



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Hespe To File [New Abbott Regulations](#)

Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe will file on Friday, September 10 a new set of regulations that will facilitate the implementation of education reform in the state's 30 special needs, or Abbott, districts.

"These regulations provide a blueprint for school-wide reform in our disadvantaged urban areas and will help Abbott districts achieve our core curriculum standards," said Hespe.

Hespe said the regulations build on the experiences of the past 12 months in the Abbott districts and the input the Department of Education received from the many groups and individuals who participated in focus groups, submitted written comments and spoke at public testimony sessions.

"We addressed many of the issues raised by individuals and groups," the commissioner noted, "and have attempted to incorporate as many of their concerns as possible. Although we may have differences of opinion, I am certain we all share the same aims and objectives. With a prevailing spirit of cooperation and collaboration, our ultimate goal of improving student performance can be realized."

Hespe said the regulations demonstrate the state's commitment to providing full-day, extended year preschool programs for all three- and four-year-olds in Abbott districts over the next 12-to-24 months.

"This aggressive timeframe reflects the common belief that we must quickly move beyond the half-day program required by the court if we are to deliver on our commitment to have children in our urban districts begin kindergarten ready to learn," the commissioner said.

In the area of preschool, the regulations:

- Direct Abbott districts to amend their early childhood operational plans so that all three- and four-year-olds are offered full-day, full-year preschool by the 2001-2002 school year; [Previously, the regulations mandated that the plans offer full-day preschool to all four-year-olds by the 2001-2002 school year and all three-year-olds by the 2003-2004 school year.]
- Require Abbott districts to provide a master teacher to coordinate and facilitate early childhood programs at a recommended ratio of one to every 20 preschool classrooms;
- Require child care centers licensed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and contracting with Abbott districts to provide one family worker for every 40 children to ensure the delivery of appropriate health and social services; and
- Stipulate that the age and developmentally appropriate activities offered by DHS-licensed child care providers must be aligned with the state's core curriculum standards and integrated with the Whole School Reform model or alternative program used in the district. The master teacher will assist the centers in achieving this objective.

"The regulations deliver quality through certified teachers, the development of common standards and expectations, and staffing ratios adequate to support learning," Hespe said. "These elements build on the quality already present in both school- and community-based programs."

Another component of the regulations will help address the problem of substandard school facilities by allowing the department to move priority projects forward pending passage of legislation establishing a construction and financing mechanism for the statewide school renovation and building program proposed by Gov. Whitman.

"In accord with the court's decision, the highest priority will be given to those projects that are necessary to protect the health and safety of students such as those that involve upgrades to electrical systems or serve preschool students," Hespe explained. "The project also must involve an existing building that will remain in use, and the district must agree that the project should move independently of its five-year facilities plan."

Hespe said the regulations recognize that the keystone of the department's urban reform initiative is Whole School Reform. A number of changes were made so Whole School Reform models can be implemented more effectively and efficiently. A major change gives certain high performing schools in Abbott districts the ability to

choose an alternate program providing its track record is documented and the department approves it after a rigorous review process.

"There are some schools in Abbott districts that have a tradition of success," Hespe said. "The regulations will give them the ability to develop an alternative Whole School Reform design that builds on the expertise and knowledge that already exist in these schools.

"Our whole school reform initiative empowers teachers, parents and the community and involves them in the governance of their schools," Hespe added. "It also reflects a philosophy that the needs of the whole child – their educational, social and health needs – must be addressed to achieve optimum success. Our Whole School Reform models will help make this happen."

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NOTE: [Abbott regulations](#)