



NJDOE News

Contact: Peter Peretzman
For Release: June 13, 2001

Report Shows Whole School Reform Being Implemented According to Plan; Funds Being Spent to Support Approved Programs and Services

A new report has found that the Abbott district schools reviewed this year are implementing their whole school reform programs and services, as outlined in their implementation plans and that funds are being expended to support the approved programs and services. The review was conducted between February 1, 2001 and April 30, 2001 in eighty-seven schools in nine Abbott districts (a complete list of schools is attached).

The review was conducted by a retired district superintendent in Asbury Park, members of the Department of Education's Camden Task Force in Camden, Watson Rice LLP/Frye Williams Company in Jersey City, Newark, Passaic and Paterson, George Washington University in Plainfield and Trenton and a member of the Camden Task Force in Vineland. The purpose of the review was to determine if the programs are being implemented as outlined and approved, and if funds are being used to support the approved programs and services. In Vineland all of their school were in their first year of whole school reform implementation, therefore only its plan for the use of its state start-up grant was reviewed.

"I am pleased with the results of this review," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "This review gives us a clear indication that whole school reform is being implemented as envisioned in these schools. The children who attend these Abbott district schools will be the beneficiaries of this program, which is designed to provide them with the highest quality education possible."

The report found four key areas of concern. The training provided to school management teams varies significantly, as does the frequency, times and length of SMT meetings, the quality and amount of professional development varies widely among schools, educational technology plans have been implemented with varying degrees of success, and reviewers were unable to track expenditures through all levels of the local budget process because the approved school-based budget, district budget and district expenditure reports do not appear to be aligned.

The review provided the following recommendations:

- Training should be provided to School Review and Improvement Teams, central office staff and School Management Team members in needs assessment, planning, budget and roles and responsibilities of the state, district central office, school and school management team;
- School based budgets, district budgets and district expenditure reports should be aligned.
- Whole school reform implementation plan and school- based budget development need to be streamlined;
- Where possible, schools should be allowed greater flexibility to adjust approved plans and budgets during the year;
- District and school staff should be provided opportunities for interdistrict networking across models; and
- District business office staff should increase their role in the budgeting process

An intensive training program has already been launched for school personnel responsible for the implementation of whole school reform in the Abbott districts. Department of Education School Review and Improvement Teams will be trained over the summer and local district staffs, including School Management Teams will be trained beginning in September.