



## Lessons Learned from a New Jersey Preschool Needs Assessment: Implications for Creating A Program Database



New Jersey Preschool  
Expansion Assessment  
Research Study (PEARS)

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## Preschool Expansion in NJ



- New Jersey's School Funding Reform Act of 2008
  - All at risk 3- and 4- year-olds in the state will be eligible to attend a high quality preschool program
  - Districts will be required to offer a universal or targeted program
  - Programs will be required to meet the same quality standards as the Abbott Preschool Program



## Purpose of PEARS



- To assess the capacity and quality of school district preschool programs, child care centers, and Head Start programs
  - How many 3- & 4-year-olds can be offered a high quality preschool education in existing programs?
  - What is the basic quality of classrooms?
  - What is the background/experience of preschool staff?
  - Districts' plans for preschool expansion?



## Implementing the Needs Assessment

- All Non-Abbott districts in NJ with Elementary School (N=467)
- Interviewed district superintendents, principals, child care center directors, and Head Start directors
- Teachers and assistant teachers completed questionnaires
- Direct observations of classrooms
- Worked closely with the NJ DOE
- Partnered with NJACCRA





## PEARS Sample



- 375 district interviews (80%)
- 437 district preschools, 1,037 child care centers, and 69 Head Start centers
- 2052 classrooms were visited
- 2,003 teachers and 1,577 assistants completed the workforce survey



## Lessons Learned

Use ELC or other key informants to determine what data you want to collect:

- What questions you want to answer?
- How and when the data will be collected?

This will determine:

- Data needs (e.g.: Each district or classroom; minimal standards (health, safety, physical space) or optimal (teacher and admin qualifications; quality ratings))
- Your sampling strategy

The obvious lesson: Thorough advanced planning!