



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Abbott Implementation

**IMPROVING LEARNING
AND LITERACY IN
ABBOTT CLASSROOMS**

2005 – 2006

GUIDELINES

- *Measuring student achievement and setting instructional priorities for 2005-2006, and preparing school and district operational plans and annual school-based budgets*
- *Focus on more efficient instructional and business practices*
- *Whole School Reform/Alternative Design*

December 15, 2004

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New Jersey Department of Education
Improving Teaching and Learning in Abbott Classrooms

INTRODUCTION

Student achievement is the measure of our work. This document integrates all the court decisions, federal laws, state regulations, and various compliance requirements that are imposed on districts and schools into a form that will encourage reflection about the academic performance of Abbott students and state concisely what schools and districts will do in this and the next school year to improve learning. This guidance builds on the regulations promulgated by the Commissioner on November 30, 2004 (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:10A). The most noticeable regulatory change this year is the introduction of clearer standards for middle grades literacy and for increasing academic rigor in the secondary grades while personalizing the experience of students in middle grades and high schools. Districts will notice the greater emphasis on more efficient business, instructional, and financial practices by comparing their spending with spending in peer districts and using that information to explore opportunities for efficiencies. Finally, budget preparation will be built around the idea of a “presumptive budget,” which is explained below.

The 2005-06 guidelines build on the emphases and procedures of the last two years: to focus on teaching and learning, with special attention to literacy.

Every effort has been made to *simplify* the work of Abbott schools and districts, including avoiding duplication with *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* requirements. The department looks for a clean emphasis on the three or four instructional priorities that will dominate the work in schools and districts next year, as well as specific measures of progress along the way. Based on Abbott and the *NCLB* requirements, schools fall into the following categories:

- Schools not in need of improvement;
- Schools in need of improvement Year 2 (Public School Choice) and Year 3 (Supplemental Education Services); and
- Abbott-designated Low Performing Schools (LPS) and schools in Year 4/ Corrective Action, which are required to undergo a scholastic audit, known as the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) .

Schools designated as in need of improvement by Title I will need to insure that the priorities identified in the *NCLB* Parallel Application are consistent with the instructional priorities in their report to Abbott. Schools categorized as both LPS and in corrective action should select priorities from recommendations resulting from the CAPA review. The CAPA process will be accepted by *NCLB* as meeting all federal requirements. We expect that all schools will describe their instructional priorities with a diagnosis that includes evidence of student performance, description of the work to be implemented, and measures for judging progress. Instructions for completing the instructional priority requirement are found later in this document.

Three objectives drive the work we ask you to undertake. First, the evaluation and planning outlined herein has a single measurement – “how well do all students perform academically?” No plan, regulation, judicial decision, or department policy is successful if it doesn’t work in the classroom. Therefore, we expect that *every teacher in every school* will participate in the examination of student work. “Classroom out” assessments mean that the most likely answer to problems with student achievement will be found in improved instructional practices; more tailored support for teachers; continuous attention to, and discussion of, student work; a coherent curriculum closely aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS); and continuous assessment of student performance evidence, such as student products, writing samples, quizzes, and other measures.

In your evaluation and in our review, we will be looking at the performance of *all* students. *NCLB* judges schools and districts on how well students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL) and other subgroups perform academically - so, too, will Abbott. However, a subtle but important distinction must be made between the numbers reported in response to this guidance and the tallies used for *NCLB*: While *NCLB* excludes students who were at the school less than one year, we ask that all students be included in your reporting, including “new arrivals.” Therefore, the numbers you report to us will probably not match those for *NCLB* purposes.

Second, schools and districts should report again the performance of “Continuously Enrolled Students” (CES) in two categories: those enrolled in the same school for the previous three years or more being referred to as “CES-school,” and students who have been enrolled in more than one school in the same district for at least three years being referred to as “CES-district.” The department offers an Excel spread sheet to report CES and other required *NCLB* subgroups’ data.

Third, the school-by-school assessment of academic progress will be successful only if the evidence of student performance on state, district, and classroom assessments is carefully dissected, and everyone is candid about how well students are doing, what is holding them back, and what needs to be done to improve instruction and learning. Therefore, while each teacher is asked to complete the checklist that follows and to discuss it with faculty colleagues, the checklists are not to be shared with either the district *central office* or the department. However, schools should include in the report of instructional priorities a description of the process that was used to reach conclusions.

By the time the districts and schools receive this document, schools and their School Leadership Councils (SLCs) will have about two months to collect and analyze detailed student data; review and draw conclusions from last year’s academic results; determine effective instructional responses; and prepare a school budget and a report on instructional priorities for 2005-06. The report will serve as the revision to the school three-year operational plan from last year. Schools need not update the forms and charts submitted last year. The school budget and instructional priorities report are due to the district on *February 1, 2005*.

Districts will also submit their budgets and reports on instructional priorities on the schedule determined by the Governor's Budget Message (most likely in early March 2005). The district's instructional priorities report should reflect the findings and subsequent discussions following this summer's face-to-face conversation. The goal is to agree on a limited number of instructional priorities, so that, with focus and continuous assessment, districts can make dramatic progress in academic performance in the 2005-06 school year.

Please note that the department's focus on *early* literacy has been broadened to take in the middle grades. As increased proportions of Abbott 3rd and 4th graders become good readers, it is essential that the benefits of this achievement not atrophy in the middle grades as frequently happens. The new standards for the middle grades reflect reliable research and good practices that place the emphasis on many of the same ingredients found in early literacy – such as small group instruction, a block of uninterrupted minutes (*at least 90 for early literacy and 80 for middle grades*) of language arts instruction, a print-rich environment (e.g., classroom libraries), and frequent writing. These are the practices found in Abbott districts and schools with high-performing 8th graders.

Finally, as a result of the contributions of the working group on secondary education set up last year, there are two developments that will affect both the schools serving the middle grades and high schools. The first is the adoption of clearer standards to more closely align instruction in secondary schools with the rigor required by the CCCS. Too many students are not being taught what they are expected to learn under the state standards. Second, the department seeks three or four Abbott districts that will cooperate in testing principles for assuring that every middle and high school student can have a more personalized experience through the creation of small learning communities.

Districts using EdSolution services may submit their instructional priorities report online, with a hard copy going to their respective regional Office of Student Achievement and Fiscal Support. Teacher checklists can be completed anonymously online via EdSolution or any other provider used by the district.

IMPROVING LITERACY AND LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Providing evidence of student performance to set instructional priorities and school budgets

The foremost goal for every Abbott elementary school next year is to see 100 percent of its unclassified and non-limited English proficient (LEP) 4th graders be proficient or better on the NJ ASK language arts literacy section. Non-Abbott students achieved 93.4 percent proficiency last year, and there is no reason that students in Abbott districts should not be equally strong readers (ten Abbott schools hit 100 percent in 2004). This is an urgent issue since there is strong evidence that students who are not reading on grade level by 4th grade have only a one-in-eleven chance of ever reading on grade level. Moreover, this is one goal we know how to achieve, where the consensus about what to do among scholars and practitioners is strong and that consensus is reflected in the Abbott regulations and these guidelines. In short, we know how to teach younger students to read well.

Schools must construct a profile of how students have performed over the last few years using test results disaggregated by Continuously Enrolled Students (CES) and *NCLB* subgroups. Is achievement equally distributed or are there large differences among subgroups? Do the state assessment content clusters pinpoint areas of instructional shortfall? This profile is something every teacher should help construct. The most likely answers for inadequate performance are that students are not being taught what they need to learn - frequently not enough writing instruction (a heavy component on NJ ASK4 language arts literacy) - and that the instructional materials being used are not well aligned with the CCCS. If these are the problems, they can and must be corrected right away. Full implementation with supporting professional development and the purchase of needed instructional materials must be ready for September 2005 at the latest.

For two years, Abbott elementary schools have been required to implement all the elements of Intensive Early Literacy, with full implementation expected not later than the current school year. Any school that does not schedule at least 90 uninterrupted minutes of language arts instruction, have classroom libraries with at least 300 titles, conduct teaching in noticeably separate small learning centers, and use instructional materials carefully aligned with the CCCS should declare an educational emergency to its superintendent. The district's report on instructional priorities should, therefore, highlight schools that are not fully executing Intensive Early Literacy strategies, including the date during the 2004-05 school year that all ingredients will be in place.

Just as important as these ingredients is the assurance that teachers have received adequate professional development to apply these standards and that there is continuous assessment of student work and progress. The essentials of Intensive Early Literacy should be the first item on the report on instructional priorities.

The second goal for most elementary schools may be improvement in math instruction and student performance.

New Jersey adopted more rigorous national mathematics standards in 1997, but many districts and schools, including non-Abbotts, are only recently catching up by purchasing instructional materials that are well-aligned to the CCCS and providing more professional development on how to use them. *This adaptation must be led by the district central office, beginning with the provision of adequate professional development and appropriate instructional materials.* The consensus about improved math performance is not as strong as it is for literacy. This means that schools and the district central office need to collaborate in diagnosing the evidence from NJ ASK3 and 4 and any commercial tests that are used in the K-2 grades. (If consistent with New Jersey standards, commercial tests may offer item analyses that can help pinpoint skill and content deficiencies.)

The same kind of longitudinal subgroup analysis required for literacy should also be prepared for math. Again, *all* classroom teachers should help diagnose instructional problems and recommend steps that can be taken next school year to improve math teaching and learning. For example, if it appears that the school's textbook or math materials are not focused on New Jersey's standards, then a red flag must be raised with the district central office. Teachers, principals and supervisors need to be candid about the familiarity of teachers with math concepts, materials, and their daily use in the classroom. Many districts report that teachers in the middle grades must contend with a gap between the math content they are now expected to teach with what they were prepared to teach in their collegiate training.

Each school must prepare, as a part of its report on instructional priorities, a narrative on how math instruction and learning will be improved in the 2005-06 school year that begins with a diagnosis of student performance data. There should be a section that depicts the proposed pacing and sequence for whatever materials, training, classroom support or other steps are to be introduced, as well as interim measures, e.g., all 4th and 5th grade teachers will receive a full-day of professional development before school opens; three classroom visits to observe math instruction; and a half-day training in November to update content on math estimation. The report may place emphasis on lesson plan preparation and review by a math coach, supervisor, and/or the principal.

The third goal for each elementary school is to review its instruction for its special education (SPED) students and its English language learners (ELL).

