

# The Bridge

ISSUE  
12  
FEBRUARY  
2014

A monthly newsletter for educators from the  
New Jersey Department of Education



## In this Issue

The Department of Education has released the second edition of the School Performance Reports. Check the article to find out what changes were made this year based on feedback from educators about how to improve the reports and make them more useful to districts and communities.

The department has shared non-consequential median student growth percentiles, based on last year's data, to districts to share with teachers as a practice run for next year when SGPs will be part of the summative evaluation process. The update in this issue gives you suggestions on how the practice scores can be useful to both teachers and principals.

Did you know that New Jersey landed a Race to the Top Early Childhood grant worth \$44.3 million? The article on the grant in this issue explains the goals of the winning plan that won the grant.

Are you on the team – the Common Core Implementation Team (CCIT) that is. If you are interested, the article provides instructions on how to sign up.

The department needs your help in identifying outstanding elementary teachers deserving of recognition so we are asking teachers, parents, and community members to reach out to school and district officials to suggest elementary educators (grades PreK-5) worthy of being nominated for the Exemplary Elementary Educator Recognition Program. See the article for details.

Check out the contest that could win you a 2GB Flash Drive from The NJ Educator Resource Exchange. The article on the exchange encourages you to register and contribute your best practices for implementing the Common Core Standards. By registering, you could be eligible to win the prize and have access to a lot of good materials from colleagues around the country.

In this Issue/School Performance Reports	P. 1
Median Student Growth Percentiles/ Common Core Implementation Team	P. 2
Race to the Top (RTTT) Early Learning Challenge Grant	P. 3
School Performance Reports/Common Core	P. 4
Professional Development Opportunities	P. 5
Elementary Educator Recognition/Contest	P. 6

## The Department of Education Has Released the 2012-13 School Performance Reports

The Department of Education has released the 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 indicators, beginning at the earliest grades.

"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."

Commissioner Cerf added, "These reports are designed to provide meaningful data to school and district staff in a range of areas in order to drive improvement at the local level. These reports are not designed for statewide rankings, or to focus on which school is outperforming another school. In that spirit, we held a conference call with reporters in advance of the release specifically to stress that we do not support any effort to create a statewide ranking of schools. Data is meant to drive reflection, not judgment, and we will do our best to keep the conversation focused on productive dialogue."

This is the second year the department has issued its School Performance Reports providing 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).

*(continued on p. 4)*

# The New Jersey Department of Education Has Released the 2012-13 Median Student Growth Percentiles to Districts

On February 4, 2014, the department published a [broadcast memo](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/020414mSGPrelease.pdf) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/020414mSGPrelease.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/020414mSGPrelease.pdf)) describing the release of 2012-13 median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) data for all qualifying teachers. This data does not have any consequences for this year's evaluation as it describes student growth from last school year. Instead, the information is being shared as a practice exercise. By law, this data is confidential and cannot be shared publicly.

District leaders were provided with a summary of all teacher mSGP scores, as well as individual reports for each teacher indicating his/her 2012-13 mSGP. School principals and supervisors were asked to share these confidential reports individually with each teacher. Administrators were asked to help teachers understand how:

- mSGPs are derived,
- 2013-14 scores will factor into the evaluation when available next year, and
- mSGP data may be used in conjunction with other measures to identify professional learning opportunities.

New Jersey measures growth for an individual student by comparing the change in his or her NJ ASK achievement from one year to the student's "academic peers" (all other students in the state who had similar historical test results). This change in achievement – not absolute proficiency level – is reported as the SGP and indicates on a scale from 1 to 99 how an individual student's growth compares to that of his/her academic peers. To determine the mSGP for an individual teacher, the department creates an ascending list of SGP scores of the qualifying students on the teacher's roster. The median (middle) SGP value on this list is the teacher's mSGP score.

For mSGP to be part of a teacher's evaluation, the teacher must be:

- Assigned to a 4th-8th-grade Language Arts or Mathematics course for 60% or more of the year prior to the date on which the NJ ASK was administered, and
- Assigned 20 unique students by the district through the Course Roster Submission.
  - o These students must be enrolled for 70% or more of the course duration prior to the administration of the NJ ASK.

We strongly encourage teachers who receive mSGP reports to carefully read the detailed User Guide ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/mSGPuserguide.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/mSGPuserguide.pdf)) for more information on this data release. The User Guide provides detailed background on the use of SGPs and mSGPs and explains how mSGP scores are used as part of the summative evaluation rating for 2013-14.

