

Beyond the numbers: What you can do now

So, now what?

The Star-Ledger's School Report Card provides a portion of information available about schools, with more offered through the districts or online. Also, within the state's report, each district and school includes a brief narrative that outlines its successes and goals.

But beyond printed words and numbers, families that want to know more should visit the schools and ask questions. Here are 10 suggestions compiled from a survey of parents and educators that can help start the conversation.

1. What is the school's educational philosophy or mission?
2. How is your child doing in the school? Is he or she meeting the grade-level expectations?
3. How is a student's progress monitored, in addition to grades?
4. How does the school ensure all students are being challenged?
5. How does the school monitor teachers' performance and help them grow?
6. What steps are taken to include students classified with disabilities in the general education setting?
7. What are the school's greatest accomplishments?
8. How does the school use technology to improve learning?
9. In addition to teaching academic skills, what steps are taken to ensure that students are taught to be good thinkers and good citizens?
10. On any topic, especially about your child: "What can I do to help?"

HELPFUL LINKS

The Star-Ledger's interactive report can be found at:

nj.com/news/reportcard

The state's full Report Cards can be accessed online at:

education.state.nj.us/rc/rc07/index.html

Test information for parents and guardians, provided by the state

Department of Education: nj.gov/njded/assessment/parents/

Sample questions and other specifications for assessments:

nj.gov/njded/assessment/

Information about the federal No Child Left Behind Act, provided by the U.S. Department of Education and the state Department of Education

Federal: nclb.gov

State: nj.gov/education/grants/nclb

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and when each student should know at each grade: www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/

A comparative analysis of schools in New Jersey and elsewhere as developed by Just4Kids: New Jersey: just4kids.org/en/new_jersey/