Given the priority placed on educating *all* students by Abbott and *NCLB*, this recommendation may appear unnecessary. Moreover, there are 11 special education classifications covering a broad spectrum of physical, emotional, neurological, and sensory problems. ELL students present an equally diverse range of challenges and circumstances. *However*, the overall patterns discerned in your evaluation of literacy and math performance may not apply equally to your school's teaching of SPED and ELL students. It would be useful to begin in all cases by answering this question: are SPED and ELL students expected to master the same curriculum taught to "general" students? If the answer is "no," your ELL and SPED students may not be

receiving the instruction necessary to have a reasonable chance of gaining proficiency on the state assessments.

Another category of questions that may help analyze the school's effectiveness with SPED and ELL students—what proportion of their instruction occurs in “general” classrooms taught by either the full-time teacher and co-taught by a “SPED, bilingual, or English as a second language (ESL) teacher? Does the school try to maximize “push-in” instruction over “pull-out?” Addressing these issues may provide some clues as to both the diagnosis and prescriptions for effective instruction.

If a school has a concentration of ELL students of the same language, there may be opportunities for native language instruction that will ease the transition to English mastery. The home-language assessment instrument (used to assess ELL students during registration) may provide particularly useful information to make the initial pedagogical judgment about native/English language emphasis, e.g., students whose families are literate in the first language will make the transition to English more rapidly and smoothly.

Analyses of longitudinal and subgroup data on SPED and ELL students are essential first steps to determining a school's instructional priorities for next year.

Effective teaching requires continuous assessment of student performance and so does the report on instructional priorities, along with the 2005-06 school and district budgets.

The central office should assist each school to assemble and analyze essential student performance data. *NCLB* already requires that schools and districts report on how well all students are doing by classified SPED, ELL, six racial/ethnic classifications, and poverty (i.e. free- and reduced price-lunch eligible) subgroups. When these subgroups don't perform adequately on state tests, a school is categorized as “in need of improvement.” Almost all the evidence the department is asking each school to assess should have already been reported for *NCLB*. Students excluded due to their short tenure (less than one year) at the school must be added back into the counts and tabulations.

In addition to the *NCLB* subgroups, the department requires that schools and districts report on those students who have been continuously enrolled for at least three years (called “continuously enrolled students” or “CES”). CES takes away the unfairness of judging students who only recently enrolled in a school or district. Schools will report students in three CES classifications:

- Out-of-district transfers, called “non-CES” (i.e. less than three years in both the district and school);
- Within-district transfers, called “CES-District” (i.e. more than three years in the district but enrolled in more than one than school); and
- Non-transfer, called “CES-School” (i.e. at least three years in one school).

We will provide an Excel program (**electronically to each district**) to report the CES and *NCLB* subgroups' data (districts can also create a report using Access or another database, or develop its own form). The following is the information each elementary school must report:

- Enrollments from the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) for each year 1999 through 2004 by grade;
- The count of students who took the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) or New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, Fourth Grade (NJ ASK4) in each year 1999 through 2004 by all (i.e. Total) students, as well as the following four subgroups:
 - *Regular/Special Needs* (three categories)—general education (GE), English language learners (ELL/ LEP), and Special Education (SPED);
 - *Racial/Ethnic* (six categories)—white, Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and other ethnicity;
 - *Economically Disadvantaged* (two categories)—free or reduced price lunch eligible and non-eligible; and
 - *Continuously Enrolled* (three categories)—out-of-district transfers within past three years, within-district transfers within past three years (i.e. CES-District), and non-transfers past three years (i.e. CES-School);
- Results for each year by all students and subgroups by mean scaled score, and the percentages by performance level (proficient, advanced proficient and partially proficient) for each; and
- The results reported in the same way for any standardized norm-referenced tests used for the K-3 and fifth grades by year and by student category. Please indicate the test version being reported (e.g., TerraNova Custom). This is particularly important since the NJ ASK4 results are received too late and without item analyses to be very helpful in adjusting teaching.

While these are a lot of data to collect, organize, and evaluate, no credible assessment of student learning can take place without them. Schools and districts should “drill down” to go beyond required data to strengthen pedagogical analyses and prescriptions:

- Kindergarten:
 - How many of your kindergarten students attended Abbott preschool programs, non-Abbott programs, or no program?
 - Are there measurable differences in how well-prepared students from the various programs are for kindergarten?;
- English Language Learners:
 - How well do students who have exited the ELL program perform on state and other assessments?
 - Is there any difference between students who were in dual language or transitional bilingual programs versus those in ESL-only or English-only programs?
- Students with Disabilities:
 - How well have students with disabilities performed on NJ ASK4 when viewed by disability?

- How have the SPED students most likely to be mainstreamed (i.e., speech-only and learning disabled) fared compared with non-classified students?
 - Are there sub-classifications that significantly lag other SPED categories within the school? How does this “gap” compare with that of the district as a whole?
- What percentage exceeded the average statewide cluster scores?
 - Are there differences in performance among students who are in self-contained classrooms versus those receiving in-class supports versus those in resource rooms?

Of course, many factors may influence learning that are not strictly statistical, such as the introduction of a new model or curriculum, teacher turnover, new leadership, or rapid changes in the demographics of the student body. Relevant factors should be addressed in the report on instructional priorities.

Assessing student needs means reflection and continuous evaluation.

While the answers to what is holding students back might leap out from tables of data, it is far more likely that thoughtful dissection, discussion, and testing hypotheses will produce more useful conclusions. This process should be led by the principal and involve every teacher, the central office and the School Leadership Council (SLC). The place to start is to identify those problems that are best explained by policies and practices at the **district** level, those that are at the **school** level, and those at the **grade** or **classroom** level.

The following checklists should help diagnose instructional difficulties and to figure out what to do. There are separate checklists for literacy and math. These are not “tests,” or compliance documents, nor are they comprehensive. Consider them a starting point to grade-level or school-wide conversations. Everyone should also ask the question: “Are we doing things that just don’t work?”

To encourage candor, individual teacher checklists are not to be shared with the central office or the department. They should be filled out by *all* teachers, discussed in grade-level meetings, and then in full faculty meeting with the principal. Summaries of the teacher checklists (but not individual forms) should be reviewed by the SLC and principal to help produce a school-wide assessment as a part of the report on instructional priorities, particularly when a “no” is checked.

**Intensive Early Literacy and Mathematics
in Elementary Schools Checklist
2005-06**

Intensive Early Literacy	Yes	No
1. The Intensive Early Literacy model has been implemented in all K-3 classrooms as evidenced by:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive reading program that includes: motivation and background knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, writing and comprehension. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An uninterrupted literacy block of at least 90 minutes daily. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read-alouds to the whole class occur at least once daily. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifiable small learning centers that are clearly delineated for at least reading, computers, and writing. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A classroom library with at least 300 titles that are aligned to the Core standards and the comprehensive reading program.. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A classroom library that includes books and assistive materials for special education, ELL, and other students, as appropriate. 		
2. The district uses a curriculum that is fully aligned with the CCCS with citations of the connections to specific standards.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a copy of the curriculum for the grade(s) I teach and use it in preparing lesson plans. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum includes six- or eight-week units and gives benchmarks for measuring progress through the period. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are given professional development to become acquainted with curriculum changes to upgrade their content mastery, when necessary, and to explore with their colleagues effective means to teach the curriculum. 		
3. Technology is fully integrated into the instructional practice of all classrooms.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom computers are adequate in number and form a learning center. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers are networked, connected to the Internet, and have sufficient broadband. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers know how to use computers in instruction and they're used daily. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional software was selected because of its <i>effectiveness</i> and its alignment with the comprehensive reading program and CCCS. 		
4. Assessment of student work is continuous, measured, and set against curricular and instructional standards that are clear, specific, and known by all teachers.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have information on the family literacy backgrounds, knowing what language is spoken at home and the parents' education levels, particularly for ELL students. 		

Intensive Early Literacy	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district uses standardized tests in kindergarten, first and second grades that permit cluster and item analysis to aid instruction. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district curriculum provides interim assessments that teachers use to gauge progress against clear benchmarks. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeper assessments are used for students who are falling behind. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELL and SPED students are taught the district curriculum with appropriate modifications and differentiation of instruction. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized test results are shared with, and explained to, teachers, parents, students, the central office and SLC members. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cluster analysis of the NJ ASK4 results has been completed. 		
5. The school expects 100 percent of its unclassified students to be readers.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 75 percent of the school's students can read at grade level by the end of first grade. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELLs are carefully assessed and placed according to their dominant language into bilingual or ESL-only programs. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual language classes are available for students. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion is achieved by maximizing in-class instruction with SPED teachers or SPED-certified general classroom teachers. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Whole School Reform model is fully compatible with the model for Intensive Early Literacy. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school exchanges visits with preschool programs whose "graduates" attend the school's kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers receive a portfolio of their students' pre-K work. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title I is integrated into the general classroom and its instruction, and student support is fully coordinated with classroom teachers. 		
6. Teachers have at least a weekly opportunity to exchange information on effective teaching strategies and materials.		

Mathematics	Yes	No
1. The district curriculum is aligned with the CCCS with citations of the connections to specific standards and Cumulative Progress Indicators (CPIs).		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work in math centers, with instruction targeted at mastering the CCCS and assessing the needs of students who fall behind. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our mathematics program emphasizes the development of mathematical thinking and not memorization and arithmetic skills. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to communicate about mathematics orally and in writing, to explain their reasoning and to make connections among mathematical strands and the real world. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mathematics curriculum for kindergarten is aligned with the 		

Mathematics	Yes	No
district's preschool curriculum.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district assures that mathematics print materials, instructional software, and manipulative materials are aligned with the CCCS and the five standards (the four content standards—Number and Numerical Operations, Geometry and Measurement, Patterns and Algebra, and Data Analysis, Probability, and Discrete Mathematics -- and the Mathematical Processes Standard). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum includes multiple assessment and benchmarks for measuring progress through each content and process strand. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning styles: students are offered choices of real life, auditory, visual, and kinesthetic applications of mathematics skills and concepts within each cluster. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math across the curriculum: students apply mathematics within each cluster and in other subjects: social studies, language arts, science, technology, art, music and physical education. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are given regular opportunities to manipulate objects and models to represent mathematical concepts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are given professional development time to become acquainted with curriculum changes; to upgrade their content mastery when necessary; to differentiate instruction for groups of students; and, to plan cross-curricular mathematics applications. 		
2. Mathematics is integrated into technology in classrooms and in computer labs.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Software is aligned with CCCS at each grade level. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology applications do not reduce time required for mathematics instruction. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology provides experiences for advanced levels of critical thinking, simulation and application of skills. See http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/etreport/1998/milken.html 		

INCREASING LITERACY AND MASTERY OF THE CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS IN MIDDLE GRADES

Background. Public discussion about education frequently focuses on the early years and high school—the middle grades are too often the “forgotten” time. So it is with students in Abbott districts in grades four through eight. Elementary students are covered by a highly specific and detailed set of Supreme Court-ordered remedies; and there is a strong consensus around how to teach younger children the gifts of literacy. High schools are in the public eye with their “high stakes” graduation tests, the controversy over Special Review Assessment (SRA) graduations, and the popularity of sports competition. This year’s Abbott regulations and these guidelines include a significant addition to the standards for students in the middle grades, and they focus on improved literacy.