## Deadline for Adjusting Student Growth Objectives: February 15

Approximately 20% of New Jersey teachers will receive mSGP scores and these teachers must also set 1 or 2 Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) for 2013-14. Teachers who do not receive mSGP scores must set 2 SGOs for 2013-14. The department encourages teachers whose class rosters are between 20 and 25 to set 2 SGOs. Doing so guards against the possibility of the roster falling below 20 and the teacher not receiving an mSGP score. Please note that the deadline for adjusting SGOs for the current school year is February 15, 2014. Such adjustments require the approval of the chief school administrator.



## Are you on the Team? Learn how to join the Common Core Implementation Team

The purpose of the Common Core Implementation Team (CCIT) is to establish a means for effective and efficient

communication between the NJDOE and teams of educators in each district who have a critical role in implementing or supporting the changes necessary to achieve the outcomes of the Common Core State Standards. Ideally, each district team will include the superintendent, the business administrator, curriculum supervisors, principals, teachers, school board members, and parents. We have recently invited higher education administrators and faculty to join the CCIT as well because it is important for higher education to also receive these

resources and to disseminate information to colleagues. All educators are invited to register to join and receive the monthly collection of resources. The team is not expected to meet, complete any tasks or produce any reports. They will simply serve as avenues of communication that connect people to the resources available through the NJDOE and the professional organizations that serve each group (NJASA, NJASCD, NJASBO, NJPSA, NJEA, AFT, NJSBA, NJPTA).

Superintendents will be notified of each communication, but will not be required to engage in any direct action in order to disseminate the information to those who may benefit from knowing of the availability of new resources or opportunities for training.

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## New Jersey Has Received a Race to the Top (RTTT) Early Learning Challenge Grant for \$44.3 Million

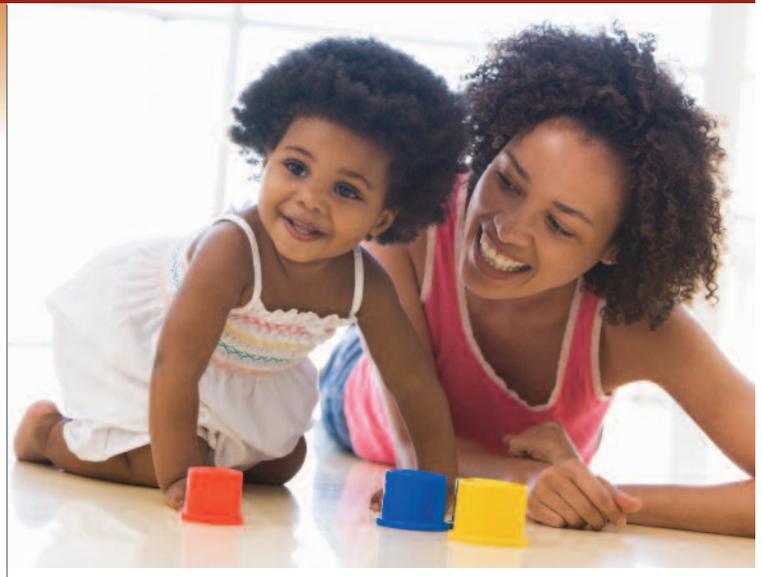
Last December, the U.S. Department of Education announced that New Jersey had received a \$44.3 million Race To The Top (RTTT) Early Learning Challenge Grant to help improve access to high-quality early learning and development programs for thousands of high-needs children throughout the state.

The funding will implement an initiative that sets standards to guide the quality of programming, broadens training for program staff, and provides parents with a Consumer Reports-like rating system of early learning providers.

The funding also will help implement the New Jersey Early Learning Plan establishing a coordinated system of early education and care. The plan was created through the collaboration of four state agencies – the Departments of Education, Children and Families, Health, and Human Services – as well as the New Jersey Council for Young Children, which includes other public, private, state and local partners.

“This is a bold, statewide plan to provide more high-quality early childhood opportunities for children, with a focus on giving parents the information they need to access effective early learning programs, and giving program providers the tools they need to improve services,” said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. “In the end, we anticipate our effort will reach at least 83,300 high-needs children, from pregnancy through age 8, over the four years of the grant. This grant is the result of the hard work of departments across the state, as well as the strong voice and support of advocate groups throughout New Jersey, and I thank them for all of their efforts on behalf of our students.”

The heart of the plan calls for developing a statewide quality rating improvement system called “Grow NJ



Kids,” which is currently a pilot program in 56 sites in four counties. Through Grow NJ Kids, a set of standards will provide a roadmap to improve the quality of programming offered from birth to school-entry ages. Early learning and development program administrators will perform a self-evaluation that, when complete, will help determine the overall quality of the program. The evaluation will serve as a basis for professional development and other improvements. Ratings will be assigned to each program to help parents in the decision-making process.

