



[NJDOE News](#)

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Enrollments Rise Again as New School Year Begins

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More than 1.3 million public school students throughout New Jersey are preparing for a new school year. Enrollment, projected at 1,336,927, continues to follow a decade-long trend of gradual annual increases, but still falls short of the all-time high of 1,432,344 students enrolled in 1973-74.

Highlights of the coming school year will include the first administration of a new state exam for high school students, changes in curriculum requirements for high school, growth in early childhood education enrollment in the 30 Abbott school districts, and an expected influx of project plans as school districts throughout the state prepare to replace or upgrade their school buildings under a multi-billion dollar school funding law.

In addition, alternatives to traditional public school education are expected to expand with more schools and students participating in charter schools and the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program.

The Department of Education will continue to expand its programs to recruit and retain quality teachers in New Jersey through initiatives designed to help local school districts fulfill their staffing needs.

The new exam, called the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), will be administered for the first time to all eleventh-grade students in March 2002. This exam replaces the High School Proficiency Test, or HSPT. The HSPA initially will have test sections in language arts literacy and mathematics. Additional sections will be added in future years. Passing both sections of the HSPA is a requirement for a high school diploma. Students who fail one or both sections will have additional opportunities to pass in the fall and spring of their senior year.

Incoming high school freshmen will be the first class required to complete 10 credits in the visual, performing and / or practical arts as a graduation requirement. They will also be the first class required to complete 10 credits in a world language in order to receive a diploma.

Three- and four-year-old children will be turning out in record numbers this year, according to school officials in the 30 Abbott school districts. The districts expect 36,824 three and four-year-olds to receive a free preschool education in 2001-02, compared with 23,983 young students served in 2000-01.

The need for more teachers to serve this emerging group of new students prompted Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco earlier this year to announce an incentive program called *Teach New Jersey, Reach the World*. Incentives for new early childhood education teachers include a laptop computer for each new teacher and possible forgiveness of college loans for eligible candidates. In addition, the Department of Education hosted a statewide job fair to recruit teachers to the Abbott districts.

Teacher recruitment activities for all school districts will again be a priority of the Department of Education's recruitment unit. The unit, beginning its second full school year, visits college campuses and various job fairs around the nation to promote teaching in New Jersey. It has also organized statewide job fairs for critical teaching positions, such as early childhood and world languages. The unit also maintains a successful free web site, **NJHIRE**, designed to help teachers and school districts find each other on the Internet.

After dedicating a year to planning, school districts are expected to begin filing individual project plans for new schools, school additions and school renovations under the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act. The law appropriates \$8.6 billion to help underwrite the costs of school projects. State reimbursement of eligible project costs ranges from a minimum of 40 percent for non-Abbott districts to 100 percent for eligible project costs in the Abbott districts.

This September, 51 charter schools, including consolidated charter schools, are expected to open their doors to 13,400 students.

One district, Belvidere in Warren County, will join 11 districts this year as participants in the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program. The Department of Education is conducting a five-year pilot of this project on a small

scale to allow parents and students the ability to choose a public school outside of their district of residence without cost to the parents. Choice districts are expected to enroll 308 students this year, compared with 96 students in 2000-01.