The Commissioner’s Task Force on Middle Grades Literacy issued its report in May 2004 and that work provides much of the foundation for guidance to schools serving middle-grade students. The evidence of how well 8th graders are doing in Abbott schools is very mixed. There are districts in which almost all students were found proficient on the 2004 GEPA language arts subtest and districts in which more than half the students were partially proficient. The encouraging experience with Abbott’s Intensive Early Literacy standards, as well as the concrete evidence from high-performing districts, supplements the task force recommendations. A copy of the report can be found on the department’s Web site at www.nj.gov/njded/genfo/midliteracy.htm

Previous guidance was addressed to “middle schools.” This guidance is directed to any school that serves students in grades four through eight. For schools organized on a K-8 or P-8 plan, there will continue to be a single report and budget for the school.

Mobilizing for greater literacy. The implementation of the literacy standards and practices described herein should occur in the 2005-06 school year. The need for improved literacy is too great to defer these effective measures, even if every item is not fully in place by September 2005. That means that the thinking and planning must begin immediately, since the report on instructional priorities and the school budget are due to the district February 1, 2005. In schools that have successfully implemented the ingredients of Intensive Early Literacy, the transition to these practices should be relatively smooth. The content of the middle grades literacy standards is familiar because it builds on the same principles of a print-rich environment, concentrated and uninterrupted instructional time, small-group instruction, and early attention to students who fall behind.

It is important to note that schools are not solely responsible for middle grades literacy. The district must assist its schools by ensuring that there is a coherent district curriculum that lays out the grade-level and subject-area curricula so that literacy is not just the realm of “language arts,” but is a part of the instruction for those teaching science, math, social studies, health education—all courses that require reading, and spoken, and written English. The curriculum must specify what is expected by grade and subject and then the district must be certain that instructional materials that are closely aligned with the CCCS are available, again for the appropriate grades and content areas. Finally, the district needs to check the preparation of teachers for what may

be the introduction of cross-subject teaching, particularly in seeking more writing that is consistent with the CCCS being assigned and graded in courses other than language arts/English.

The immediate job is for each district and school to address these standards for grades 4-8 (according to the checklist that follows):

- Small learning centers in all self-contained and designated language arts literacy classrooms with at least centers for reading, computers, and writing;
- Small-group instruction, co-teaching, and differentiated groupings and instruction;
- A print-rich environment including a classroom library of at least 300 titles in all self-contained classrooms through grade five (and beyond, if applicable);
- Continuous assessment of student performance against the benchmarks set in the curriculum with early intervention for students falling behind;
- An uninterrupted block of 80-120 minutes of language arts/literacy; and
- Students routinely utilize the school media center and see it as an extension of the classroom.

“Classroom out” assessment and planning

Improving student achievement is the criterion to be used for evaluating and planning the school’s work for this and the next two years and for preparing the school-based budget. This year’s planning begins with a careful assessment of how students have performed on state, district or national standardized tests in a school over the past three or four years. This review should be broken out by the *NCLB* subcategories and CES. The department has prepared an Excel spreadsheet to assist with the collection of the required information, but an Access database can be created, or the school can devise its own form, as long as the same data are reported.

Student achievement data are the beginning point in assessing how well students are learning, what obstacles stand in their way to improved performance, what steps the school will take to eliminate or lower those obstacles, what specific goals are set for improvement this year and for the next two years, and how that progress will be measured. Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) scores alone do not provide adequate documentation, since the state assessment Cycle II information comes so late in the school year and because it does not include item analysis to give more precise information on the skills and content areas of greatest weakness and strength. The foregoing list defines the task ahead for every school to be completed by February 1, 2005, when the Report on Instructional Priorities and a school budget are submitted to the central office. This will require that the 2003 and 2004 GEPA scores be included and evaluated.

Remember, the most likely solutions for inadequate student performance are to be found in the recruitment and support for qualified teachers and well-prepared principals, the implementation of a coherent curriculum that is closely aligned with the CCCS, and the constant review of the evidence as to how all these elements are working. These are the teaching and learning issues that should be addressed in December and January by all teachers, the principal and the SLC working together.

Because the classroom is the focus of this year's evaluation and planning, we ask that every teacher complete a checklist. These forms are not to be turned in to the central office or DOE. They are designed to encourage discussion among teachers and principals to enrich the assessment and planning process. Once completed, we ask teachers at the same grade level or in the same department to meet and compare their responses. We also ask that the same be done in a faculty meeting of all teachers and the principal. Once these meetings have been held, the principal should share the consolidated results with the SLC to help prepare the Instructional Priorities Report.

The goal of this teacher survey is not to achieve consensus, nor to place blame. Instead, the goal is to stimulate a focused and frank conversation among the educators who are directly responsible for, and knowledgeable about, how well students are working and achieving. Candor and forthrightness are obviously required for this process to work.

The evidence of student achievement. Middle or K-8 schools report student performance on the GEPA for the years 1999-2004 by CES and *NCLB* subgroups. For this analysis, the school may use the Excel spreadsheet prepared by the department, an Access database, or its own form. Whichever is used, the following should be displayed:

- Enrollments from the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) by grade for each year from 1999 through 2004; and
- The GEPA performance by subtest for each year 1999 through 2004 and by *NCLB* subgroups for each year by percentage proficient and mean scale score.

These numbers are essential to a sensible review of student performance. There are other indicators that may be available for analysis that the School Leadership Council (SLC) may want to investigate to gain a clearer picture of how well the school is achieving. For example, the performance of former ELLs students who exited in 2002 or earlier and took the GEPA as a "general" student can be reviewed against the performance of current ELL students and other general students. The mean scale scores of disabled students can be plotted by disability and cluster and contrasted with the statewide averages for all students. The more data that are reviewed, the richer the school profile will be.

Teacher’s Review of Instruction and Learning Checklist for Middle Schools

	Yes	No
Expectations and school culture		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our school operates on the daily assumption that all students should be prepared to master the courses they will need in high school to be accepted at a four-year university. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a curriculum that spells out clearly what I must teach and the student must learn, including the pace and sequence of instruction and interim tests of progress along the way. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are told what is expected of them for each term, unit, test, or assignment, and they are given frequent chances to attain the goals set. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of students taught is manageable and permits careful reviews of each student’s work. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No student “falls through the cracks” or is “just a number” as at least one teacher, administrator, counselor or other certified professional knows the work and struggles of every student. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, parents, and visitors are greeted with respect in a safe, clean, and hospitable environment. 		
Curriculum and instructional materials		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know what content must be covered if my students are to be proficient on state assessments of the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can tell from the district curriculum what instructional materials are connected with which CCCS. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a textbook is used, it is one that is aligned to the CCCS and is supplemented with accessible and aligned instructional materials. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum includes assessments that the teacher and students use to know how well they are doing in mastering standards in a timely way, so that extra attention can be given to those falling behind. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school leadership and central office help the teacher when the <u>content</u> of the curriculum is unfamiliar or difficult for teachers. 		
Literacy and writing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know where to turn if one, some, or many of my students cannot read and write at grade level. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My students have ready access to interesting reading materials beyond anthologies and textbooks that help them with the content they must master. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50 percent of my teaching is done in small-group instruction in reading, writing, or my content area. 		

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can devote an uninterrupted period of at least 80-120 minutes to language arts/literacy. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read what they write and write about what they read. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student writing samples that cover a wide range of assignments are planned, revised and published when the specific purpose of the assignment/writing is achieved (process writing). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English language learners receive effective instruction through bilingual, ESL, or other appropriate support programs. 		
Professional respect		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are given time, at least once weekly, to work with colleagues at grade or department level to share effective practices and discuss individual students. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers from his or her grade or content area were involved in writing the district/school curriculum. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development is given a high priority and is tailored to problems in the classroom, grade or department, and school. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance evaluation is based on adequate observation, is constructive in tone, timely, and fair. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school/district has a responsive and sensible way to deal with computer problems in the classrooms or labs; software is effective, aligned with the CCCS and the district curriculum, and useful to teachers in daily teaching. 		
Math		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school implements a mathematics program that emphasizes the development of mathematical thinking as opposed to memorization rote exercises alone. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum includes multiple assessment and benchmarks for measuring progress in each content and process strand. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district assures that mathematics print materials, instructional software, and manipulative materials are aligned with the CCCS in mathematics (the four content standards—Number and Numerical Operations, Geometry and Measurement, Patterns and Algebra, and Data Analysis, Probability, and Discrete Mathematics—and the Mathematical Processes standard). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to communicate about mathematics, both orally and in writing, to explain their reasoning and to make connections among mathematical strands and the real world. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are given regular opportunities to manipulate objects and models to represent mathematical concepts. 		

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students work in a variety of groupings with individualized instruction targeted at meeting or exceeding the CCCS. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning styles: students are offered choices of real life, auditory, visual, and kinesthetic applications of math skills and concepts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software is aligned with the CCCS, is effective in improving student performance, and provides students with opportunities for advanced levels of critical thinking, simulation and application of skills. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum applies mathematics across the curricula in language arts, science, social studies, technology, art and music. 		

INCREASING MASTERY OF THE CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Fresh ideas. One product of the agreement between the plaintiffs' attorney in Abbott and the department in 2003 was the creation of a jointly appointed work group to begin to fill the vacuum in policies for secondary students. With the active participation of Abbott teachers, principals, and superintendents, scholars, consultants, and experienced practitioners from outside New Jersey, this group made a series of recommendations that are captured in regulation and in these guidelines.

