

**New Jersey Preschool Quality Evaluation Study**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Summary Report**  
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*Study Overview*

The following report details the findings of the New Jersey Preschool Quality Evaluation Study for the 2014-2015 school year for a sample of 296 classrooms across the 31 former Abbott districts in New Jersey. This study is the continuation of work begun by the Early Learning Improvement Consortium's statewide evaluation of Abbott preschool program quality, conducted from the 2002-2003 through the 2008-2009 school year. Through these years, the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) has continued to collect classroom quality data on various measures of quality. This report describes the annual results of the classroom observations conducted since 2007 through to this past spring on quality classroom measures for your district. During the 2012-2013 school year, information on classroom quality was collected using only the CLASS tool (some districts only). Consequently, the findings presented below for 2012-2013 reflect scores for only the eight districts that were assessed with the measures of quality that were utilized in previous years. These districts include Camden, East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Long Branch, Newark, Paterson, and Phillipsburg.

*Measures*

Similar to prior years, the data collection included three observation measures including the following:

- The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R)
- The Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA)
- The Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Mathematics (PRISM), which is an unpublished, updated version of the Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI)

As with last year's evaluation of classrooms on the ECERS-R, the most updated notes for clarification (published online at [http://www.ersi.info/ecers\\_notes.html](http://www.ersi.info/ecers_notes.html) in January, 2014) were utilized when scoring all classrooms in this sample. The most significant changes in the notes were those affecting the hand washing, nap and media items. For instance, the tool requires that children spend a minimum of 20 seconds rubbing their hands with soap and water each time they wash their hands. In the past, a minimum of 10 seconds was required. The updated notes also mandate that hand washing be done prior-to and after the use of certain wet/moist sensory materials such as water and play dough. These updates were also adhered to during the 2013-14 evaluation of classrooms and no further updates have been made since that time.

*Sample*

The sample included a total of 296 classrooms in 31 districts. The original sample included 300 classrooms. One classroom declined participation and three classrooms were not observed due to data collection errors, resulting in a final sample of 296 classrooms. Table 1 describes the number of classrooms by auspice. Statewide, 13.2% of funded classrooms are made up of Head Starts, 42.9% are district classrooms and 43.9% are provider classrooms. The numbers below indicate that the sample for this evaluation was in line with statewide averages and thus representative of overall quality in New Jersey.

**Table 1. Sample description by auspice.**

	Number	Percent
District	127	42.9%
Provider	130	43.9%
Head Start	39	13.2%
Total	296	100%

*Data Collection*

A random sample was drawn by NIEER from the total universe of classrooms provided by DECE in early March. District supervisors and superintendents were subsequently informed of the evaluation via email with letters attached from NIEER. Training and reliability were completed by NIEER observers in March and all data was collected between mid-March and mid-June. NIEER observers called in advance to schedule appointments for observations in individual sites but teacher names were not disclosed until the day of the observation.

*Results*

The results of this year's evaluation can be found in Tables 2- 4. Findings will be presented for the overall sample of randomly selected classrooms first, as well as by auspice for each instrument. The tables also contain scores for each instrument for prior years during which data was collected. Figures will also be presented to illustrate patterns over time and levels of quality within subscales. An important note is that scores for the 2012-2013 evaluation reflect only the scores of the aforementioned 8 districts in which ECERS, SELA, PRISM observations were conducted. A discussion section will be presented at the end of each measure's results with highlights of low v. high scores and explanations of the general trends.

## Statewide Scores Spring 2015

### *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R)*

The ECERS-R is an observation and rating instrument for preschool classrooms serving children aged three to five. The total ECERS-R score represents an average of the scores on the 43 items. A rating of 1 indicates inadequate quality, 3 indicates minimal quality, 5 indicates good quality, and 7 indicates excellent quality. The ECERS-R was completed on a total of 296 classrooms in 31 districts. Table 2 below reflects subscale scores over time.

