

New Jersey Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study through Grade 10 (APPLES-10)

Two decades ago, the New Jersey Supreme Court in *Abbott v. Burke* mandated that the state establish high quality preschool education in the 31 highest-poverty school districts. New Jersey created a pre-K program with high standards and a continuous improvement system that transformed a patchwork of private and public programs into a highly effective mixed delivery system. NIEER's most recent research on children's long-term outcomes from this preschool system has been published in [*Early Childhood Research Quarterly*](#).

The new study contributes to our understanding of the potential long-term outcomes from large scale public preschool programs. Key points regarding the program, the study, and its findings are:

- The Abbott Pre-K program is currently being expanded to more New Jersey communities, but it is far from typical of large-scale public preschool programs. Important features of the program include:
 - Universal access in communities with high percentages of low-income families.
 - High expectations for learning and teaching set in standards.
 - Adequate funding of about \$15,000 per child per year.
 - Strong teachers with 4-year-degrees and specialization in early childhood, pay parity with K-12 regardless of public, private, or Head Start setting.
 - Maximum class size of 15.
 - Children can begin at age 3 and attend for 2 years.
 - Full school day (at the time of the study the program received free wrap-around child care).
 - An extensive continuous improvement system that guides individual teachers, centers, districts, and the state.
- The pre-K program was offered beginning at age 3 in a mixed-delivery system (private and public, including Head Start) with a single set of standards overseen by school districts.
- Study participants were primarily African-American and Hispanic and resided in the 15 largest of 31 low-income communities implementing the program.
- The study estimates both initial effects at kindergarten entry on individualized assessments and effects on statewide assessments from grades 3 through 10.
- Rigorous methods are used to account for differences among individual students, local contexts, and attrition from the sample over time.
- Sample size varies from 426-745 depending on grade level and assessment (for example, not all children take the Algebra II exam).
- Achievement effects were smaller in grades 3 to 10 than at kindergarten entry but did not “fade out” and remained substantial through grade 10 in both math and language arts and literacy.
- Attending the program for two years beginning at age 3 had roughly twice the effects on achievement as one year at age 4.
- Grade retention was 15 percentage points lower through grade 10 for children who attended the pre-K program. Estimates are consistent with a 7 percentage point reduction in special education.