Teaching to the Standards. New Jersey's adoption of Core Curriculum Content Standards in 1997 has greatly increased the difficulty of academic work that a student must master in order to graduate. Not surprisingly, the advent of tougher new standards has caught many students, teachers, schools, and districts under-prepared for the level of teaching and learning required. This means that too many Abbott high school students cannot achieve proficiency on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), endangering their chances to earn a high school diploma. The work group concluded that a major explanation for a lack of proficiency on HSPA is an obvious but important one - too many students are not taught what they are expected to learn. In mathematics, for example, too many 9th and 10th graders are enrolled in math courses with titles like "fundamentals of," "basic," or "consumer math," which do not prepare them for the math subtest. The same pattern is found too frequently in science and language arts.

The work group incorporated the most useful findings from research, but also turned to successful examples of Abbott schools and districts in which students were demonstrating sustained proficiency in state tests. A pattern was discerned that almost always involved a district dissecting the CCCS and the content and skills most frequently tested in GEPA and HSPA, and then working backwards to the skills and content that students must master in the years before 8th and 11th grades. Not only do more successful districts carefully align their curriculum with the CCCS, but they lay out six- or eight-week units with very specific instructional goals, the sequence of instruction, and the measures that alert teachers and students that inadequate progress is being made.

During the 2005-06 school year, we expect each district to revise its curriculum to ensure that the years in grades five through nine are used to prepare all students for college preparatory courses in grades nine through 12. If this requirement is treated as yet another paperwork process, then the objective of improved student achievement will be unrealized. This will require that the curricula for every grade and subject are specifically aligned to the CCCS and the teaching materials that match the content required are identified and provided. It will mean that schedules may have to be revised in subsequent years (there is not enough lead time to see changes introduced before September 2006) to focus more instructional time on those fundamental or "power" core standards at the heart of each discipline and most likely to be tested. Each district's review next year should outline how it intends to assess the content and skill mastery of secondary teachers so that tailored and sufficient professional development is offered.

To assist in this effort, the department will give particular attention to the “gatekeeper” courses of algebra and English I by retaining experienced consultants to work with districts on the content of these courses. There is now good evidence, particularly from large-scale demonstrations in Southern states, that these classes can be “make or break” for 9th graders, leading either to increasingly more difficult course work or to discouragement. Tearing apart the sequence, pacing, and content of these courses is at the heart of effective high school pedagogy.

Support for every secondary student. The second principle recommendation of the work group is to begin the difficult planning and consensus-building to create smaller schools or learning communities to ensure that every student’s needs are well-known and advocated for by at least one professional educator. In most Abbott districts this will require converting large institutions into more manageable, personalized communities where students and teachers spend at least two years together. The intent is that a small group of students will become the charge of one educator, who will work over time with the students and their families in a setting of a few hundred students (300 is the recommended ceiling for high schools; 250 students for middle schools). Based on successful experiences in other large cities, we estimate that at least eighteen months of careful planning is required.

The department seeks three or four districts to work cooperatively with the department to test the principles advanced in this year’s regulations. We will retain the expertise of consultants who have implemented smaller communities elsewhere and those who have specialized in working with teachers to make the necessary adjustments. We will also seek to learn from New Jersey districts that have already implemented academies and other forms of smaller communities. Many of the principles are already practiced by some models of comprehensive school reform adopted by Abbott schools. We hope that at least one district with more than one high school will participate. The idea is to test the principles and standards before requiring other districts to follow suit. The standards include the following:

- A voluntary association of teachers and students, with a premium set on both student and teacher choice among schools or communities organized by discipline (math and science or the performing arts, for example), career interests (law enforcement or the health care), or across traditional lines;
- Schools/learning communities must be inclusive and reflect the student population of the “host” middle or high school. Tests, auditions or other enrollment conditions will not be permitted;
- Communities would stay together for at least two years, e.g. for grades 7-8 or 9-10 with a target of not more than 300 students in high school communities or 250 in the middle grades;
- Every student would have a teacher or other professional educator as an advocate/advisor with frequent scheduled and informal gatherings and at least a semi-annual family meeting;
- Schools and districts that can demonstrate that they are able to achieve the objectives by other means could apply for waivers; and
- The planning period would end in September 2006 for the first-phase districts at which point all middle and high schools would convert to smaller schools/communities (i.e. there would be no phase-in within the district).

Districts not participating in the first-phase planning would be expected to form working groups during the 2005-06 year to explore the possibilities, consequences, and difficulties of creating small schools/learning communities.

Remember, the most likely solutions for inadequate student performance are to be found by supporting qualified teachers and well-prepared principals, implementing a coherent curriculum that is closely aligned with the CCCS using instructional materials that are interesting and aligned, and constantly review of the evidence as to how all of these elements are working and making necessary adjustments. These are the teaching and learning issues that should be addressed in December and January by all teachers, the principal and the SLC working together.

Because the classroom is where Abbott works or doesn't, we ask that every teacher complete a checklist. These forms are not to be turned into the central office or the department, but stay at the school to enrich discussion and reflection. Once completed, we ask that teachers in the same department meet to compare their responses. We also ask that the same be done in a faculty meeting of all teachers and the principal. Once these meetings have been held, the principal should summarize the results with the SLC to help prepare the report on instructional priorities for 2005-06.

The goal of the teacher survey is not to achieve consensus nor to point fingers. Instead, the goal is to stimulate a focused and frank conversation among the educators who are directly responsible for, and knowledgeable about, how well students are working and achieving. Candor and forthrightness are obviously required for this process to work.

Reporting on student performance. The following information including continuously enrolled students (CES) must be submitted by high schools. You may use the Excel spreadsheet prepared by the department, an Access database, or your own form as long as the following is displayed:

- Enrollments from the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) by grade for each year from 1999 through 2004;
- The *NCLB*-required 9-12 grade cohort analysis depicting the numbers of ninth grade students four years earlier against the number of graduates four years later for the years 1999-2004;
- The number of high school graduates in the years 2001-2004 with the number graduating via the Special Review Assessment (SRA);
- The HSPA performance by subtest and by *NCLB* subgroups for each year 2002 through 2004 both by percentage proficient and mean scale score; and
- The 2002-2004 HSPA scores by subtest for all eleventh grade students who had been continuously enrolled in the school for at least three years.

These numbers are basic to a sensible review of student performance. There are other indicators that the School Leadership Council (SLC) may want to investigate to gain a clearer picture of how well the school is achieving. For example, the performance of former English language learners (ELLs) who exited in 2002 or earlier and took the HSPA as a "general" student can be reviewed against the performance of current ELL students and/or other general students. The

mean scale scores of disabled students can be plotted by disability and cluster and contrasted with the statewide averages for all students (e.g. how well do speech-handicapped students do compared to non-SPED students?). The more data reviewed, the richer the school profile and revised plans will be.

Teacher's Review of Instruction and Learning

Checklist for High Schools

	Yes	No
Expectations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We expect all students to complete high school prepared to attend a four-year college or university. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We expect all students to complete at least three years of college-prep math, science, and four years of English. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our curriculum makes clear to teachers in every discipline and for every grade what is expected to be covered in their course(s), both as to content and skills. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students know what is expected of them for each term, unit, test, or assignment and they are given frequent chances to attain the goals set. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of students taught is manageable and permits careful reviews of each student's work. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even if all students take college preparatory courses, the school gives counseling and concrete opportunities for those not pursuing college to explore vocational, military, and business opportunities. 		
Curriculum and instructional materials		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our curriculum tracks the CCCS and links academic expectations and instructional materials to specific state standards. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum includes specific benchmarks in six- to eight-week units with interim assessments to identify students falling behind. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbooks, if used, are aligned to the CCCS and are supplemented with accessible and aligned instructional materials. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school leadership and central office help the teacher when the content of the curriculum is unfamiliar or difficult. 		
Professional respect		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are given time, at least once weekly, to work with colleagues at grade or department level to share effective practices and discuss individual students. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers from a grade or content area were involved in writing the district/school curriculum, which is continuously updated 		

	Yes	No
and adjusted.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development is tied to the curricular expectations and helps teachers with both content mastery and instructional skills. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher's performance evaluation is based on adequate observation, is constructive in tone, timely, and fair. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school/district is responsive in correcting computer problems; software is effective, aligned with the CCCS and the district curriculum, and useful to the teacher in daily teaching. 		
Literacy and writing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read widely, across genres, text that is challenging, motivational and relevant to their experience and lives. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students write about what they read and critique what they and others write and students write frequently in courses other than English/language arts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student writing samples that cover a wide range of assignments are planned, revised and published when the specific purpose of the assignment/writing is achieved (process writing). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students write for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to, response to literature, expository, narrative, research, poetry, persuasive/argumentative, etc. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students review, critique and discuss text and its relevance across all content areas. 		
Math		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school implements a mathematics program that emphasizes the development of mathematical thinking as opposed to memorization and rote exercises alone. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students are given the opportunity to complete Algebra I by the end of ninth grade or by the second year of an integrated high school math course. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math texts and supplemental materials cover the five standards: Number and Numerical Operations, Geometry and Measurement, Patterns and Algebra, and Data Analysis, Probability, and Discrete Mathematics -- and the Mathematical Processes Standard. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to communicate about mathematics, both orally and in writing, to explain their reasoning and to make connections among mathematical strands and the real world. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work in a variety of groupings with instruction targeted at meeting or exceeding the CCCS and on the assessed needs of students in relationship to the standards. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum includes multiple assessment strategies and 		

	Yes	No
benchmarks for measuring progress for each content and process strand.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are given regular opportunities to manipulate objects and models to represent mathematical concepts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning styles: students are offered choices of real life, auditory, visual, and kinesthetic applications of math skills and concepts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school uses software that is aligned with CCCS, is effective in improving student performance and provides students with opportunities for advanced levels of critical thinking, simulation and application of skills. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum applies mathematics across the disciplines of language arts, science, social studies, technology, art and music. 		
School culture		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No student is “just a number” because at least one teacher, administrator, counselor or other certified professional knows the work and struggles of every student. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school offers students not pursuing college an opportunity to explore vocational, military and business options. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, parents, and visitors are greeted with respect in a safe, clean, and hospitable environment 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School rules, procedures, and operations are designed to support students, not penalize them. 		

