



Department of Education Releases User-Friendly School Report Cards for 2010-11 School Year

Based in part on these results, interventions to turn around state's lowest-performing schools are already underway

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ - The Department of Education today released Report Cards for each public school in the state for the 2010-11 school year. The Report Cards are released annually to provide user-friendly information to the public about school performance. The information in these Report Cards also provides useful data to educators and districts to help develop local improvement plans. Based in part on these results, the Department of Education has already begun interventions in Priority Schools - the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in the state over the past three years - with full support to begin in September through the state's new Regional Achievement Centers.

The Report Card contains information in the five areas below.

1. School environment
2. Student information
3. School performance
4. Staff information
5. District financial data

Beginning next school year, the Department will develop and publish new school performance reports for every school in New Jersey to replace the current bifurcated School Report Card and NCLB Report Card publications. Through these reports, the Department will set specific school and subgroup performance targets for both language arts and math, and will report annual progress towards meeting those goals. In addition, the reports will include a number of new data points including progress towards closing achievement gaps, comparison to "peer schools" with similar demographics, growth as measured through Student Growth Percentiles on state tests over time, and additional college and career readiness data points. These public reports will help districts and schools to engage in local performance management by setting local performance goals, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and developing local plans to focus on areas of low performances in their districts.

Over the next several months, the Department will convene a committee of educators and stakeholders to help to collaboratively develop these reports. The committee will look at both the data points to be included and the visual representation to ensure that they are helpful to both educators and parents.

"While these Report Cards provide some helpful information to parents, the general public, and school administrators about school performance, the Department has long acknowledged that we can do a much better job of providing actionable information for the purposes of school improvement. We are moving to a new School Performance Report next year that will provide unprecedented data on how our schools are doing," said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. "Based in part on the results from these Report Cards, steps are already underway to free high-performing schools from bureaucratic red tape and to turn around the state's lowest performing schools."

As announced in February, New Jersey was one of the first ten states to receive approval from the Obama Administration for flexibility from provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in exchange for developing a new school accountability system. Through this new accountability system, the state has identified the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in the state (Priority Schools) that will receive intensive state intervention. A list of those 75 schools can be found here: <http://www.nj.gov/education/news/2012/0411rac.htm>

Based in part on the data from these Report Cards and based in part on individual ongoing school reviews of Priority Schools, the state's new Regional Achievement Centers (RACs) are already working to implement interventions in these schools in three areas: evaluating whether the school's current principal is the right individual to lead the turnaround effort; evaluating the school's curriculum to ensure that it provides the conditions for success; and helping each school to align its resources to the turnaround effort through proper administrative staffing. In addition, the state has already taken action to close three charter schools that were categorized as Priority Schools.

"We are entering a new age of school accountability in New Jersey, one that frees high-performing schools from state interference and defines a stronger investment from the state to turn around pockets of persistent

academic failure,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “No longer can we stand on the sidelines when our schools are not preparing students in New Jersey to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. There is a moral imperative for the state to take a stronger role in persistently failing schools and to work collaboratively with communities and districts to give all students a fair chance.”

In addition to Priority Schools, the state has identified 183 Focus Schools that have the largest in-school achievement gap or lowest subgroup performance. The RACs will also begin to work to provide targeted supports to these schools beginning in September.

Beyond these two groups of schools, the vast majority of schools in the state will still have increased autonomy over the necessary investments and supports to sustain strong performance or strengthen areas for improvement. Through the Department’s new performance reports next year, the state will provide a wealth of data to these districts and will require each district to hold a public meeting to discuss the results. All schools will also develop and submit to the state improvement plans when they do not meet specific performance targets.

Of these schools, the state has identified 112 schools as Reward Schools for either high levels of performance or high growth. Beginning in September these schools will begin to receive recognition or financial rewards (for certain Reward Schools that are also Title I schools), and will serve as exemplars for schools across the state to model best practices.

The School Report Cards for the 2010-11 school year can be found at the link below:

<http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc11/>