



The Business Coalition
for Educational Excellence
at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Winter, 2004

the workforce pipeline

The *Just for the Kids* data picture for student achievement at a sample school shows a 10% Opportunity Gap compared to the achievement levels of students in five schools with similar or more-challenging student populations.

BCEE Launches Public School Accountability Web Site

Presents data on the fundamental mission of schools: ensuring that all students can read, write, and do math and science on grade level.

A former mayor of New York became famous for regularly asking "How am I doing?" That simple question became his trademark and helped him gauge his level of performance. Now, anyone can get the answer to that question when it comes to New Jersey's public schools, thanks to a new web site launched by the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

The BCEE launched the site in December, 2004, together with leadership from the Department of Education, education associations, and school personnel from top performing schools. Called *Just for the Kids - New Jersey*, the program is open to the public and can be accessed at www.just4kids.org.

The program is unique in three ways. First, it presents data in easy-to-understand bar charts and line graphs. Second, it compares a given school only to other schools with equally- or more-challenging student populations -- making fair comparisons and consequently setting realistic benchmarks for underperforming schools. Finally, the BCEE is investing in research that will determine what top-performing schools are doing that produces high levels of student achievement and will be helping underperforming schools to implement those practices.

In defining 'more challenging student populations,' *Just for the Kids - New Jersey* uses two measures: low income and limited English proficiency.

Using the *Just for the Kids - New Jersey* comparison system, the BCEE has found schools that are producing successful

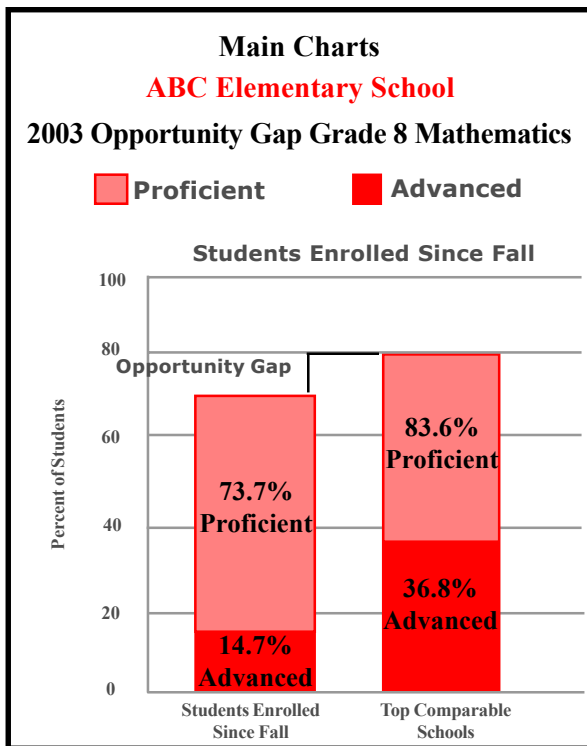
Find out how your local school is doing at www.just4kids.org

student outcomes with populations in urban, rural and suburban environments, such as:

- ★ The Forest Hill School in Camden City where over 86% of their students are proficient in math at grade 8 (with over 30% of those at advanced proficient levels), yet 100% of their students are economically-disadvantaged.
- ★ The Iselin Middle School in Woodbridge, where over 70% of the student population is proficient in math (with over 30% of those at advanced proficient levels), yet almost 20% of their students are conomically-disadvantaged and over 33% of their students do not speak English.
- ★ The Cranbury Middle School where over 95% of their students are proficient in math, and 66% of those students are at advanced proficient levels.

Visit the web site and find out your local school is performing: www.just4kids.org.

**Your Opinion Matters:
Look for Workforce
Pipeline Surveys**



Check out our television clips on *Just for the Kids - New Jersey Benchmark Schools at News 12:*

www.news12.com/NJ/in_depth



**The Business Coalition
for Educational Excellence**
at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Sponsors Needed

Bring the New Jersey Scholars program, and three other workforce development initiatives, to your local middle or high school. Support the Learn More. Do More. Earn More. Campaign. Call 609-989-7888 to find out more.

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce is committed to ensuring that all students achieve at high levels, become productive citizens, and are well-prepared to succeed in the workplace.

The BCEE serves as the voice of business in the education policy debate, and supports programs that address the business agenda in education reform. The BCEE is guided by its accountability to the business community.

The BCEE is supported by tax-deductible contributions made to the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization.

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BCEE Launches Pilot Pushing Academic Rigor

Studies show that rigorous high school course work is the best predictor of future success.

As president of the State Chamber, which has supported the BCEE since its inception in 1996, I am pleased to announce yet another milestone on the BCEE's list of accomplishments. The BCEE will be implementing a program called *New Jersey Scholars* in four pilot schools, two in the north and two in the south, and will launch statewide in academic year 2004-2005.

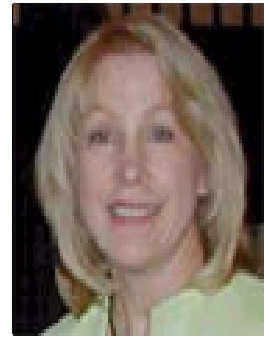
Studies show that students who take demanding high school courses, including Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, and two years of the same foreign language, can

- ★ Increase their college admissions (SAT) scores by over 100 points
- ★ Double or triple their chances of completing college and earning a bachelor's degree
- ★ Enjoy more than 13% more in wages than students who don't take rigorous courses whether or not the students go to college.

And while the coursework may seem intimidating, the research also indicates that as long as students complete and pass the courses, the impact on their future success is the same -- in other words, students don't need an A or a B, they just need to work hard now to get the widest range of options for their future.

The *New Jersey Scholars* campaign is part of a broader workforce development initiative in which students are encouraged to 'Learn More. Do More. Earn More.' The campaign includes the well-established *School Counts* and *Technology Challenge* programs.

Just another way the BCEE is building your future workforce. Consider making a contribution in support of their work.



Joan Verplanck
President
New Jersey
Chamber of Commerce

Workforce Pipeline Issue Brief Fax Back Survey Coming Soon

As many as 20,000 students annually receive 'back-door' high school diplomas without passing the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)

Theoretically, in order to obtain a diploma, New Jersey students are required to demonstrate their proficiencies in language arts, mathematics and science in the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). However, a little known alternative has been available to students who have not passed the HSPA, called the Special Review Assessment (SRA).

Significant evidence would indicate that the SRA is not being consistently applied in high schools across the state, nor administered in a rigorous manner. Today, the SRA has become a more of a "back door" for students who have not learned enough to pass the HSPA. Every year, as many as 20,000 high school students receive a

diploma based on the far less demanding SRA process. Districts vary widely in how rigorously they administer and score the SRA. In some schools, less than one percent of students receive diplomas through the SRA process, while in others 50 percent or more receive SRA diplomas.

Because of the obvious impact it has on the workforce pipeline, the BCEE believes this is an important issue to everyone in the state. We will soon fax a brief set of survey questions to Chamber members. We hope you'll take a moment or two to provide us with your input on this important issue.

Please look for that survey in the next two weeks. Your response will help us to best represent you in Trenton.