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

“Job number one.” Each district has now met twice in “face-to-face” conversations with the department to discuss in depth its most important instructional issues. The first topic in each of those meetings was intensive early literacy, and *improved literacy rates remain the primary measure of central office effectiveness*. While the purpose of these conversations is to focus on the particular academic needs of each district, there is a short list of problems that is shared by a majority of Abbott districts: math achievement, teaching English to ELLs, improving cognitive knowledge of SPED students, and coping with large middle and high schools. Whatever the short list is for your district as reflected in the division’s follow-up letter to the summer face-to-face meetings, we ask that it dominate the effort to be put forward in 2005-2006.

If any district thinks that the instructional priorities identified in this summer’s face-to-face meetings should be changed, please contact the Abbott division’s Office of Student Achievement and Fiscal Support (609) 292-6874 to discuss the proposed revision.

The Commissioner’s regulations for this year build on the standards and practices of the last two years in specifying the role of the district central office in improving student performance. In particular, the regulations are much more precise about the *foundational education* framework that should be in place in each Abbott district. These are the basic responsibilities of any district that must be discharged well if students and their schools are to be properly supported. You will note that the conditions which mirror these basic functions and that were attached to the award of Discretionary Education Opportunity Aid (formerly “supplemental funding”) this year remain in place for next year. These are basic operational, financial and educational practices that are customary, standard, and assumed to be in place in each district, such as a timely unqualified audit and a curriculum aligned with the CCCS.

Special emphasis is given to a district curriculum aligned with the CCCS. There is growing evidence that many Abbott students are not being taught what it is they are expected to learn as defined by the core standards and assessed by the state’s tests. The starting point to correcting this unfair condition is a fully aligned district curriculum that is clear and specific about what teachers should teach in what sequence and at what pace using what instructional materials with interim tests along the way to know if appropriate progress is being made. An effective curriculum is continuously reviewed and adjusted using content supervisors. *Producing or revising a district curriculum is not work that can wait for the start of the new school year.*

Department of Education review of the District Report on Instructional Priorities. The division will review each district’s report to confirm that the work to achieve universal early literacy and the goal of mastery of the CCCS is clearly and specifically addressed. The quality of the district’s assistance to schools, the existence of a coherent preschool-to-grade-12 curriculum, and professional development plans will be at the heart of the discussion. We hope to base these conversations on the evidence of achievement and progress. The goal is to reach an agreement on the budgetary implications for 2005-06 so that we can settle on the district’s instructional priorities and its budget for next year by the March submission date.

The checklist that follows the budget section is not a compliance review, but a shortcut to get to the fundamental issues involved in providing high-quality instruction. It recognizes the competition for talented educators and the difficulties of teaching a rapidly changing student body. The checklist works only if it produces candid answers. We do not assume all “yes” answers for any district.

Budget preparation for 2005-2006

Abbott district budgets should provide the resources needed to educate students well and to do so efficiently. Budget preparation and review for 2005-06 will be driven by the relationship of school and district spending to improvement in student achievement. The department’s goal is to work closely with each district during budget preparation so that we are in agreement with the submission of the budget in March. Districts applying for Discretionary Education Opportunity Aid (DEOA) will receive notice of the department’s award by May 31, 2005.

The most noticeable change from this year’s budget is the “presumptive budget.” In previous years, districts submitted a budget with proposed spending from which was subtracted confirmed revenues, with the remainder becoming the district’s request for supplemental aid, now DEOA. For 2005-06, districts should presume that their approved budgets for 2004-05, including any DEOA, is the starting point to which is added 2.5 percent or the cost of living, whichever is higher. This becomes the “presumptive” budget that will be approved by the department. If the district receives an amount higher than the presumptive budget because of its parity aid for 2005-06, then the higher amount becomes the approved budget. If parity aid is not adequate to meet the presumptive budget, then Education Opportunity Aid (EOA) will be increased to cover that amount.

Between December and the end of February, the department will discuss budget preparation with each district to facilitate an early agreement. Included in those conversations will be the results of the Department Efficiency Study, comparing expenditures in nine major categories for every Abbott district to spending in other districts identified in six groups by Abbott, statewide, district factor grouping (DFG), operating type and size, county, and region. Where a district’s per pupil spending exceeds the midpoint average median (the average of the highest and lowest medians) there will be a joint assessment of the reasons for the higher spending. If particular local needs or circumstances do not explain the higher spending, then the department and district will try to agree on how much of the higher spending can be reduced in 2005-06. Any reductions will be used first for improved instructional expenditures, then for improved efficiencies, then for absorbing inflation, and, finally, for reducing any request for DEOA.

Any district that finds that its presumptive budget is not adequate to cover foundational education requirements, effective instruction, and other needs may apply for DEOA. The regulations specify the ordinary financial, business, and educational standards that the district must meet to be eligible for DEOA. For example, a district that does not have a pre-K-12 curriculum aligned with the CCCS, or does not maintain a student-level database to track educational progress, or does not assist schools in evaluation of educationally effective programs will not be eligible for DEOA.

An applicant district will be given a reasonable opportunity to explain the particular needs and circumstances requiring DEOA. The department seeks assurance that awards of DEOA are made to districts that have set clear instructional goals, can evaluate the educational effectiveness of all schools are financially well-managed, with adequate internal controls and efficient business operations.

The Department will review a district's request to determine if there are any current expenditures that are not effective and efficient that might be reallocated to fund the DEOA request. The regulations are clear that the district must be able to document the evidence of student achievement, have a coherent curriculum to guide instruction, and evidence that what is currently practiced is both effective and efficient. This review will include any spending area in which a DEOA applicant exceeds the midpoint average median with the expectation that any realized savings from reduced spending may be subtracted from its DEOA award. DEOA applicants must submit the Report on Instructional Priorities and school-based budget for every school, including the list of any programs, services, contracts or positions that are being requested or discontinued with the documentation of its contribution to improved student achievement. For any new or expanded program, the district must document that there is a reasonable expectation that the new or expanded expenditure will produce improved student performance in an efficient manner.

The schedule for district budget submission is determined by the date of the Governor's Budget Message which contains state aid recommendations to the Legislature.

Checklist for District/DOE Review

	Yes	No
1. Highly qualified teachers in every classroom		
• There are no teachers with emergency certificates.		
• There are no permanent substitutes or “19-day subs.”		
• The district is successful in recruiting for specialties in short supply, i.e. special education, bilingual, ESL, math, science.		
• The district recruits alternate route teachers.		
• The district, not individual schools, decides the priorities for professional development.		
• Professional development combines an assessment of student performance with an assessment of how well-prepared our teachers are to teach the content of the core standards.		
• Professional development exceeds the state minimum of 100 hours/five years.		
• District policy encourages weekly grade-level and departmental meetings.		
2. Highly qualified principals in every school:		
• The most important criterion in each principal’s evaluation is academic performance.		
• Principals participate regularly in district-organized professional development.		
• Principals meet regularly to discuss instructional issues and practices.		
• The district brings together principals with similar instructional problems, e.g. growing ELL populations or fourth-grade math problems.		
• The district identifies, encourages, and challenges teachers, supervisors, and others who might make strong principals.		
• Principals in schools making inadequate progress are warned and supported, but removed if the trend continues.		
3. A coherent, aligned district curriculum.		
• There is a district-wide curriculum aligned with the CCCS from preschool through twelfth grade.		
• A teacher at any grade level or teaching any subject will know from the curriculum the content he/she is expected to teach, the sequence and pacing of the instruction, and how student progress can be measured.		
• The curriculum is the subject of continuous scrutiny and revision, when necessary.		
• The cluster results on state assessments and the item analyses on non-state assessments are torn apart for curricular alignment.		
• The preschool curriculum is closely aligned with the K-3		

	Yes	No
curriculum		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district, not schools or technology coordinators, selects the instructional software to ensure its alignment with the district curriculum. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum includes instructional materials selected for their effectiveness with ELL students. 		
4. Continuous, rigorous assessment of student work.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district uses an electronic student database that includes pre-K students. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has identified all students continuously enrolled in district schools for three years or more. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each school receives a district-prepared analysis of state and other test results with item and cluster analyses that compares school-to-school performance within the district and with other Abbott, DFG, and statewide results 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The central office reports the national origin and home literacy survey results for all ELL students 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district reports the percentage of third-year ELLs who were proficient on state tests and tracks the proficiency of exited ELLs to graduation 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district compares test results of speech and specific learning disability (SLD) classified students with “general” students and tracks the classified students who exit SPED. 		
5. Underperforming schools.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district identifies underperforming schools for special attention, including a joint diagnosis of instructional problems and a road map for improved teaching and learning. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district’s evaluation of the principal of an underperforming school includes agreement on the specific work to be done and measurable indicators of progress. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has conducted an evaluation of each classroom teacher to determine strengths and weaknesses and agreed on a professional development program for each. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district, principal, and SLC have agreed on a plan that complies with <i>NCLB</i> requirements and sets school-wide goals and indicators for 2005-06. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal of each underperforming schools reports to one central office person, who shares responsibility for school improvement results. 		
6. Service to schools, teachers, and other customers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central office professionals are evaluated on how well they serve the district’s “customers.” 		
The district uses anonymous “customer satisfaction” surveys of principals, a random sample of teachers, and other school-based		

	Yes	No
professionals. If “no” we will initiate such surveys this year.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All textbooks and other instructional materials and supplies are delivered to all schools in advance of school opening. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair orders for broken windows, graffiti, heating, and other building problems are handled quickly and with as little intrusion on instruction as possible. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student referred for evaluation by a child study team is reviewed within twenty days and a diagnosis completed within ninety days. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutritious and tasty food is served for lunch. 		

ABBOTT INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT AND NCLB

The Report on Instructional Priorities for the 2005-06 school year and meeting NCLB Requirements. The school principal will lead the School Leadership Council and the entire faculty in setting three or four ambitious but manageable instructional goals for next year. These goals will translate into the Report on Instructional Priorities. The report and 2005-06 school budget must be submitted to the district by February 1, 2005 (districts applying for DEOA will submit all school reports and budgets with their budget request in March). These guidelines reflect the fullest possible integration of Abbott and *NCLB* schools-in- need-of-improvement requirements.

