

Christie Administration Releases New School Performance Reports and Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending for 2011-12 School Year

New Performance Reports Include a Wealth of New Data on School Performance Focused on College and Career Readiness

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Trenton, NJ - The Department of Education today released new School Performance Reports for all schools in the state for the 2011-12 school year that build upon and replace the outdated school report cards. These reports include brand new data on college and career readiness and provide comparison to "peer schools" in order to provide a more complete picture of school performance for educators and the general public. In addition, the Department released the 2013 Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending to help New Jersey residents and interested citizens learn how their tax dollars are spent in their schools.

"These new school performance reports were developed with the input of stakeholders across the state and provide a significant amount of new data to present a more complete picture of school performance," said Commissioner Chris Cerf. "We hope this data will help schools and stakeholders engage in local goal setting and improvement to help all students graduate from high school ready for college and career."

As outlined in the Department's approved flexibility request from No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the new school performance reports were created collaboratively with stakeholders across the state in both informal conversations and through a workgroup that included representatives from the NJEA, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA), New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) and the New Jersey Parent Teacher Association (NJPTA). The workgroup met collaboratively over a four-month period to discuss the data to be included, the presentation of the results and the peer school methodology.

The performance reports include both data and a narrative overview to help users better understand school performance in the context of state performance and the performance of similar "peer schools." The reports also include a color-coded guide to help readers identify where schools met individual or statewide targets.

Included for the first time in these performance reports are "peer school comparisons" to replace the outdated District Factor Group (DFG) comparisons. The peer school methodology compares schools to approximately 30 similar "peer schools" from across the state with similar grade configurations and that are educating students with similar demographic characteristics such as free/reduced lunch eligibility, limited English proficiency or special education program participation. This data provides information about how similar schools are performing to help identify strengths and areas for improvement. For the first year of the reports, vocational schools have been removed from these comparisons because of their unique student population. However, as there is no standard definition or data collection for other types of screened schools or schools that are open enrollment throughout the state, all other schools in those categories remain in the peer comparison this first year. The peer methodology uses propensity score matching to establish the peer groups for each eligible school. Propensity score matching is an established statistical technique that helps to construct comparison groups from data observed outside of research testing.

"While the evaluation of student outcome data is crucial for school improvement, we know that these data alone cannot capture the dozens of other essential elements of schools such as a positive school climate, participation in extracurricular programs and the development of non-cognitive skills," said Chief Performance Office Bari Erlichson. "However, by focusing on college and career readiness and including meaningful comparisons for schools, we hope that these new reports will inform conversations at the local level about where schools are doing well and where they can continue to improve."

As the reports include several new categories of information, the Department provided previews of the reports to districts over the last month. This allowed districts the opportunity to review the data included about their schools and ask questions to inform their understanding of the reports.

The following are the new categories included for the first time this year:

Progress Targets for NJASK and HSPA

Through flexibility from NCLB, the state Department of Education has set individual progress targets for each district, school, and subgroup. These ambitious but achievable goals begin with the baseline starting point of

achievement in the 2010-11 school year, and measure whether each school and subgroup is making progress toward the goal of cutting the gap in half between their starting point and 100% proficiency by 2017. These metrics are based on performance on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

College and Career Readiness

For the first time, the performance reports include robust data on whether students at each school are on track for college and career. Beyond traditional measures of NJASK and HSPA performance, these measures help schools to identify, from an early age, whether students are demonstrating the skills and behaviors indicative of college and career readiness.

At the high school level, this includes:

- % of students participating in SAT and PSAT
- % of students scoring above 1550 on the SAT, the benchmark score identified by the College Board associated with a high likelihood of college success. Statewide, 44% of students met this target.
- % of students taking at least one AP test in English, Math, Social Studies, or Science
- % of AP tests in English, Math, Social Studies, or Science with a score of 3 or greater

At the elementary and middle school level, this includes behavior indicative of college and career readiness:

- % of students taking Algebra I
- % of students chronically absent (greater than 10% of the year)

Student Growth

For the first time, the Performance Reports include measures of student growth, utilizing the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) methodology. SGP creates a measure of how students progressed in grades 4 through 8 on the NJASK language arts literacy and math assessments when compared to other students with a similar NJASK test score history. A short video explaining the SGP methodology can be found here:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/njsmart/performance>.

As educators are aware, looking at proficiency levels alone do not provide a complete picture of school performance because students and schools all begin at different starting points. By partnering that proficiency data with growth information, these new reports can help educators identify where, for example, students are demonstrating low proficiency but high growth, or, conversely, high proficiency but low growth.

Graduation and Post-Secondary Enrollment

The performance reports not only include information about a school's graduation rate, but also about post-secondary enrollment.:

- Graduation rates are presented using the new "adjusted cohort graduation methodology" used by the state over the past two years, and includes both four-year and five-year graduation rates
- Pathway information is presented based on the percentage of students that graduate via HSPA, the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA), or by being exempt.
- Post-secondary enrollment is collected by the National Student Clearinghouse, which collects data from 95% of secondary institutions nationwide. This data measures the percentage of students who graduated from high school in 2011 and were enrolled in a post-secondary institution 16 months later. Across New Jersey, 62% of students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions during this time.

The School Performance reports can be accessed here: <http://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>

2013 Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending

The Department also released the *2013 Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending* to help New Jersey residents and interested citizens learn how their tax dollars are spent in their schools by providing the public with information about school districts' annual budgets. Included are two types of total expenditures:

- Total Spending Per Pupil, which includes all district expenditures including state expenditures on behalf of school districts.
- Budgetary Costs Per Pupil, which only includes costs that are similar among school districts.

This is the third year that the Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending includes a full accounting of all spending on education in New Jersey through the Total Spending Per Pupil. Before this was created, the former Comparative Spending Guide did not include costs such as transportation, debt service, federal funds, and state payments on behalf of the districts for pension, social security, and post-retirement medical costs in any of the indicators. The previous guide also omitted the costs of tuition and students sent out of district. The new Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending includes these numbers, as they are very real parts to the whole spending picture. For the 2011-12 school year, the average Total Spending Per Pupil in the state was \$18,045.

The *Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending* can be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2013/>
The guide was first produced in the spring of 1997 as the *Comparative Spending Guide*. The guide's name was changed last year when the Department made modifications to provide a more inclusive representation of district expenditures, including state expenditures on behalf of the districts, and to illustrate a more complete picture of all education spending.