

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Steffanie Bell
609-777-2600

RELEASE: September 17, 1999

Governor Discusses Early Childhood Education Initiatives In Abbott Districts

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

Attached is a text of this week's message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

RADIO MESSAGE FOR SEPTEMBER 17 ABBOTT COMMUNITY CENTERS

This September, New Jersey is making history with an unprecedented commitment to early childhood education.

Hello, this is Governor Christie Whitman.

For the first time ever, parents in New Jersey's 30 school districts covered by the Abbott vs. Burke court case have the option of sending their three- and four-year olds to state- sponsored preschools.

The preschool years may be the most critical to a child's development. Through our new program, we will help the youngest students in our Abbott Districts build the foundations that are a critical factor in later academic success.

The program we are undertaking is unprecedented, not just in New Jersey, but in the nation. In fact, our new preschool program not only meets the State Supreme Court's mandate, but will exceed that mandate when the program is fully implemented three years from now.

What's more, I think we are already seeing the benefits of our decision to work both with local school districts and with those childcare providers already serving their communities.

Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to visit community care providers in Camden, Cranford, and Plainfield. I have seen how these centers have become integral parts of the communities they serve.

For years, parents have been sending their young children to local care providers - they know the facilities, they know the teachers, and they feel confident

entrusting their children to them. By working with community providers we are acknowledging their dedication and the investment parents and providers have made in their communities.

I know how important it is to the future of New Jersey's children that this program be of the highest educational quality.

That's why we're committed to such things as:

- Expanding the program from half-day to full-day;
- Providing professional development through the new nursery-to- third grade license;
- Expanding the curriculum to support whole school reform;
- Requiring a low teacher-to-student ratio; and
- Helping parents become involved in their child's preschool education.

We're also going to make sure that quality extends to the facilities. In fact, every Abbott community center will be inspected within the next 60 days, to ensure they meet our health, safety, and program standards.

I am committed to making this program a success. Working together, we will give all our children the opportunity they deserve.

Thank you and have a great week.