As detailed below, a school's categorization will determine the process for developing the report, including *NCLB*-relevant forms to be submitted. The Report should show how specific student performance data were used to help set the priorities. It is not enough to rely on NJ ASK4 results alone, since affected students will already be in 5th grade. *Every elementary school should begin its report with its analysis of literacy*, even if its students are doing very well by all measures. Each school must use evidence and judgment to select priorities beyond literacy. We have found that the most common instructional problems are math performance and effective instruction for ELLs and SPED students, but each school needs to wrestle with its own evidence to decide which ones should receive special attention. The report should reflect analyses of the following:

- Were all unclassified and non-ELL third graders and at least 75% of all first graders reading on grade level at the end of last year? If “no” is the answer for either grade, then improved literacy should be the first priority identified for this and the next school year. The research is solid, and the experience in many Abbott schools is convincing, that only students with serious disabilities are unlikely to be readers by third grade. The report should analyze the extent to which the ingredients of Intensive Early Literacy are being implemented and include an item and cluster analysis of non-state assessments in K through second grades (New Jersey does not release item analyses).

If the principal, faculty, and SLC are not able to pinpoint the explanations for unclassified students not reading on grade level, it should request the assistance of the central office during December 2004 and January 2005 to help come up with a specific literacy program for the balance of this and next school year.

- If all third graders and 75% of first graders were on grade level, then the school should answer the question of how a higher percentage of its third and fourth graders can be deemed “advanced proficient” on the NJ ASK4 language arts subtest. One source of possible information is those schools, Abbott and non-Abbott, where their third and fourth graders are disproportionately “advanced proficient,” (with only 5.7% statewide, this will not be a large number of places).

In all cases, then, the first instructional priority in every school's report is literacy.

- If the rate of improvement is not strong over the past three years or so, then the school should include in its report an examination of programs, contracts, positions, and services that have been in place during the same time. Do you have computers that are not tied into daily classroom instruction? Is the software linked with the comprehensive reading program and district curriculum or is it an unrelated commercial package to keep students busy? What contributions is the whole school reform (WSR) model making to student achievement and teacher support that can be documented? How do teachers make use of the services of coaches, facilitators, and supervisors?
- If English language learners (ELLs), low-income students, and special education (SPED) students are not making acceptable progress as measured by *NCLB*, the level of *integration* of all instructional resources should be examined. One indicator is whether there is a wall between “general education” and other students. For example, do SPED, Title I or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers pull out their students or do they work alongside the classroom teacher in small-group instruction? If the former, the school should consider what progress can be made toward the goal of integrated and inclusive co-teaching and what assistance teachers may need this year to begin that process.

In setting three or so instructional priorities to guide the school next year, we ask that each school provide the following additional information:

Whole School Reform. It is presumed that Abbott elementary schools will retain a contract with a DOE-approved national WSR model. All schools should have completed a detailed evaluation of the contributions and limitations of its WSR model in spring 2003. Any elementary school that has documented that its WSR model is not contributing to improved student achievement may apply for another DOE-approved model. The standards for such a switch should also include evidence that a good-faith effort was made to implement the original model. Schools interested in selecting another department-approved model should consult their district superintendent and refer to the document’s section on changing whole school reform models (including Form B) in the appendix.

Schools in the following four categories may, under certain circumstances, choose to develop their own design in cooperation with their central offices:

1. Low-performing schools as defined at *N.J.A.C.* 6A:10A-3.3(e) and as designated for the 2003-04 school year. In these cases, the CAPA team assigned to the school may recommend a shift from the current developer to another DOE-approved WSR model or to an AWSRD generated by the school or district.
2. High-performing schools which are schools in which the percentage of general education students attaining proficiency on the 2002 ESPA LAL subtest exceeds the statewide proficiency level percentage. Such schools may shift models or implement an AWSRD.
3. Schools that did not have a WSR contract in 2002-03 are expected to contract with its WSR model from 2001-02, unless the school/SLC can demonstrate to the Commissioner

that its original developer cannot meet the instructional needs of the school, in which case, a different WSR model or an AWSRD may be approved.

4. Schools that file a complaint with the Commissioner documenting unsatisfactory performance of contract terms by its WSR developer may, if the Commissioner determines that satisfactory performance is not feasible, explore the same options as schools in numbers two and three above.

Schools in categories 2-4, with the superintendent's approval, may apply to the Commissioner for approval to establish an Alternative whole School Reform Design, using Form A found in the appendix.

All other elementary schools not in categories 1-4 will continue implementation of a DOE-approved WSR model. With the highest priority on "classroom out" planning and budgeting, it is presumed that the developer assists with a deeper assessment of student performance and evaluation of effective instructional practices. On the other hand, if a developer has been in the school for three years or more under a contract that promises improved student achievement that has not been realized, then the school should file a complaint with the Commissioner per #4 above, select another approved model, or apply for an alternative WSR design.

Note that Community for Learners has been removed from the Department's list of approved models, which will require action by schools previously contracted with CFL.

School Leadership Council. Abbott schools are distinguished by their use of a school-based body to advise on essential instructional, budgeting, and other issues. The SLC works with the principal to assess and improve the instructional culture of the school. Its purpose is not to implement programs or manage the school. The SLC should also serve as the "school improvement plan committee" required by *NCLB*. During the current year, SLCs should be acting on the results of the self-assessments which were included in last year's regulations and guidelines. The SLC should review and approve both the school budget and the report on instructional priorities.

Supplemental services. "Supplemental services" means three different things for Abbott and *NCLB* purposes. *NCLB* uses the term Supplemental Educational Services to describe services that must be made available by "schools in need of improvement" to parents for tutoring and other supplemental help. In *Abbott V*, the NJ Supreme Court described a range of educational and other remedies that were mandated, authorized, or noted. For example, preschool for three- and four-year-olds, full-day kindergarten, and class size reduction by grade level were called "supplemental" by the court in *Abbott III*, but are, in fact, mandated in *Abbott V*. Other services such as after-school programs or in-school health clinics were authorized if the school or district could document that the program, position, or service would contribute to improved student achievement.

For the 2005-06 school budget and report on instructional priorities, supplemental services refer to those programs or services that are documented to be essential for the achievement of literacy and the other instructional priorities. There is no "cookie cutter" answer to student achievement

for all Abbott schools. It is possible that clusters of students will present unusual and unanticipated problems that prevent them from achieving early literacy or mastering the CCCS even with exposure to a rich instructional culture. Such examples must be fully documented, and proposed solutions must demonstrate potential effectiveness in improving student achievement. Only after a school's instructional practices have been evaluated and changes for their improvement proposed, should schools and districts look to other, noninstructional explanations for improved student achievement. "The Chart on Supplemental Programs" is attached and may suggest some remedies.

Where schools have employed specific programs, vendors, positions, or services for the last three years or more, whether authorized, mandated or not by Abbott, they should prepare a list of all such supplemental services with an assessment of their individual contribution to improved achievement. The premise of this requirement is that three years should be an adequate period for the expertise, philosophy, or technical capacity of the vendor to be absorbed by the school's staff. Each school should provide the evidence of the effectiveness of any provider or consultant being used beyond three years, including the WSR provider.

Directions for Completing The Report

The report must include precise goals and indicators for how far the school will go in closing the achievement gaps in math and language arts literacy (LAL). Each school must indicate its current status and set ambitious but achievable goals for 2005-06 with respect to the following: The performance and goals for all students and each subgroup in attaining proficiency in language arts and math; the performance by English language learners, by number of years in bilingual and/or ESL programs in achieving English proficiency and the number who will do so by the end of this school year; the percentage of classrooms taught by "highly qualified teachers" as defined by New Jersey for compliance with *NCLB*; and the achievement of learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning. Secondary schools should also assess the dropout rate, and how to achieve a higher graduation rate.

The report will serve as the revisions to the School Three-year Operations Plan, and should be completed based on the following school categories:

Schools Not In Need of Improvement: These schools are only required to complete a brief narrative on its two to four key instructional priorities based on guidance and questions above. Such schools are not required to complete forms found in the appendix.

Schools In Need of Improvement Year 2 (Public School Choice) and Year 3 (Supplemental Educational Services): These schools must complete a brief narrative on its three to four key instructional priorities based on guidance and questions above, as well as the following forms found in the appendix: Cover Page, Instructional Priorities/Essential Elements, and the Program Plan.

Abbott-designated LPS schools/schools in Year 4 (Corrective Action): These schools are not expected to complete the instructional priorities narrative. However, they must complete the following forms found in the appendix: Cover Page, Instructional Priorities/Essential Elements,

and the Program Plan. If the LPS has completed a CAPA review and received a report of recommendations, the priorities listed on the form must coincide with the recommendations. If a report has not been issued, the school must still complete the forms based on guidance above. In this instance, the school will be provided the opportunity to amend its priorities upon receipt of CAPA recommendations.

Abbott Middle Schools and Title I Schools In Need of Improvement. For schools that are K-8 or P-8 in which performance on the GEPA is the trigger for “in-need-of-improvement” status, the guidance on the previous pages will be sufficient for meeting *NCLB* requirements. Any middle school now categorized as “in need of improvement” must produce an evaluation for *NCLB* of student performance going back three years for each subgroup, a school improvement plan, and a specific set of goals and indicators of progress for this school year. Each of these steps fits in with the revisions required for the Abbott three-year operational plan.

Abbott High Schools and NCLB Title I High Schools In Need of Improvement. Because HSPA is a relatively new test, Title I high schools trail elementary and middle schools in the *NCLB* sequence for schools “in need of improvement.” At most, for *NCLB*, Title I high schools could be in their second year of not making “adequate yearly progress” (Year 2 School Choice) in school year 2004-05.

Abbott and *NCLB* use the same criterion for measuring progress: Are students performing better academically? Both Abbott and *NCLB* call for schools to report and analyze HSPA results by subgroups as a first step in assessing instructional priorities (Abbott adds “CES” to the subgroups required by *NCLB*). DOE has prepared an Excel spreadsheet to assist with the collection of the required test information, but an Access database can be created instead, or the school can devise its own form, as long as the same information is reported. These test data are one ingredient in assessing how well students are learning, what obstacles stand in their way to improved performance, what steps the school will take to eliminate or lower those obstacles, and what specific goals are set for improvement this year and for the next two years and how that progress will be measured. The foregoing sentence is a simple statement of the task ahead for every school that must be completed by February 1, 2005 when plans and a school budget are submitted to the central office.