**Table 2. Average scores by ECERS-R subscale over time.**

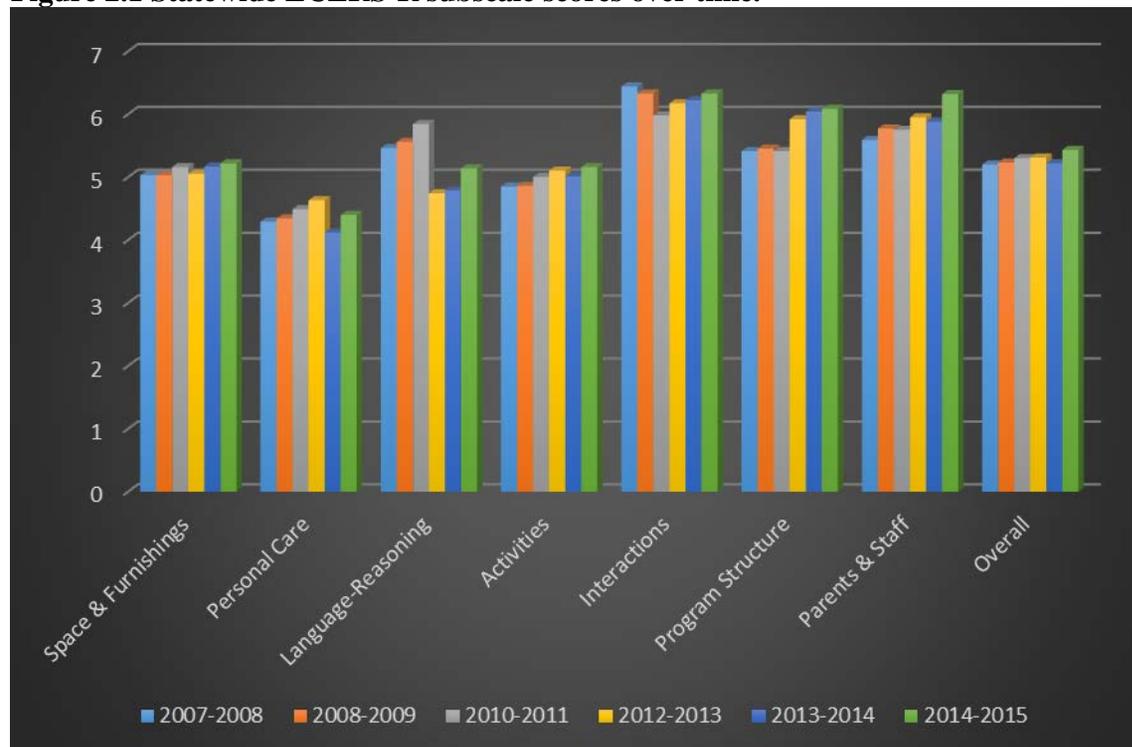
	<b>Mean 07-08 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 08-09 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 10-11 (range)</b>	<b>Mean * 12-13 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 13-14 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 14-15 (range)</b>
<i>Space and Furnishings</i> This subscale addresses the areas of indoor and outdoor space, room arrangement, organization, display, furnishings and equipment.	5.03 (2.38-7.00)	5.03 (3.13-7.00)	5.16 (2.50-7.00)	5.05 (2.50-7.00)	5.17 (2.43-7.00)	5.22 (2.63-7.00)
<i>Personal Care Routines</i> This subscale addresses practices around daily routines like greeting and departure, meals, naptime, and toileting as well as health and safety practices.	4.29 (1.67-7.00)	4.34 (1.00-7.00)	4.49 (1.17-7.00)	4.63 (1.33-7.00)	4.12 (1.50-7.00)	4.40 (1.33-7.00)
<i>Language-Reasoning</i> This area addresses the classroom’s formal and informal communication, language and reasoning opportunities.	5.46 (2.00-7.00)	5.56 (1.75-7.00)	5.84 (2.50-7.00)	4.74 (2.50-6.75)	4.90 (1.50-7.00)	5.14 (1.50-7.00)
<i>Activities</i> This subscale looks at the learning opportunities in each of the areas of the classroom including fine motor, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number, use of video/computer, and diversity.	4.85 (1.60-7.00)	4.86 (2.50-7.00)	5.00 (2.30-7.00)	5.10 (3.20-7.00)	5.01 (2.60-6.90)	5.14 (2.20-7.00)
<i>Interactions</i> This area addresses supervision of children, discipline, staff-child interactions, and interactions among children.	6.44 (1.60-7.00)	6.33 (1.80-7.00)	5.98 (1.40-7.00)	6.17 (1.00-7.00)	6.22 (1.00-7.00)	6.33 (1.60-7.00)
<i>Program Structure</i> This area addresses classroom operations and schedule, including groupings, transitions and flexibility.	5.41 (1.00-7.00)	5.45 (1.67-7.00)	5.41 (1.33-7.00)	5.92 (1.33-7.00)	6.04 (1.00-7.00)	6.09 (1.67-7.00)
<i>Parents and Staff</i> This area addresses the program’s supports for both parents and staff, including opportunities to evaluate, communicate child-related information, family involvement and professional development opportunities.	5.59 (2.67-7.00)	5.77 (2.67-7.00)	5.75 (2.17-7.00)	5.95 (4.00-7.00)	5.88 (3.17-7.00)	6.32 (3.00-7.00)
<b>Total Overall Average Score</b>	<b>5.20 (2.57-6.95)</b>	<b>5.23 (3.34-6.71)</b>	<b>5.30 (2.52-6.67)</b>	<b>5.31 (3.37-6.71)</b>	<b>5.22 (2.63-6.90)</b>	<b>5.43 (3.38-6.88)</b>

\*These means reflect the following districts only: Camden, East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Long Branch, Newark, Paterson, and Phillipsburg

As is shown in Figure 2.1 below, there is a trend of general improvement in subscale scores over time with fluctuation in some areas. The figure illustrates the distribution of classrooms across the range of scores by subscale for the 2014-2015 school year. Though scores from 2012-2013 are included, we again point out that these account for only the 8 districts in which DECE requested observations last year, and are not representative of the state program as a whole.

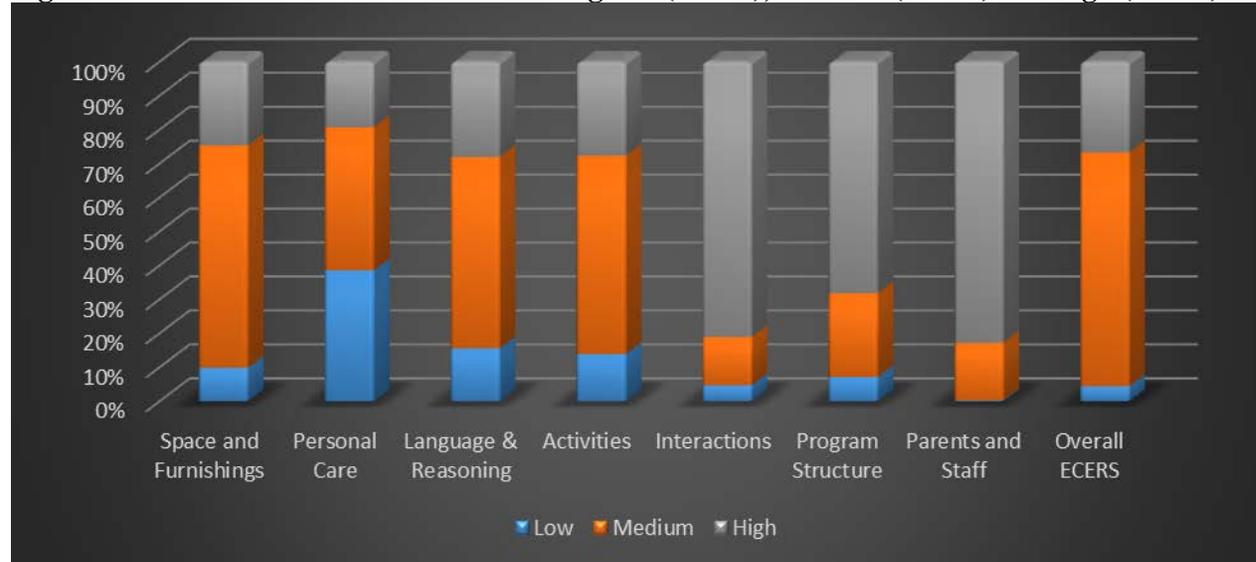
Scores in the Language and Reasoning and Personal Care Routines subscales dropped in 2013-2014 but they have increased in the current year. Language and Reasoning, dropped from 5.84 when last evaluated in 2010-2011, to a 4.90 in 2013-14, and in 2014-15 it went back up to 5.13. In addition, the Personal Care Routines subscale dropped from a score of 4.49 in 2010-11 to 4.12 in 2013-14. Scores on this subscale also improved slightly in 2014-15, averaging 4.40. This was again the lowest scoring subscale, mainly due to the hand washing requirements in the ECERS-R that were described previously. In addition, the nap item (11) also suffered, as this item requires that all cots/sleep mats are at least 36” apart regardless of the use of a solid barrier to earn a score of a “5.” Again, these trends can be better understood by looking at Table 3 below which reports item level averages.

