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## NJDOE News

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### Department of Education Approves Facilities Plans for Two Abbott Districts

The very first long-range facilities plans for Abbott districts were approved today by Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe making them eligible for full funding under Gov. Christie Whitman's school construction and improvement initiative.

Burlington City received approval for additions and alterations to three elementary schools and a high school and the replacement of a middle school. Hoboken received approval to renovate a high school and to realign grades at, and renovate, four elementary schools and a middle school.

"Children in disadvantaged communities are entitled to an education in schools that are just as good as those in affluent communities," said Gov. Whitman. "The \$6 billion that will be spent on new and improved facilities in our Abbott districts will create a quality environment that is conducive to learning and will promote academic achievement."

"These approvals are just the first of a series that will profoundly change the landscape of urban education for the better and for generations to come," said Commissioner Hespe.

The improvements authorized by the Department of Education, pursuant to the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act signed into law on July 18<sup>th</sup>, will be managed and financed by the state Economic Development Authority. The determination of preliminary eligible costs, final eligible costs and the amount of state assistance will be determined as part of the approval process for specific school facility projects.

Burlington City's current grade structure includes three Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3 elementary schools, one Grade 4 through 6 intermediate school and one Grade 7 through 12 high school. In the absence of the ability of participating community providers to expand, the district has proposed to house in-district 180 three- and four-year-old preschoolers.

The long-range facility plan approved by the Commissioner proposes a grade alignment change that would move Grade 3 to the intermediate school, making the elementary schools Pre-K through 2. This would create a Grade 3 through 6 intermediate school with a Grade 7 through 12 high school. The Board of Education offices would be relocated to the new middle school. The district plan proposes the construction of a replacement middle school, additions and alternations to the three existing elementary schools and additions and alterations to the high school.

Hoboken's current building and grade structure consists of three Pre-K through 4 elementary schools (Thomas G. Connors, Wallace No. 6, and Salvatore R. Calabro No. 4), two Grade 5 through 8 middle schools (Joseph F. Brandt No. 2 and A.J. Demarest), and a Grade 9 through 12 high school (Hoboken High School). The long-range facilities plan proposes converting the Joseph F. Brandt School into an elementary school, renovations and an addition to the A.J. Demarest Middle School, and renovations/alterations to all other schools in the district. Through the use of participating community providers within school district buildings, the Hoboken plan proposes to house in-district 265 preschoolers.

The department will be approving additional Abbott long-range facilities plans in the coming days with the goal of final approval for virtually all Abbott districts by mid-January.

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