

NEWS

- Main
- Local
- Hunterdon State
- Editorials
- Obituaries
- Sports
- Special Reports

- Weather
- Photo Gallery
- Senior Scoop
- Legals
- Business
- Stock Market
- Technology
- Education

Past Week Online News:

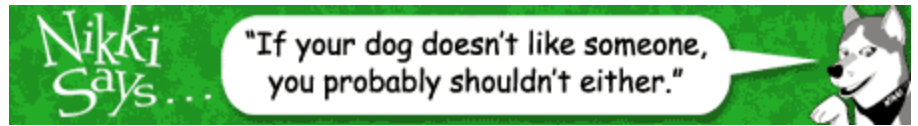
Select the day of the issue you would like to view.

Select A Day

LIFE & LEISURE

- Entertainment
- Local Coupons
- Weddings
- Movies
- Space
- New To The Area?
- Town Guides

Customer Service Center



State should refocus on Abbott needs

Published in the Courier News on October 8, 2003

In a series of recent rulings by administrative law judges, more than 75 percent of the additional \$27 million in aid officials wanted to cut from requests made by the state's neediest districts has been restored. Judges largely disagreed with the state's perception of the extent of financial waste occurring in those districts.

State education officials chose to look at it another way. They focused on about \$6 million in cuts the judges did uphold, confirming in their minds that at least some of the aid was unnecessary.

No one is suggesting that the state's 30 Abbott districts -- named after the Abbott vs. Burke school-funding lawsuit, with Plainfield among them -- should get a blank check from the state. But what continues to be painfully clear is that state officials desperately want to find reasons to withhold money from the Abbott schools. And that's a real shame.

The state's resistance is understandable, to a degree. The more than \$8 billion in overall state aid to schools represents by far the biggest appropriation in the overall state budget, and the Abbott schools make up a healthy chunk of that. Meanwhile, no one would suggest that pumping so much money into the poorest schools -- the result of a court order -- is anything but an imperfect and not entirely logical solution.

But there are some basic, inarguable points here. The poorest schools are failing to educate too many children, and the state has yet to find any viable way to level the playing field for those kids. So what's left? Do nothing? Or at least allow those districts to spend on students at a level closer to wealthier districts -- something the state can do?

The real fruits of those dollars aren't likely to be seen for a long time. Putting a troubled school system back on its feet is a prolonged process, yet state officials at times act as if these many millions should immediately be boosting test scores by leaps and bounds.

At every available turn, it seems, state officials fight to cut Abbott aid. They've sought -- successfully -- funding freezes in recent years and want to slash many millions in additional aid. They've repeatedly pledged greater accountability, but what this week's court rulings show is that the Abbott districts are mostly proving quite accountable. The money isn't being wasted. It's just not immediately producing the kinds of tangible results lawmakers want to see -- and which are unrealistic.

The Abbott schools should be scrutinized closely to assure that the money be put to the best possible use. Their decisions should be reviewed and questioned. But we would like to see the state shift its emphasis from finding reasons to cut to making that money work. Otherwise, we are left with the nagging feeling that the state would like nothing better than to keep hundreds of millions of dollars in Abbott money for other purposes. And we don't even



AP Top Stories

- Bush: U.S. 'Did the Rig Thing' in Iraq
- Schwarzenegger Promi: Smooth Transition
- Phila. Mayor Office Bug Causes Furor
- Siegfried Talks About T Attack on Roy
- Do-Not-Call List to Sigr New Numbers
- Airport Screeners Got J Test Answers
- Episcopal Church Faces Split on Gay Issue
- Iowa Police Tip Parents Suicide Pact
- American, Briton Win M Prize
- Concorde Sets New Lor To-U.S. Record

want to think about what that would mean to the students in those school systems.

OUR POSITIONS:

State education officials should stop trying so hard to cut aid to needy districts and instead focus their efforts on helping put that money to good use.

from the Courier News website www.c-n.com

[Go Back](#)

Read more of today's Local News

[Click Here](#)



Privacy Policy | Copyright 1997 - 2003 Courier News | Site design by Courier News
Have suggestions or problems? We want your feedback.