**Figure 2.1 Statewide ECERS-R subscale scores over time.**



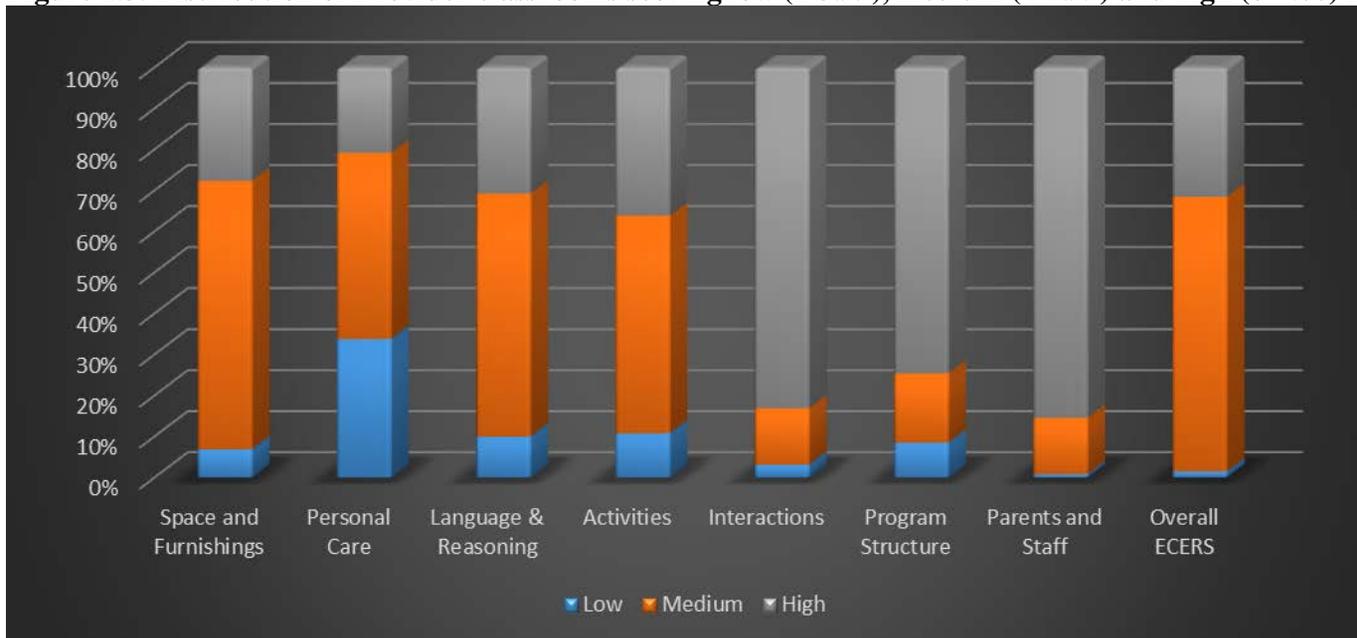
To further illustrate patterns across subscales, we have created Figure 2.2 to show the percentage of classrooms across the statewide sample scoring low (1.00-2.99), medium (3.00-5.99) and high (6.00-7.00). This figure shows how most classrooms score in the medium to high range on each subscale and overall. The subscale with the highest percentage of subscale scores in the high range, is that of Interactions, with about 81% of the sample scoring high. Again, the figure also displays that the *Personal Care Routines* subscale has the most classrooms scoring in the low range, in comparison to the other subscales.

**Figure 2.2. Distribution of classrooms scoring low (1-3.99), medium (4-5.99) and high (6-7.00) in 2015.**

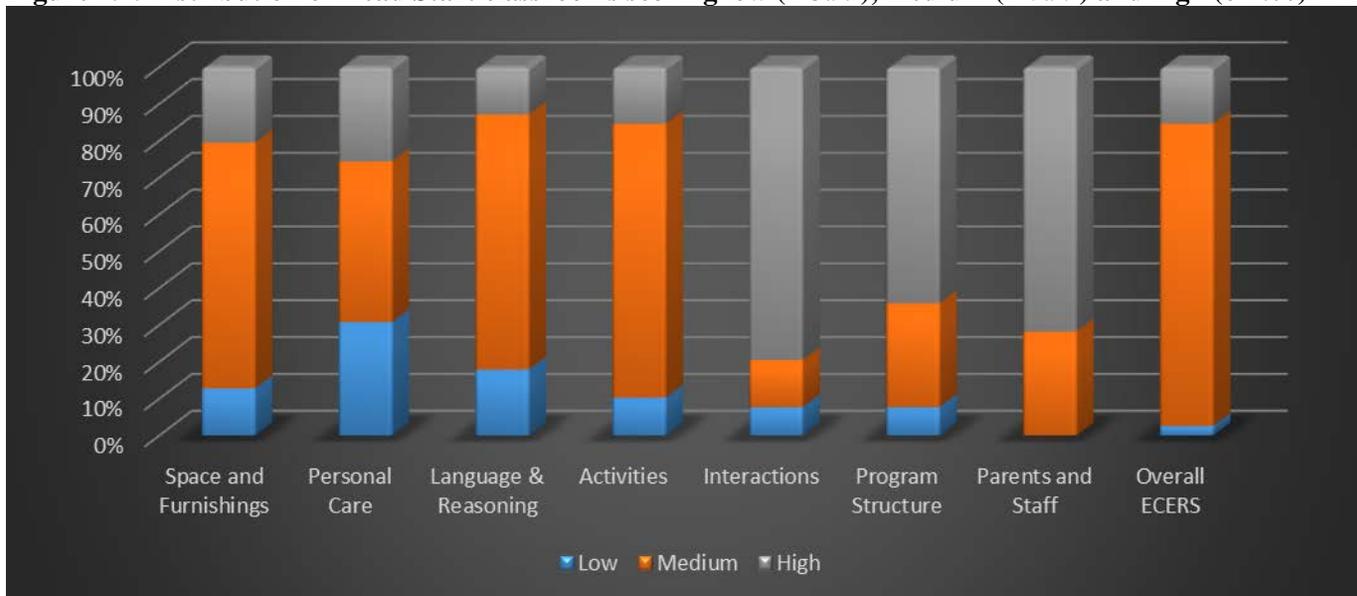


The following figures (Figures 2.3-2.5) illustrate the same percentages separately by auspice. In general, the scoring patterns are similar regardless of auspice.

