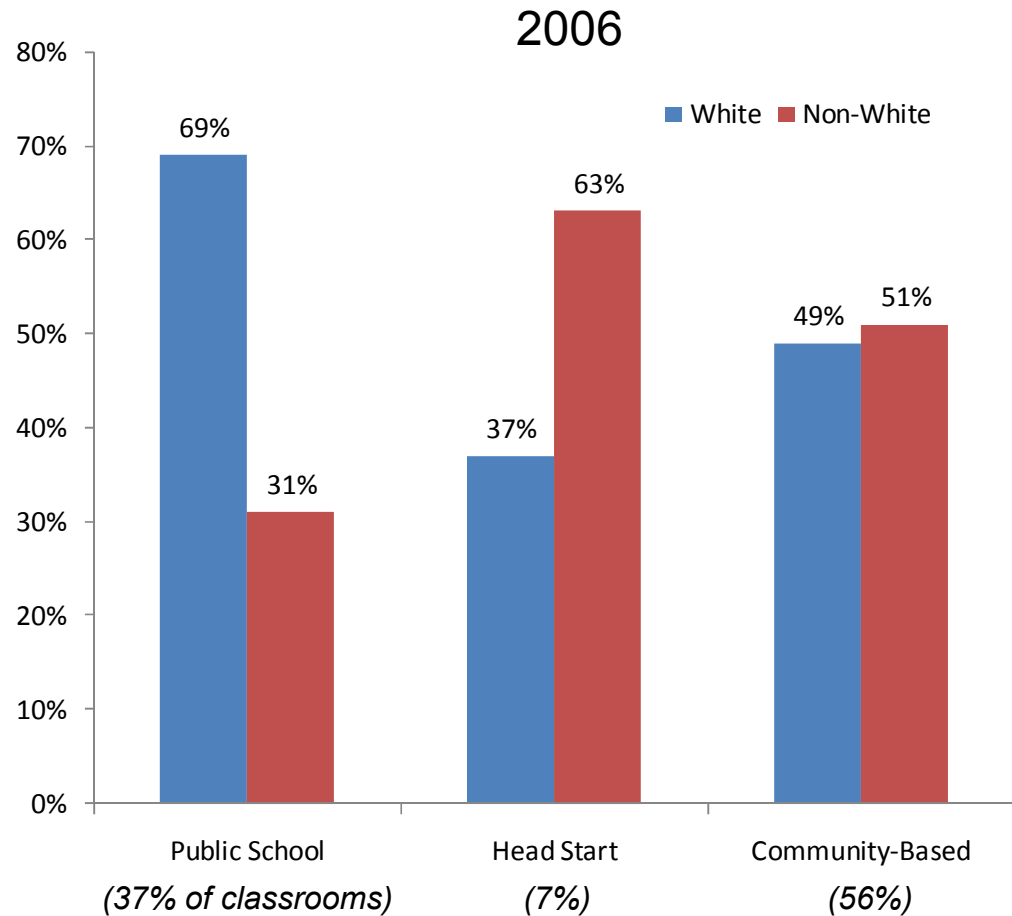
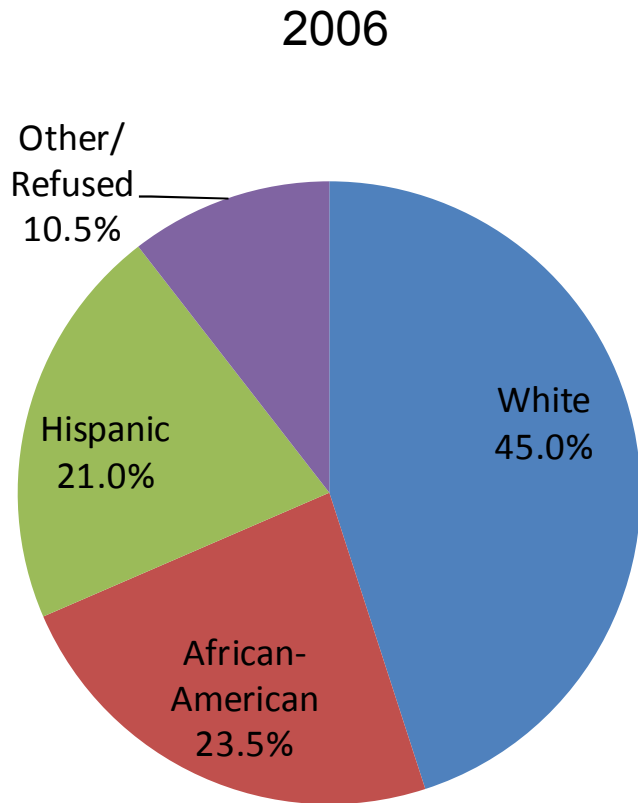


Source: NJDOE

2006 data showed these teacher characteristics for a sample of *Abbott* programs.

| 2006 | TOTAL | District (37% of programs) | Private (56% of programs) |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mean years Experience | 6.5 | 6.7 | 6.0 |
| At least a BA | 97.1% | 100% | 98.2% |

What we know about workforce diversity is limited; only post-deadline teacher ethnicity data are available.



We do know some teachers in community settings were affected.

- Teachers in community settings (who are more likely to be African-American or Hispanic) were more likely to leave their positions once certified.
- About one-fourth of center directors interviewed in 2007 said they experienced turnover as a result of *Abbott*, and that turnover for some meant a decrease in diversity.
- About one-third of center directors interviewed in 2007 said they had to move staff around (move lead teachers to assistant teachers or out of *Abbott* classrooms).
- Some teachers lost their jobs.



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New Jersey's experience offers lessons for other states working to maintain or increase workforce diversity.

- 1) Make sustaining diversity an *explicit* goal with explicit strategies.
- 2) Frame the diversity issue as a quality indicator for children; do not present it just as a workforce issue, or as a “bonus” beyond the BA.
- 3) Collect and monitor data on teacher ethnicity and teacher needs.
- 4) Provide sufficient resources such as scholarships and other supports that make it possible for teachers to acquire qualifications.
- 5) Think hard about how to improve access; offer non-traditional education and options.
- 6) Ensure parity in compensation, benefits, and pensions.
- 7) Allow sufficient time for individuals, especially ELL students, to attain the 4-year degree.

New Jersey's experience with
Abbott preschool
also offers lessons about the role
that philanthropy can play.