



## Christie Administration Unveils 2013 School Performance Reports, Includes Arts

### *New Jersey Is First State to Include Arts Instruction in School-Level Reports*

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** - The Department of Education today released School Performance Reports for the 2012-13 school year, marking the first time that participation in arts education has been included in any state's annual school-level reporting. The reports provide a more complete picture of school performance beyond simple test scores by identifying a range of college and career ready metrics, beginning at the earliest grades. The reports are designed to further the Department's goal of helping educators and stakeholders turn information into action to improve student outcomes across a range of performance indicators.

"New Jersey has one of the best public school systems in the nation, and we applaud our educators and administrators for their many successes. We also appreciate their commitment to a process of continuous learning and improvement," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "These expanded School Performance Reports provide an important tool for engaging in that critical process. We believe they offer school communities a foundation for meaningful conversations about their many accomplishments as well as opportunities for positive change."

**About the Performance Reports** This is the second year the Department has issued its School Performance Reports that provide comprehensive data on school performance. The reports were created collaboratively through both informal conversations and a workgroup that included members of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA), the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) and the New Jersey Parent Teacher Association (NJPTA).

After the release of last year's performance reports, the Department engaged feedback from hundreds of educators who made suggestions about new data to include, ways to make the reports more useful, and how to refine existing NJ SMART collections to capture data at even higher levels of quality. The Department reconvened the workgroup, and sought the feedback of other partners, such as superintendents from the county career and vocational schools.

The School 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.

New Jersey's School Performance Reports empower citizens to view a series of key performance indicators, indicative of college and career readiness, through the lens of four types of questions:

- How is my school performing on this indicator? Did we make progress from last year?
- How is my school performing compared to other schools that educate students similar to mine?
- How is my school performing compared to other schools across the state?
- Did my school meet its performance targets?

Engaging in these types of benchmarking questions and analyses will enable communities to identify strengths and address weaknesses.

Key components of the School Performance Reports include:

- *Academic Achievement:* This section of the report includes school performance on statewide assessments (i.e., the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)).
- *College and Career Readiness:* The School Performance Reports include data that helps measure whether students are on track for college and career. Besides performance on student assessments, these metrics include chronic absenteeism in the early grades, completing Algebra I prior to high school, taking college-readiness tests (SAT and ACT), and taking rigorous high school coursework (Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate).
- *Student Growth:* Because proficiency levels alone do not provide a complete picture of school performance,

the reports pair data on student proficiency with student *growth*. This is done through "Student Growth Percentiles," which measure how students progressed in grades 4 through 8 on the NJASK language arts literacy and math assessments when compared to other similar students. In the high school level, the reports provide information on numbers of students who move on to postsecondary education.

The reports include "peer school comparisons," which replaced the outdated District Factor Group (DFG) comparisons of communities by socioeconomic status. 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 more accurately provides information about how similar schools are performing to help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Through flexibility from NCLB, the reports also include "progress targets" for each district, school and subgroup. These goals start with achievement levels on statewide assessments in the 2010-11 school year, and measure whether each school and subgroup is progressing toward the goal of cutting the gap in half between the starting point and 100 percent proficiency by 2017.

**Adding the Arts** Visual and performing arts are one of the nine curricular areas that must be taught in all New Jersey public schools. The school-level data on visual and performing arts in New Jersey's high schools is located within the "college and career readiness" section of the most recent School Performance Reports.

National studies have found that students from lower socioeconomic communities who are involved in the arts are three times more likely to receive a bachelor's degree than students with little or no arts involvement. Those findings were echoed in a 2012 report by the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership, which found Garden State students who were involved in the arts were more likely to have higher scores in language arts literacy and more likely to enroll in college. Numerous studies that demonstrate the link between the arts and achievement are posted on the Partnership's website.

Arts instruction from grade 6 to high school is driven by a focus in four disciplines: Dance, music, drama/theater, or visual arts. For many years, state regulations have required students to take at least a year of arts instruction (typically 5 credits) in one of the key arts disciplines during high school.

The School Performance Reports do not measure student grades or test scores in the arts. Rather, the reports provide the percentage of students in each high school who are enrolled in courses that would help them fulfill the five-credit requirement. The initial data shows 47.7 percent of high schoolers – nearly 200,000 students in all – were enrolled in one or more classes in the four arts disciplines in 2012-13 (when, if students were only meeting the minimum requirements in the arts, that figure would be expected to be approximately half the current amount).

"Research shows a strong connection between arts education and success in college and career," said Commissioner Cerf. "Arts education is crucial in unleashing the creativity and innovation that are needed to succeed in today's workforce. I'm proud that New Jersey is at the forefront of this effort."

**Other Improvements** Besides the new information on the visual and performing arts, feedback from stakeholders last year has led to the addition of other new elements to the reports, including:

- *Postsecondary education.* In the former school report cards, the state relied on less accurate exit surveys of high school seniors for post graduation plans. Now, postsecondary enrollment is logged by the National Student Clearinghouse, which collects data from 95 percent of secondary institutions nationwide. This data measures the percentage of students who enrolled in college within 16 months of graduating high school. New to the 2013 performance reports is the additional information of the percentage of postsecondary enrollees that are attending 2-year vs. 4-year institutions.
- *International Baccalaureate.* New to the 2013 performance reports is the addition of participation and outcomes in the rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework as another indicator of college and career readiness alongside Advanced Placement (AP) courses and tests.
- *ACT Participation.* In the 2013 performance reports, participation in the ACT test program is now recognized alongside the SAT.

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