**Figure 2.3. Distribution of Provider classrooms scoring low (1-3.99), medium (4-5.99) and high (6-7.00) in 2015.**



**Figure 2.4. Distribution of Head Start classrooms scoring low (1-3.99), medium (4-5.99) and high (6-7.00) in 2015.**



**Figure 2.5. Distribution of District classrooms scoring low (1-3.99), medium (4-5.99) and high (6-7.00) in 2015.**

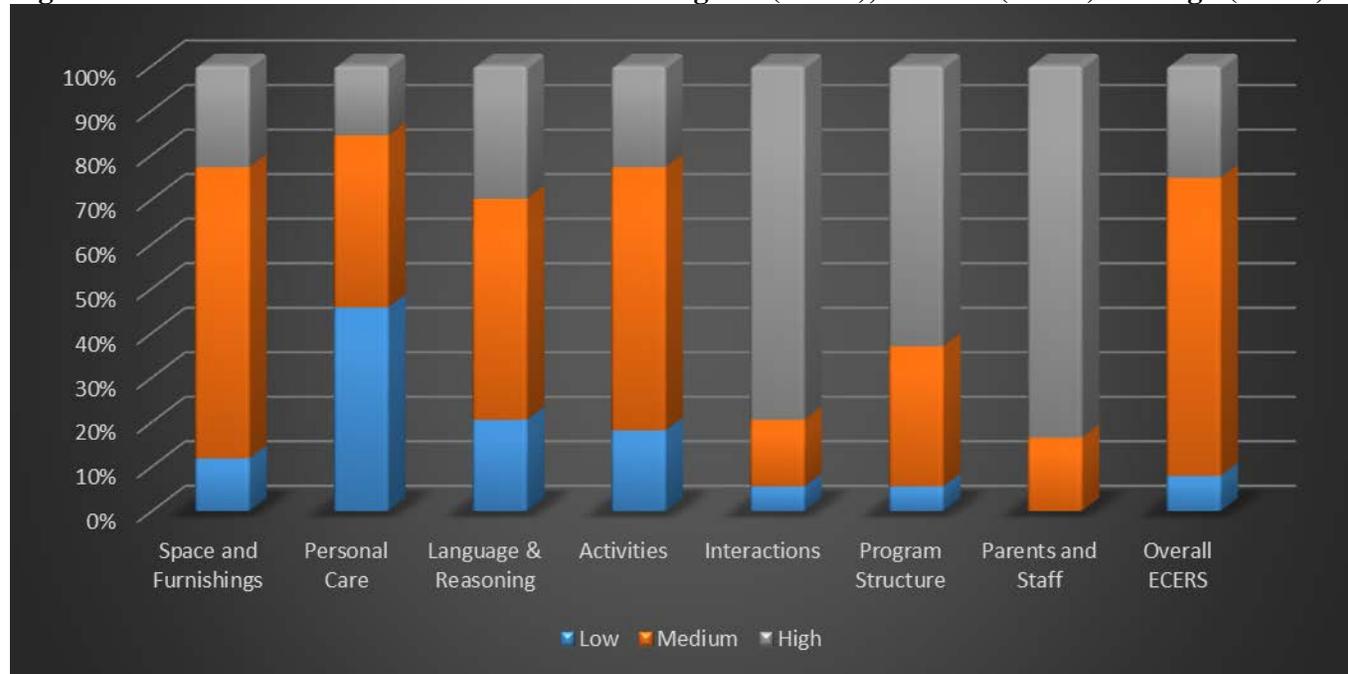


Table 3 below presents the item level score means. Again, we would like to note that the 2012-13 sample includes only 8 districts statewide.

**Table 3. ECERS item overall scores by year.**

ECERS Item	Mean 07-08 (range)	Mean 08-09 (range)	Mean 10-11 (range)	Mean* 12-13 (range)	Mean 13-14 (range)	Mean 14-15 (range)
1. Indoor space	4.79 (1.00-7.00)	4.86 (1.00-7.00)	5.22 (1.00-7.00)	4.65 (1.00-7.00)	5.32 (1.00-7.00)	5.12 (1.00-7.00)
2. Furniture for routine care	6.60 (1.00-7.00)	6.66 (1.00-7.00)	6.59 (1.00-7.00)	6.31 (2.00-7.00)	6.10 (2.00-7.00)	6.23 (1.00-7.00)
3. Furnishings for relaxation	5.76 (1.00-7.00)	5.73 (1.00-7.00)	5.65 (1.00-7.00)	5.09 (1.00-7.00)	5.50 (1.00-7.00)	5.42 (1.00-7.00)
4. Room arrangement	5.38 (1.00-7.00)	5.18 (1.00-7.00)	5.73 (1.00-7.00)	6.42 (1.00-7.00)	6.30 (1.00-7.00)	6.14 (1.00-7.00)