Report of Instructional Priorities

In your Report of Instructional Priorities narrative, did you address the following for each instructional priority:

1. Diagnosis of student performance, including state and other assessment results for *NCLB* subgroups, CES, and other indicators;
2. The process used by the school to reach consensus about the priorities;
3. Measures for judging progress including interim benchmarks;
4. Description of the work to be performed, including:
 - Summaries of the essential elements of Intensive Early Literacy to be completed;
 - Summary of activities for improving teaching and learning in other priority areas,

- including proposed pacing and sequence for materials, training, classroom support and interim measures;
- Summaries based on the middle grades and high school literacy checklists; and
 - Implementation of WSR
5. If the district is applying for DEOA in accordance with the Abbott rules, *N.J.A.C* 6A:10A-7, have you included:
- A list of programs, services, contracts, positions being requested or discontinued with their contribution to student achievement (See *N.J.A.C* 6A:10A-7); and
 - For new and expanded programs, have you included a reasonable explanation that the proposed programs will contribute to improving student achievement (See *N.J.A.C* 6A:10A-7).

Abbott Districts and NCLB. In the next school year, some Abbott districts may be identified as “districts in need of improvement” under *NCLB*. (Currently, the pool of potentially eligible districts totals fourteen.) Once again, the department will make every effort to match the *NCLB* requirements for district compliance with the expectations for Abbott districts with the *consequence* that much of what is required for *developing the district’s instructional priorities* will have been produced in their recently submitted consolidated federal application. The goal is the same: to identify the obstacles in the way of all students mastering the CCCS.

APPENDICES

**INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES/SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN REPORT
COVER PAGE**

SCHOOL:		DISTRICT:	
SCHOOL CODE:		DISTRICT CODE:	
CURRENT DATE:	REGION: ___North ___Central ___South		
WSR MODEL:_____		Date model initially adopted_____	
Newly selected WSR model? ___		Newly selected alternative WSR design?___	
APPROVED TITLE I SCHOOLWIDE: ___Yes ___No			
NCLB SCHOOL IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT: ___Yes ___No Corrective Action: _____Yes No_____			
DISTRICT CONTACT:		SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:	
DISTRICT CONTACT PHONE:		PRINCIPAL PHONE:	
DISTRICT CONTACT FAX:		PRINCIPAL FAX:	
DISTRICT CONTACT E-MAIL:		PRINCIPAL E-MAIL:	
DISTRICT BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR NAME:		SCHOOL ADDRESS—CITY, STATE, ZIP	
DISTRICT BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR PHONE/FAX:		GRADE SPAN OF SCHOOL: Grades ___ - ___ Elementary_____ Middle _____ High School _____	
DISTRICT ADDRESS—CITY, STATE, ZIP		TOTAL SCHOOL-BASED BUDGET FUNDS:	
Signature of School Principal & Date:		Signature of School Facilitator & Date:	
Signature of School Leadership Council Chair & Date:		SLC Chair Address:	

INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES/ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

LEA: _____ County: _____ Project Code: NCLB _____

School: _____

1. What strategies, programs and/or activities does the school improvement plan include to address each of the following areas:
 - Teaching and learning in core academic subjects with particular emphasis on literacy and mathematics;
 - Professional development
 - Technical assistance; and
 - Parent involvement.

2. Indicate the plan's measurable goals for each of the following areas:
 - Teaching and learning in core academic subjects with particular emphasis on literacy and mathematics;
 - Professional development
 - Technical assistance; and
 - Parent involvement.

3. Describe the scientifically based research (for Title I Funds only) or evidence-based research used to support the plan's strategies, programs and/or activities for teaching and learning in the core academic subjects?

4. What extended day and/or extended year programs and activities, as appropriate, does the plan include to address teaching and learning in the core academic subjects?

5. Describe the professional development activities that will be implemented to address:
 - The teaching and learning process to increase content knowledge;
 - The use of scientifically based instructional strategies in core academic subjects;
 - The alignment of classroom activities with academic content standards and assessments; and
 - Training to analyze classroom and school-level data to inform instruction

6. Was provisions are in the school improvement plan to support high-quality, structured mentoring of new teachers?

7. Describe the steps the school will take to provide the parents of each student with written notice about the school's identification for improvement? **(Note: This requirement only applies to schools designated as "in need of improvement")**

8. What resources will be allocated and/or reallocated to support implementation of the school improvement plan?
9. Explain the responsibilities of the LEA and the SEA in implementing the plan and providing, or providing for, technical assistance.

**INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES/SCHOOL IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT
Program Plan**

LEA: _____ County: _____ Project Code: NCLB-____ School: _____

Goals, Identified Needs, Performance Indicators, Performance Targets, Measurement Tools, and Program Activities

(1) Selected Priority Problem(s)/ Populations Identified During Needs Assessment Use Problem(s) Codes from 2005 Parrallel Application.	(2) Performance Goal(s) and Indicator Code(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Performance Target(s) for Each Year: 2005 and 2006 • Actual Performance Target(s) Achieved From Prior Year 		(5) Measurement Tool/Method	(6) Scientifically Based Program <u>and</u> Activities (Title I Funds only)/Evidence-Based Research Program and Activities	(7) CAPA Recommendation
		(3) Baseline Data and Performance Target	(4) Actual Outcome from 2004			



Check Before Proceeding:

- Has an evaluation of 2004 *NCLB* activities been made for decision making for the 2005 planned activities for *NCLB*?
- For Title I, does the program plan for schools in need of improvement include the required *NCLB* elements: Strategies for teaching core academic subjects; Professional development; Technical assistance; Parental involvement; Measurable goals; Mentoring; Data analysis; Resource allocation, and improving instruction?
- Are there performance targets for each student subgroup that did not meet AYP?

CHANGING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM MODELS

All elementary schools must have an approved school or district AWSRD, or a Department-approved WSR model. To change their WSR model, elementary schools must follow the requirements in the Abbott regulations, *N.J.A.C. 6A:10A*, which implement the New Jersey Supreme Court policies in Abbott X. The regulations presume that elementary schools will implement a national WSR model to assure that every student is reading at grade level by the end of third grade and mastered the core curriculum content standards (CCCS), unless they meet the conditions specified in *N.J.A.C.6A:10A*. If recommended by a comprehensive assessment, low-performing schools may discontinue their current model. High-performing schools and those schools that can document that their WSR model is not addressing their needs, may apply to implement a whole school alternative design (AWSRD) or select another WSR model. Schools must submit a request on the application in these guidelines to the Department and receive approval prior to changing their model. Schools or WSR developers that claim that the conditions of the contract have not been met, may file a complaint with the Commissioner.

An alternative WSR design is offered because the instructional needs of every school might not be met by any of the approved national models. The department relies on school and district professional educators to evaluate student needs for DEOA and for determining the educational value of national models. Hence, there are no mandatory elements for the AWSRD, as long as the instructional needs of students have been fully assessed and addressed and that the nine elements of whole school reform are included.

All other schools that do not fall into one of the four categories below but are not satisfied with their WSR model, may apply to switch to another approved model that is better tailored to its students' needs. Applicant schools must demonstrate that they have made a good-faith effort to implement their WSR models and that their current model is not contributing to improved student performance. A school seeking a new WSR model must first consider the models on the department-approved list. See www.nj.gov/njded/abbotts/resources/. If a school identifies a model that is not on the department- approved list, it may work with the provider of the model to complete an alternative WSR design application or petition the department to add the model to the approved list. The department will review all such requests separately and notify the schools of its decision. Schools selecting a new WSR model, **except high-performing schools**, should complete and submit Form B.

The applications in this manual must be used to notify the department of any changes in WSR model. Schools that have allowed their contract with their WSR developer to expire must either reinstate the contract in accordance with the code, submit an application to implement an AWSRD, or switch to another WSR model using the enclosed applications.

In accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:10A, Improving Learning and Literacy in Abbott School Districts: Implementing Standards-driven Instruction and Effective and Efficient Practices*, schools in the following categories are eligible to apply for an AWSRD:

1. High-performing schools are schools in which the percentage of general education students attaining proficiency on the Language Arts Literacy (LAL) section of the 2002 Elementary

School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) exceeds the statewide percentage, as may be adjusted by the Commissioner. These schools were identified in 2003-2004 and retain their designation for two years.

2. Schools that did not have a whole school reform (WSR) contract were to have reinstated their original WSR model last year unless to the department approved a different model. Schools without contracts or an approved AWSRD for the 2005-2006 school year must submit either Form A (for AWSRD) or Form B (for a new WSR).
3. Schools and/or model developers that file a complaint with the Commissioner of Education, asserting failure of the other party to comply with the WSR contract will be reviewed with the intent of restoring satisfactory performance of the contract and to determine if the contract should be continued or modified. If performance under the contract is not feasible, the Commissioner may authorize the school to apply for an AWSRD.
4. Low-performing schools are those in which 50 percent or more of general education students were not proficient on the Language Arts Literacy (LAL) Section of the 2002 Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA). These schools will retain their designation in 2005-2006. After an assessment by the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) Team, it may reach an agreement with the school and district that the model should be discontinued in preference for an AWSRD. The improvement agreement replaces this application.

APPLICATIONS FOR SELECTING A NEW WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM MODEL OR IMPLEMENTING AN ALTERNATIVE WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM DESIGN

OVERVIEW

Purpose. State regulations presume that elementary schools will implement a national model of Whole School Reform (WSR) to assure universal literacy by third grade and attainment of the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) at every grade level. Under certain circumstances, however, a school may apply to the Commissioner using Form A, if it concludes that Abbott's goals will be better achieved with an alternative whole school reform design (AWSRD). Schools that want to select another department-approved WSR model may use Section B.

Literacy and learning. In reviewing applications for an AWSRD or selecting a new WSR model, the department will give greatest weight to evidence that the applicant school has completed a rigorous assessment of student achievement, analyzed the reasons for inadequate performance, and demonstrated the relationship of the proposed AWSRD or new WSR to those findings and prescriptions for improvement. Only WSR models or AWSRDs built on improved student achievement will be considered.

Note that Abbott districts interested in developing a single AWSRD model for all of their elementary schools should not use this form, but should set up a meeting with the Division of Abbott Implementation.

High Performing Schools do not have to submit Form A.

Directions for Completing the Alternative Whole School Reform Design Application or Selecting a New WSR Model

Please note that low performing schools do not complete these forms since the decision related to their WSR is made as the result of the CAPA process.

High-Performing Schools: These schools are posted on our website: www.nj.gov/njded/abbotts. If the school intends to implement the an AWSRD in 2005-2006, the school must include the following in its Report on Instructional Priorities:

1. The transition from the current WSR model to the AWSRD, including the schedule for introducing new materials and practices;
2. The pace, magnitude and nature of the professional development to be offered the faculty; and
3. A description of how the AWSRD will contribute to increased student achievement.

The Report should be submitted to the district and the Department by February 1, 2005.

