



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Librera Announces Release of 2003 School Report Cards

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced the release of the 2003 New Jersey School Report Cards. The School Report Cards contain detailed statistical profiles of all public schools in the state. The annual reports are prepared for the public to gauge school and student progress.

"With the expenditure of \$8.1 billion for education in New Jersey, Governor McGreevey expects accountability for ensuring that education dollars are going into our classrooms," Commissioner of Education William L. Librera said. "Our mission remains to ensure that all children can read by the end of third grade and to improve overall achievement for every student."

"By law, we are required to produce the annual School Report Card, so that parents and interested citizens can review the progress of their local schools and evaluate whether the schools are providing their students with a high-quality education in a cost-effective way," Commissioner Librera said.

The 2003 New Jersey School Report Card is accessible here:

<http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc03/letter.html>

The 2003 version of the NJ School Report Card has been produced by department staff in house for savings of more than a half a million dollars — this, after phasing out the vendor that had been producing the report card since 1997. The format is more compact, quicker to access, and easier to read. Most of the report card fields remain consistent with past reporting with a few exceptions as follows:

- The information has been rearranged under five categories – school environment, student information, student performance indicators, staff information, and district/charter financial information.
- Assessment results are shown as totals and also as disaggregated by the same subgroups that are required by the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. These subgroups were first introduced in the 2002 NCLB Report released by the department last August. The conditions required to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) under *NCLB* have not been applied to the assessment results for this School Report Card. The assessment results that are reported in the next NCLB Report will reflect the application of those conditions.
- For average class size, the information is presented by grade level, as well as in a total. There will be only one year of data shown, because there is no grade-level information in prior report cards.
- The field for Highly Qualified Teacher information that was introduced in the 2002 NCLB Report has been carried over to the February School Report Card with the addition of 2002-03 data.
- Advanced Placement information has been reduced in scope. In the past, much of the test information for AP courses was suppressed because the classes tended to be small. To show what courses the districts or charter schools offer, the names of the courses are listed along with the number of students taking the course and the number of students taking the test. There is a summary number of test scores that were 3 or higher for the school. The field that shows the percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 (unduplicated) who took advanced placement classes as compared with the state average is the same as prior report cards.
- Dropout rates are disaggregated by the same subgroups as those introduced in the 2002 NCLB Report.
- Graduation rate shows only one year of data because the 2003 calculation has been done completely differently from prior years. **Therefore, comparisons with prior years are invalid.** In accordance with New Jersey's Accountability Workbook, approved by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), New Jersey is required to show that we are moving toward a cohort model of calculating high school graduation rates. In a cohort model, data is collected over four years, taking into consideration students who drop out and student who move in and out. Because we do not have in place the collection mechanism to produce the data that will be required of districts in complying with this mandate, we have USDE's permission to use an interim calculation this year based on a model advocated by the National Center for Education Statistics. This model estimates a graduation rate for the cohort of students that began high school four years ago. The formula divides the number of graduates, including the summer graduates following the school year, by the sum of

- all graduates plus the number of dropouts for that cohort through the four years of high school.
- In report cards for vocational schools, the NOCTI course and test information has been simplified in a format similar to that of the Advanced Placement field. There is a list of the current courses offered and the test score averages for the school and state on written and performance tests. NOCTI information is not shown for comprehensive high schools.

The reports released today are the ninth to be produced under a 1995 state law that standardizes much of the information and requires its annual distribution. They also represent the 13th time New Jersey has issued a report on its public schools, since the first report cards were distributed in 1989. Report cards are produced for all elementary and secondary schools, as well as vocational schools, special education schools, charter schools, and Special Services School Districts.

Commissioner Librera expressed appreciation to local school district personnel for their cooperation in supplying data for the statistical profiles. For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.