5. Space for privacy	5.01 (1.00-7.00)	5.05 (1.00-7.00)	5.03 (1.00-7.00)	5.23 (2.00-7.00)	5.17 (1.00-7.00)	5.26 (1.00-7.00)
6. Child-related display	5.58 (1.00-7.00)	5.45 (1.00-7.00)	5.83 (1.00-7.00)	5.63 (1.00-7.00)	5.51 (1.00-7.00)	5.58 (1.00-7.00)
7. Space For Gross Motor	3.49 (1.00-7.00)	3.31 (1.00-7.00)	3.19 (1.00-7.00)	3.15 (1.00-7.00)	3.50 (1.00-7.00)	3.48 (1.00-7.00)
8. Gross motor equipment	3.65 (1.00-7.00)	3.97 (1.00-7.00)	4.08 (1.00-7.00)	3.92 (1.00-7.00)	4.02 (1.00-7.00)	4.50 (1.00-7.00)
9. Greetings/departing	6.16 (1.00-7.00)	6.41 (1.00-7.00)	6.31 (1.00-7.00)	5.98 (1.00-7.00)	6.10 (1.00-7.00)	6.29 (1.00-7.00)
10. Meals/snacks	3.73 (1.00-7.00)	3.58 (1.00-7.00)	3.92 (1.00-7.00)	5.08 (1.00-7.00)	4.21 (1.00-7.00)	4.23 (1.00-7.00)
11. Nap/rest	3.91 (1.00-7.00)	3.82 (1.00-7.00)	4.54 (1.00-7.00)	4.08 (1.00-7.00)	3.29 (1.00-7.00)	3.76 (1.00-7.00)
12. Toileting / diapering	4.71 (1.00-7.00)	5.12 (1.00-7.00)	4.93 (1.00-7.00)	4.15 (1.00-7.00)	3.31 (1.00-7.00)	3.47 (1.00-7.00)
13. Health practices	4.63 (1.00-7.00)	4.64 (1.00-7.00)	4.51 (1.00-7.00)	5.05 (1.00-7.00)	3.51 (1.00-7.00)	4.45 (1.00-7.00)
14. Safety practices	2.61 (1.00-7.00)	2.47 (1.00-7.00)	2.74 (1.00-7.00)	3.46 (1.00-7.00)	4.19 (1.00-7.00)	4.18 (1.00-7.00)
15. Books and pictures	5.17 (1.00-7.00)	5.01 (1.00-7.00)	5.13 (1.00-7.00)	5.15 (1.00-7.00)	5.35 (1.00-7.00)	5.33 (1.00-7.00)
16. Encouraging children to communicate	6.48 (1.00-7.00)	6.53 (1.00-7.00)	6.70 (1.00-7.00)	6.07 (2.00-7.00)	5.63 (1.00-7.00)	6.12 (2.00-7.00)
17. Using language to develop reasoning skills	4.24 (1.00-7.00)	4.70 (1.00-7.00)	5.29 (1.00-7.00)	2.29 (1.00-6.00)	3.34 (1.00-7.00)	3.54 (1.00-7.00)
18. Informal use of language	6.00 (1.00-7.00)	6.00 (1.00-7.00)	6.25 (1.00-7.00)	5.45 (1.00-7.00)	4.81 (1.00-7.00)	5.56 (1.00-7.00)
19. Fine motor	5.63 (1.00-7.00)	5.57 (1.00-7.00)	5.56 (1.00-7.00)	5.22 (3.00-7.00)	5.72 (3.00-7.00)	5.63 (2.00-7.00)
20. Art	5.18 (1.00-7.00)	5.19 (1.00-7.00)	5.29 (1.00-7.00)	5.02 (2.00-7.00)	5.13 (2.00-7.00)	5.46 (2.00-7.00)
21. Music/movement	4.90 (1.00-7.00)	4.78 (1.00-7.00)	5.03 (1.00-7.00)	5.26 (1.00-7.00)	4.99 (1.00-7.00)	5.24 (1.00-7.00)
22. Blocks	4.81 (1.00-7.00)	4.68 (1.00-7.00)	5.05 (1.00-7.00)	5.27 (2.00-7.00)	5.32 (1.00-7.00)	5.30 (1.00-7.00)
23. Sand/water	5.14 (1.00-7.00)	5.38 (1.00-7.00)	5.47 (1.00-7.00)	5.41 (1.00-7.00)	5.25 (1.00-7.00)	5.38 (1.00-7.00)
24. Dramatic play	4.71 (1.00-7.00)	4.77 (1.00-7.00)	4.73 (1.00-7.00)	4.65 (2.00-7.00)	4.71 (2.00-7.00)	4.96 (2.00-7.00)
25. Nature/science	4.19 (1.00-7.00)	4.15 (1.00-7.00)	4.74 (1.00-7.00)	4.70 (1.00-7.00)	4.69 (1.00-7.00)	4.89 (1.00-7.00)
26 Math/number	5.15 (1.00-7.00)	4.96 (1.00-7.00)	5.35 (1.00-7.00)	5.06 (2.00-7.00)	5.40 (2.00-7.00)	5.28 (2.00-7.00)
27 Use of TV, video, computer	4.02 (1.00-7.00)	4.11 (1.00-7.00)	4.52 (1.00-7.00)	4.94 (2.00-7.00)	3.08 (1.00-7.00)	3.32 (1.00-7.00)
28 Promoting accepting of diversity	4.65 (1.00-7.00)	4.95 (1.00-7.00)	4.29 (1.00-7.00)	5.51 (2.00-7.00)	5.53 (2.00-7.00)	5.72 (2.00-7.00)

29. Supervision of gross motor	6.21 (1.00-7.00)	6.17 (1.00-7.00)	5.66 (1.00-7.00)	6.02 (1.00-7.00)	5.83 (1.00-7.00)	6.08 (1.00-7.00)
30. General supervision	6.46 (1.00-7.00)	6.00 (1.00-7.00)	5.27 (1.00-7.00)	6.25 (1.00-7.00)	6.15 (1.00-7.00)	6.27 (1.00-7.00)
31. Discipline	6.09 (1.00-7.00)	6.09 (1.00-7.00)	5.95 (1.00-7.00)	5.99 (1.00-7.00)	6.24 (1.00-7.00)	6.28 (1.00-7.00)
32. Staff-child interactions	6.79 (1.00-7.00)	6.70 (1.00-7.00)	6.45 (1.00-7.00)	6.37 (1.00-7.00)	6.55 (1.00-7.00)	6.57 (1.00-7.00)
33. Interactions among children	6.63 (1.00-7.00)	6.71 (1.00-7.00)	6.57 (1.00-7.00)	6.20 (1.00-7.00)	6.37 (1.00-7.00)	6.43 (1.00-7.00)
34. Schedule	4.47 (1.00-7.00)	4.74 (1.00-7.00)	4.61 (1.00-7.00)	5.67 (2.00-7.00)	5.76 (1.00-7.00)	5.57 (2.00-7.00)
35. Free play	5.90 (1.00-7.00)	5.70 (1.00-7.00)	5.72 (1.00-7.00)	5.68 (1.00-7.00)	6.12 (1.00-7.00)	6.08 (2.00-7.00)
36. Group time	5.83 (1.00-7.00)	5.69 (1.00-7.00)	5.64 (1.00-7.00)	6.30 (1.00-7.00)	6.23 (1.00-7.00)	6.49 (1.00-7.00)
37. Provisions for children with disabilities	5.80 (1.00-7.00)	6.42 (1.00-7.00)	6.22 (1.00-7.00)	6.55 (1.00-7.00)	6.07 (1.00-7.00)	6.57 (1.00-7.00)
38. Provisions for parents	5.47 (1.00-7.00)	5.77 (1.00-7.00)	5.76 (1.00-7.00)	6.45 (4.00-7.00)	5.69 (1.00-7.00)	6.19 (2.00-7.00)
39. Provisions for personal needs of staff	5.13 (1.00-7.00)	5.27 (1.00-7.00)	5.12 (1.00-7.00)	4.21 (1.00-7.00)	4.65 (1.00-7.00)	5.09 (1.00-7.00)
40. Provisions for professional needs of staff	4.81 (1.00-7.00)	5.17 (1.00-7.00)	5.20 (1.00-7.00)	5.94 (1.00-7.00)	5.73 (1.00-7.00)	6.42 (1.00-7.00)
41. Staff interaction and cooperation	6.60 (1.00-7.00)	6.70 (1.00-7.00)	6.61 (1.00-7.00)	6.51 (1.00-7.00)	6.65 (1.00-7.00)	6.72 (1.00-7.00)
42. Supervision/evaluation of staff	6.41 (1.00-7.00)	6.52 (1.00-7.00)	6.58 (1.00-7.00)	6.62 (4.00-7.00)	6.55 (3.00-7.00)	6.90 (4.00-7.00)
43. Opportunities for professional growth	5.12 (1.00-7.00)	5.17 (1.00-7.00)	5.25 (1.00-7.00)	5.98 (1.00-7.00)	6.06 (2.00-7.00)	6.58 (1.00-7.00)