Schools without a contract: These schools were to reinstate their WSR model in 2004-2005 unless they had received prior approval to change models or implement a district or school AWSRD. A school continuing without a contract in 2004-2005 or a Department approved AWSRD or WSR model, the school must complete either Form A or B by February 1, 2005. The Commissioner and superintendent will collaborate with the principal and SLC of such schools to assess the following:

1. Whether the requirements of the original WSR model have been fully and fairly implemented, or whether the school can document the reasons for incomplete implementation;
2. Whether the model has contributed to early literacy and sufficient improvement in student proficiency on the CCCS;
3. Whether the philosophy and practices of the WSR model have been fully integrated into the school; and
4. Whether the conditions essential for sustained student achievement can be achieved by resuming the contract with the previous WSR model.

If the evaluation concludes that restoration of the original WSR contract is neither feasible nor desirable, the school will contract with another approved WSR model. If no other approved WSR model can meet the needs of the school, it may apply for an AWSRD, completing Form A to document the following:

1. That the AWSRD is consistent with *N.J.A.C.6A:10A-3.4(b)*, the nine elements of whole school reform;
2. That there is a clear transition plan to the AWSRD;
3. That the AWSRD is fully aligned with the district's professional development activities, curriculum, CCCS, goals of early literacy and other district priorities; and
4. That the school-based budget is sufficient to implement the alternative WSR design.

Schools and WSR model developers that file a successful complaint with the Commissioner and the Chief School Administrator (CSA). The Commissioner will direct whatever steps he deems necessary to resolve the problems raised by the complaint so that satisfactory performance under the contract can be achieved. If the Commissioner determines that satisfactory performance under the contract is not feasible, the school may select another DOE-approved WSR model. If no other models meet the school's needs, it may apply for an AWSRD.

Schools, other than those designated low- or high-performing, that did not have a contract in 2003-04 or that assert failure by another party to comply with the WSR contract, will have to do the following to terminate the WSR contract:

1. Demonstrate that the requirements of the WSR model have been fully and fairly implemented, or document the reasons for incomplete implementation; that the model has not contributed to sufficient improvement in student achievement; or that the philosophy and practices of the model have been integrated fully into the school;
2. Select a Department-approved WSR model or submit an application for an AWSRD;
3. Ensure that the new WSR model will be consistent with standards-based reform in accordance with *N.J.A.C.6A:10A-3.3 (a)*; and
4. Include a transition plan to the new model.

Schools selecting a new WSR model or AWSRD must submit the following information with their applications:

1. Evidence from its revised Three-year Operational Plan that the school community, including all teachers, has carefully and deeply assessed student achievement using state, district, and school measures of performance;
2. A narrative explaining how the requirements described in *N.J.A.C. 6A:10A-3.6* are to be satisfied by the AWSRD, which must be approved by the SLC and a vote of the school's certificated staff; and
3. A letter from the superintendent supporting the AWSRD and documenting the role the central office played in developing same.

Completed Forms A or B should be submitted to **Gordon MacInnes, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Abbott Implementation, New Jersey Department of Education, 100 Riverview Plaza, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500** or by electronic transmission to Gordon.MacInnes@doe.state.nj.us with a copy to your regional office.

**FORM A: APPLICATION FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM
DESIGN (AWSRD)**

District: _____	School: _____	Grades: _____
Current WSR Model: _____	Cohort: _____	

General Information

1. If approved, the school will implement the AWSRD:
____ this school year _____ in 2005-06.

2. Check eligibility:
 - The school did not have a WSR contract in 2004-05 and no department- approved WSR model can meet the current needs of the school.
 - The school filed a complaint with the Commissioner who determined that satisfactory performance under the contract was not possible and no department-approved WSR model can meet the needs of the school.

3. ***No Child Left Behind (NCLB) status:***
 - Our school has been designated a “school in need of improvement.”
____ Yes ____ No
 - If “in need of improvement,” our school was cited for not achieving ____ of 40 indicators (e.g. for 95 percent test-taking, math, language arts, *NCLB* subgroups special education students (SPED), etc).
 - The percentage of our students categorized as English language learners (ELLs) is _____ and as classified disabled is _____.
 - Our school improvement plan required by *NCLB* is consistent with this AWSRD proposal. ____ Yes ____ No

Student Performance Profile

1. The percentage of Total students who were proficient or advanced proficient on the NJ ASK4 LAL was _____; for NJ ASK4 Math it was _____.
2. The percentage of students continuously enrolled for at least three years in our school achieving proficient or advanced proficient status was _____.
3. Having reviewed the NJ ASK4 results by cluster, we have concluded that the area of strongest teaching and learning was _____.
4. Similarly, we have concluded that the area of weakest performance by last year’s fourth graders was _____.

5. We use standardized tests such as TerraNova for kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Yes No If "yes" give the name of the test used _____.

If yes, the percentage of our first graders who were reading on grade level in 2004-05 was _____.

Intensive Early Literacy check

1. We have classroom libraries. Yes No
If yes, the average number of books in our second grade classrooms is _____.
If we have ELL students, we also have books in their native language. Yes No
2. All K-3 classrooms are organized around "learning centers" or small-group instruction areas for computers, reading, writing and science. Yes No
3. All K-3 classes devote at least 90 minutes each morning to a language arts/literacy block of uninterrupted instruction. Yes No
4. Dual language classes are available for ELLs, as appropriate. Yes No

Our Alternative Whole School Reform Design Proposal

1. The main reason we seek approval to implement an AWSRD is...

2. If implemented, the most striking change that will be noticeable to classroom teachers will be the following:

3. The most striking change that will be noticeable to students will be the following: _____

4. The most striking change that will be noticeable to parents will be the following: _____

5. The student performance objectives most likely to be achieved by the AWSRD are the following:

6. If the design is successfully implemented, we expect the percentage of first grade readers to increase to _____ by June 2005 and to _____ by June 2006.

7. The following members of the school community were involved in the development of the design (give names and titles):

8. The following members of the central office were also involved in the development of the design, by name and title:

9. The three largest revisions or reallocations (with amounts) to the school budget required to implement the AWSRD are as follows:

10. If approved, we expect to begin professional development for teachers by _____(date) and that approximately _____hours will be required in the first full year of implementation.

11. If applicable, we expect new instructional materials required by the AWSRD to be introduced by _____(date).

The following training will be offered to non-instructional SLC members

12. Our AWSRD is consistent with the nine elements of WSR.

_____Yes _____No.

13. Which of the elements is not included in the AWSRD?

14. How will your school address missing elements?

WSR Model Information

1. We began implementation of the WSR model (date): _____
Implementation has been continuous? _____Yes _____No

2. On a scale of one to 10, with 10 representing full implementation of all WSR model requirements and one no implementation, our level of implementation was _____.

3. The faculty vote to abandon our current WSR model was taken on _____ by a vote of _____ to _____.

4. Our school does not want to continue its WSR model for the following most important reason:

5. What other department-approved WSR models did the school reviewed? On what basis did the faculty and/or SLC determine that each model would not address the instructional needs of the students? Provide information for at least three models.

Models	Rationale for not Selecting Model
A:	
B:	
C:	

Signatures:

TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chief School Administrator		
Principal		
SLC Chairperson		

**FORM B: APPLICATION FOR SELECTING A NEW WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM
(WSR) MODEL**

District: _____ School: _____ Grades: _____ Current WSR Model: _____ Cohort: _____

Check one:

1. _____ Our school did not have a WSR contract in 2004-05 and no department-approved model meets the school's needs.
2. _____ Our school filed a complaint with the Department of Education (DOE) and Chief School Administrators (CSA). The Commissioner determined that satisfactory performance under the contract was not possible.
3. _____ Our school is not satisfied with its current WSR model and wants to select a new WSR model.

Check one and include name of model.

1. Our school is interested in adopting _____ from the list of department-approved WSR models:
2. Our school is interested in adopting _____ which is not on the department-approved list.

3. We reviewed other WSR models and discussed our selection with the district central office. Our faculty and/or SLC determined that each model would not address the instructional needs of the students. Please provide information for up to three models below.

Models	Rationale for not Selecting Model
A:	
B:	
C:	

4. Our school has been implementing all components of the WSR model as specified by the WSR developer since _____.
5. We have prepared a list of components of the WSR model which have not been implemented and the reasons why. _____Yes _____No
6. We have included statements of the two most important reasons why our school does not want to continue with its WSR model. _____Yes _____No
7. We are providing the following evidence to demonstrate that our WSR model has not been contributing to improving student performance. The percentage of students that are proficient and advanced proficient is as follows:

Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA)/NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK4)

	Language Arts Literacy			Mathematics		
	Total Students	ELLs	SPED	Total Students	ELLs	SPED
1999-2000						
2000-2001						
2001-2002						
2002-2003						
2003-2004						

Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA)

	Language Arts Literacy			Mathematics		
	Total Students	ELLs	SPED	Total Students	ELLs	SPED
1999-2000						
2000-2001						
2001-2002						
2002-2003						
2003-2004						

8. We are providing evidence from other standardized tests to demonstrate that the current WSR model is not contributing to improved student performance on language arts literacy and mathematics. We have included name of test and year(s) of administration and we have provided subgroup analyses, if available.

Check those that apply:

9. Our new WSR model is consistent with the following nine elements of WSR:
 - Improved student achievement and mastery of the CCCS through standards-based reform at the school level;

- Assessment, planning, budgeting and implementation of reforms, programs, and services driven by data, including student outcomes, student and school needs, best practices, national research, and evidence of effectiveness in a similar school context;
- School-based leadership and decision-making;
- Integration and alignment of school-level reforms, programs and services;
- Educational technology;
- Teacher supports;
- A safe school environment;
- Student and family support; and
- Accountability.

10. Our school has made a good-faith effort to implement the requirements of the original WSR model. ___Yes ___No

11. The faculty vote on the current WSR model was taken on _____ with the following results: ___in favor of retaining the WSR model and ___ in favor of eliminating the WSR model.

12. If approved, we expect to begin professional development for teachers by _____(date) and that approximately _____hours will be required in the first full year of implementation.

If applicable, we expect new instructional materials required by the new WSR model to be introduced by _____(date).

The following training will be offered to non-instructional SLC members _____

Signatures:

TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chief School Administrator		
Principal		
SLC Chairperson		

Division of Abbott Implementation
Gordon MacInnes, Assistant Commissioner
Peter Genovese, Assistant to the Commissioner for Abbott
Implementation

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