\*These means reflect the following districts only: Camden, East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Long Branch, Newark, Paterson, and Phillipsburg

### *Discussion of ECERS-R Findings*

Across the full sample of classrooms, scores on every subscale and overall improved since last year. The overall ECERS-R score for the full sample was 5.43, which is considered developmentally appropriate practice. This is a promising finding and bodes well for the quality of New Jersey's Abbott preschool programs. The *Interactions* and *Parents and Staff* subscales scored highest, averaging above a 6.0. Items in the *Personal Care Routines* and *Activities* subscales continue to score the lowest, as has been the trend since the beginning of the quality study. Attending to practices such as hand washing and nap time, as well as giving children access to materials for substantial periods of time during the day would have large implications for scores in these areas. Limiting children's time allowed with computers will also increase scores in the *Activities* subscale.

### *Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA)*

The SELA examines classroom materials and activities used to support children’s emerging literacy skills. The scale includes 16 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (minimal evidence) to 5 (all features evident). The SELA looks closely at classroom practices associated with children’s literacy development. Table 4 shows the average scores for each item, and the total average for each year in which observations were completed since 2007-08 across the 31 districts included in the sample. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 display SELA scores over time for the full sample, and separately by auspice.

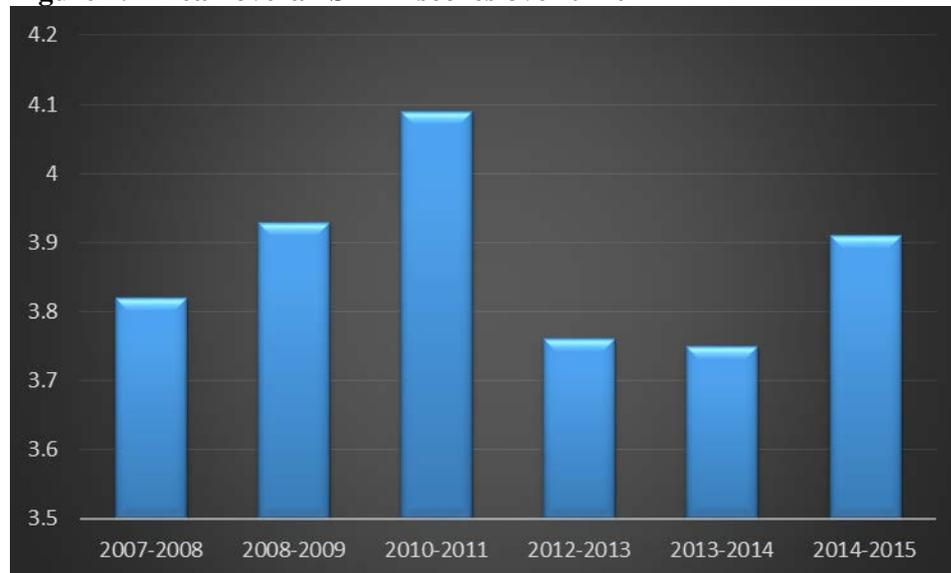
Table 4. SELA item and overall scores by year.

<b>SELA Item</b>	<b>Mean 07-08 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 08-09 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 10-11 (range)</b>	<b>Mean * 12-13 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 13-14 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 14-15 (range)</b>
<i>1. Using print in the environment for a purpose.</i> Purposefully using labels and signs, conveying a clear message and capturing children’s attention.	4.33 (2.00-5.00)	4.38 (1.00-5.00)	4.31 (1.00-5.00)	4.20 (1.00-5.00)	4.30 (2.00-5.00)	4.39 (2.00-5.00)
<i>2. Creating inviting places to look at books.</i> Creating a comfortable and easily accessible “cozy” reading area with several books on display.	4.59 (2.00-5.00)	4.52 (1.00-5.00)	4.63 (2.00-5.00)	4.48 (2.00-5.00)	4.40 (1.00-5.00)	4.47 (2.00-5.00)
<i>3. Inviting interest in a wide variety of books in the classroom.</i> Introducing books on different topics (especially those that reflect the children’s linguistic backgrounds) within the classroom and updating them throughout the school year.	4.20 (2.00-5.00)	4.30 (1.00-5.00)	4.28 (1.00-5.00)	4.12 (2.00-5.00)	4.28 (1.00-5.00)	4.27 (1.00-5.00)
<i>4. Writing materials are available and easy to use.</i> Paper and writing materials are available in the main writing area and other areas as well.	4.53 (1.00-5.00)	4.63 (1.00-5.00)	4.69 (3.00-5.00)	4.54 (3.00-5.00)	4.49 (2.00-5.00)	4.65 (2.00-5.00)
<i>5. A variety of literacy items and props are used in the pretend play area.</i> New literacy items and props are introduced at least once a month.	3.65 (1.00-5.00)	3.91 (1.00-5.00)	3.89 (1.00-5.00)	3.60 (1.00-5.00)	3.81 (1.00-5.00)	3.88 (1.00-5.00)
<i>6. Teachers encourage and extend oral language.</i> Taking time to talk to individual children expressing interest and extending conversations with open-ended statements and expansions.	4.12 (1.00-5.00)	4.17 (1.00-5.00)	4.43 (2.00-5.00)	3.78 (1.00-5.00)	3.62 (1.00-5.00)	3.86 (1.00-5.00)
<i>7. Using language that introduces new words, concepts and linguistic structures.</i> Using rich vocabulary including new words, descriptive language, and explanations that are more complex than children would normally use.	3.63 (1.00-5.00)	3.71 (1.00-5.00)	3.97 (1.00-5.00)	3.34 (1.00-5.00)	3.21 (1.00-5.00)	3.50 (1.00-5.00)
<i>8. Organizing activities that promote language development.</i> Organizing a variety of activities (e.g., reading informational books, engaging hands-on activities) while remaining flexible to the children’s interests.	3.90 (1.00-5.00)	4.03 (1.00-5.00)	4.34 (2.00-5.00)	3.85 (1.00-5.00)	3.37 (1.00-5.00)	3.66 (1.00-5.00)
<i>9. Sharing books to build language, knowledge, and a love of book reading.</i> Reading various types of books daily to children in a lively and engaging manner, inviting children’s involvement.	4.47 (1.00-5.00)	4.42 (1.00-5.00)	4.45 (1.00-5.00)	4.19 (2.00-5.00)	4.32 (1.00-5.00)	4.32 (1.00-5.00)
<i>10. Calling attention to the functions and features of print.</i> Identifying the features of a book (author and title), demonstrating how we read print by moving finger along the print as well as recognizing and writing meaningful words.	3.57 (1.00-5.00)	3.64 (1.00-5.00)	3.84 (1.00-5.00)	3.38 (1.00-5.00)	3.50 (1.00-5.00)	3.59 (1.00-5.00)
<i>11. Drawing children’s attention to the sounds they hear in words.</i> Using a variety of activities such as reading books with rhymes and interesting sounds,	2.78 (1.00-5.00)	2.79 (1.00-5.00)	3.23 (1.00-5.00)	3.15 (1.00-5.00)	3.18 (1.00-5.00)	3.17 (1.00-5.00)

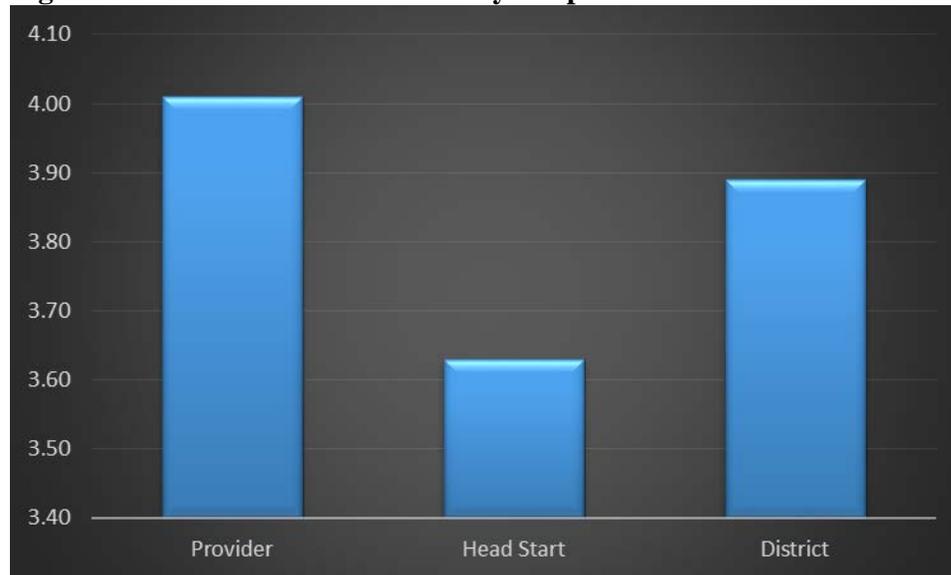
singing songs, and emphasizing the initial letter in a word.						
<i>12. Helping children recognize letters.</i> Pointing out letters in words and playing games such as letter bingo, reading alphabet books and practicing writing names using a variety of methods in a fun and engaging way.	3.33 (1.00-5.00)	3.47 (1.00-5.00)	3.61 (1.00-5.00)	3.20 (1.00-5.00)	3.25 (1.00-5.00)	3.46 (1.00-5.00)
<i>13. Promoting children's interest in writing.</i> Displaying children's writing in classroom and showing positive response to all kinds of writing efforts. Encouraging children to write their names and taking dictation of a story or description of a picture.	3.87 (1.00-5.00)	3.86 (1.00-5.00)	4.04 (1.00-5.00)	3.57 (1.00-5.00)	3.36 (1.00-5.00)	3.63 (1.00-5.00)
<i>14. Promoting home-based supports for early literacy through regular communications with parents.</i> Communicating to parents through newsletters or notes suggesting shared book reading and encouraging parents to observe and participate in classroom-based activities. Sharing information about the child's interests and skills during parent-child conferences.	3.65 (1.00-5.00)	3.93 (1.00-5.00)	4.00 (1.00-5.00)	3.75 (2.00-5.00)	3.82 (1.00-5.00)	4.08 (2.00-5.00)
<i>15. Special activities and supports to involve parents in supporting children's literacy development.</i> Offering a variety of activities providing information and guidance to parents about supports for children's literacy development (public library/adult family literacy services).	3.00 (1.00-5.00)	3.30 (1.00-5.00)	3.65 (1.00-5.00)	3.18 (1.00-5.00)	3.37 (1.00-5.00)	3.78 (1.00-5.00)
<i>20. Promoting the maintenance and development of children's native language.</i> Using several strategies to promote maintenance of children's native language including: print, songs, activities, as well as celebrating children's cultural backgrounds and encouraging native development at home.	3.46 (1.00-5.00)	3.81 (1.00-5.00)	4.03 (1.00-5.00)	3.94 (1.00-5.00)	3.67 (1.00-5.00)	3.86 (1.00-5.00)
<b>Total Overall Average</b>	<b>3.82</b> <b>(2.27-4.93)</b>	<b>3.93</b> <b>(2.20-4.93)</b>	<b>4.09</b> <b>(1.81-5.00)</b>	<b>3.76</b> <b>(2.13-4.94)</b>	<b>3.75</b> <b>(1.71-5.00)</b>	<b>3.91</b> <b>(2.13-5.00)</b>

\*These means reflect the following districts only: Camden, East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Long Branch, Newark, Paterson, and Phillipsburg

**Figure 4.1 Mean overall SELA scores over time**



**Figure 4.2 Mean 2015 SELA scores by Auspice**



### *Discussion of SELA*

Across the full sample, overall SELA scores improved since last year, averaging just under a score of 4.0. Provider programs scored highest, followed by district programs and then Head Start programs. Scores on each item were nearly identical to those from last year. The lowest score was found for drawing children’s attention to sounds and the highest average score was for providing writing materials for children that are inviting and easy to use. There were no areas of the SELA that scored below a 3, indicating that literacy practices across the board were considered at least “fair”, and often good quality in every area.

### ***Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Math (PRISM)***

The PRISM assesses the classroom’s materials and teaching practices in relation to science and mathematics. It was utilized for the first time during the 2012-13 school year in 8 districts across New Jersey. The instrument is a revised version of the PCMI with an additional 5 items related to classroom-based science materials and interactions. In total, the PRISM consists of 16 items that measure the presence of classroom materials and teaching supports around mathematics and science in a comprehensive way. Eleven math items assess supports for counting, comparing, estimating, and recognizing number symbols; measurement; classifying, seriating, and patterning; geometric thinking and spatial relations. Five science items focus on materials and teaching interactions that support explorations of biological and non-biological science; encourage reading,

writing, and representing science; encourage investigations and discussions of scientific concepts; support observing, predicting, comparing, and contrasting; and encourage recording of scientific information in journals, graphs, and other representational formats. All items in this 16-item scale are scored on a 7-point scale, from 1 (minimal evidence) to 7 (all features evident). Table 5 shows average scores across the 8 districts in which it was used in 2013 and across all the 31 districts represented in this year's evaluation.

Table 5. PRISM item and overall scores by year.

<b>PRISM Items</b>	<b>Mean 12-13* (range)</b>	<b>Mean 13-14 (range)</b>	<b>Mean 14-15 (range)</b>
<i>1. Materials for counting, comparing, estimating, and recognizing number symbols.</i> Classroom has collections of objects easy to count and contains many objects with numbers. Materials are arranged for easy access.	5.64 (1.00-7.00)	5.92 (1.00-7.00)	6.40 (1.00-7.00)
<i>2. Materials for geometry and spatial positions/relations.</i> Objects to arrange and art/pictorial materials support awareness of spatial concepts. Labels facilitate knowledge of position/locations of certain items.	5.72 (1.00-7.00)	5.56 (1.00-7.00)	5.91 (1.00-7.00)
<i>3. Instruments for measuring and comparing amount: volume, weight, length, height, distance, area.</i> Varied materials for comparing amounts (materials to fill/empty, scales for weighing, rulers and inch cubes for measuring) arranged in a logical order encouraging exploration.	4.93 (1.00-7.00)	4.81 (1.00-7.00)	5.36 (1.00-7.00)
<i>4. Materials for classifying and seriating.</i> Various materials available in graduated sizes and attributes promoting classification and seriation.	5.21 (1.00-7.00)	5.03 (1.00-7.00)	5.49 (2.00-7.00)
<i>5. Materials for science explorations.</i> Observation tools and examples of natural and human-made objects that invite close observation, comparison, and /or sorting accessible and arranged in a logical way.	4.77 (1.00-7.00)	4.38 (1.00-7.00)	4.82 (1.00-7.00)
<i>6. Materials to support reading and writing about and representing science concepts.</i> Materials such as books, posters, or computer programs that cover biological and non-biological content are accessible and arranged in a logical way that invites in-depth exploration.	4.84 (1.00-7.00)	4.44 (1.00-7.00)	4.78 (1.00-7.00)
<i>7. Counting for a purpose.</i> Methods and activities for counting/numbers are enjoyable and relevant. Opportunities to count are provided throughout the day during routines and free play.	4.58 (1.00-7.00)	4.89 (1.00-7.00)	4.83 (1.00-7.00)
<i>8. Identifying and writing numerals and numerical symbols.</i> Teachers encourage children to identify and write numerals or numerical symbols in varying circumstances and throughout the day for a purpose.	2.36 (1.00-7.00)	2.52 (1.00-7.00)	2.70 (1.00-7.00)
<i>9. Numerical Operations.</i> Teachers encourage children to compare numerals and quantities in a functional way throughout the day.	2.74 (1.00-7.00)	2.63 (1.00-7.00)	2.71 (1.00-7.00)
<i>10. Identifying and using geometric shapes.</i> Teachers provide opportunities for children to identify and manipulate 2- or 3-dimensional shapes, and discuss concepts of geometry using mathematical vocabulary.	2.56 (1.00-7.00)	2.27 (1.00-7.00)	2.39 (1.00-7.00)
<i>11. Spatial positions/relationships.</i> Staff encourage children to explore spatial concepts and relations, using mathematical vocabulary.	2.98 (1.00-7.00)	2.74 (1.00-7.00)	2.60 (1.00-7.00)
<i>12. Measuring and comparing: length, height, distance, area, volume, weight, and time.</i> Teachers provide opportunities to measure objects and compare two or more things in a variety of meaningful contexts throughout the day.	2.20 (1.00-7.00)	2.37 (1.00-7.00)	2.38 (1.00-7.00)
<i>13. Classifying, seriating, and patterning.</i> Staff encourage children to identify attributes of objects, and incorporate concepts of classification and seriation	2.68 (1.00-7.00)	2.43 (1.00-7.00)	2.52 (1.00-7.00)

<i>in an intentional way during the day.</i>			
<i>14. Science explorations, experiments, and discussions. There is classroom-based evidence of planned and spontaneous science experiences and interactions for children.</i>	3.45 (1.00-7.00)	2.43 (1.00-7.00)	2.63 (1.00-7.00)
<i>15. Observing and predicting. Staff encourage children to use language to make observations about objects that are and are not physically present, and to compare and contrast attributes of objects or events.</i>	2.68 (1.00-7.00)	1.78 (1.00-7.00)	2.16 (1.00-7.00)
<i>16. Recording science information. Staff plan activities in which children represent specific science content, and they document and review recorded information with children during or after discussions.</i>	2.48 (1.00-7.00)	1.94 (1.00-7.00)	2.37 (1.00-7.00)
<b>Total Overall Average</b>	<b>3.74</b> <b>(1.63-6.38)</b>	<b>3.51</b> <b>(1.00-6.13)</b>	<b>3.75</b> <b>(1.38-6.81)</b>

\*These means reflect the following districts only: Camden, East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Long Branch, Newark, Paterson, and Phillipsburg

### *Discussion of PRISM*

In general, provisions for math materials across the full sample of classrooms were high quality. Provisions for science materials were not as strong as there were less features evident. Results for science and math-based interactions show that teachers engage in counting for a purpose with children to a moderate degree, but other practices, such as identifying numerals or numerical operations are not as frequent. Science explorations, experiments, observations and activities also do not frequently occur in classrooms. Workshops on the importance of these features and strategies for implementing them in the classroom would be very useful.