Grow NJ Kids will expand from a pilot of 56 programs to 1,790 early learning and development programs over four years.

The New Jersey Early Learning Plan contains other initiatives to be implemented by 2018, including:

- A self-sustaining Training Academy to coordinate professional development for programs that serve high-needs children. Academy staff and specialists are expected to provide training on implementing Grow NJ Kids to approximately 20,000 early childhood educators and related staff.
- Implementation of an aligned set of early learning standards from birth to grade three.
- Creation of the NJ Kindergarten Entry Assessment (NJKEA) to help classroom teachers determine a starting point for each child’s instruction.
- Building awareness of Grow NJ Kids by reaching out to parents, especially from culturally and linguistically diverse families, through the use of multilingual documents, video clips, and online.
- Having the four state agencies that are involved with early learning align their data systems, leading to better communications and the ability to evaluate the success of initiatives.

# 2012-13 School Performance Reports *(continued from p. 1)*

After the release of last year's performance reports, the department sought 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.

Key components of the School Performance Reports include:

- Academic Achievement – This section of the report includes school performance on statewide assessments
- College and Career Readiness – includes 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 NJ ASK language arts literacy and math assessments when compared to other similar students. At the high school level, the reports provide information on numbers of students who move on to postsecondary education.

In addition, the reports include “peer school comparisons,” which compare each school 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.

Visual and performing arts is 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.

“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.”

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.

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 which exceeds the minimum expectation.

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 – 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 – shows 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 is now recognized alongside the SAT.

The School Performance reports can be accessed online at: [education.state.nj.us/pr/](http://education.state.nj.us/pr/)

## Common Core Implementation Team *(continued from p. 2)*

In short, the CCIT is intended to support New Jersey educators' efforts to transition to the Common Core State Standards.

### What are the benefits of joining a CCIT?

- To provide a means for the NJDOE to provide stakeholders with information regarding the Common Core State Standards, including:
  - ✓ Invitations to participate on NJDOE projects
  - ✓ Free professional development on critical topics
  - ✓ High-quality resources and links
  - ✓ Best practices for implementation strategies
  - ✓ Updates on PARCC

### What can CCIT members expect?

- On the first Wednesday of every month, an email detailing Common Core updates and resources will be sent directly to all registered CCIT members.

- Each month, the CCIT resources will be posted on:

[www.state.nj.us/education/sca/team/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/team/)

- If you sign up and don't receive monthly emails, let us know by contacting us at [njcore@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:njcore@doe.state.nj.us)

- To view past CCIT mailings please use this link:

[www.state.nj.us/education/sca/team/ccit.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/team/ccit.pdf)

### How to sign up:

To join the CCIT, please register at [app.mobilestorm.com/cp/manageforms/preview.php?formID=14290](http://app.mobilestorm.com/cp/manageforms/preview.php?formID=14290)

Registration is also available through the NJDOE homepage ([www.state.nj.us/education/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/)). Click on the red CCSS button, click on the “Common Core Implementation Team,” scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the link.

# News, Upcoming Events & Professional Development Opportunities



Be sure to check the online upcoming [events calendar \(http://education.state.nj.us/events/\)](http://education.state.nj.us/events/) for opportunities available throughout the year.

## February 2014

**February 2014 - Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month** – The theme for CTE month is “Celebrate CTE Superheroes.” The Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE) encourages everyone to explore and learn the amazing accomplishments, achievements and contribution of CTE professionals, students and alumni. Please visit [www.nj.gov/education/cte/](http://www.nj.gov/education/cte/) to learn how school districts in New Jersey are celebrating CTE month.

**February 19, 20 or 21, 2014 - Promoting College and Career Readiness Using the NJ Career Assistance Navigator (NJCAN)** – Times: 8:15 am to 12 pm; Location: various

The Office of Career and Technical Education, in collaboration with the Office of Student Support Services, is sponsoring three regional workshops in February for the priority and focus schools entitled, “Promoting College and Career Readiness Using the NJ Career Assistance Navigator.” NJCAN is a career information system that contains self-assessments, college and other postsecondary school information, a searchable directory of scholarships, an extensive career database, and the latest national, state and local labor market data and projections. These sessions will focus on establishing a positive school climate and using NJCAN to support college and career readiness. You can register for these events on the NJDOE calendar of events at [education.state.nj.us/events/month/?month=02&year=2014](http://education.state.nj.us/events/month/?month=02&year=2014).

If there are any questions, please contact Lori Howard, Melissa Stager or David McNair at 609-633-0665.

## March 2014

**March 3, 5, 7 or 10, 2014 - Assessment Literacy** – Times: 8:30 am – 3:30 pm; Locations: various

The Office of Academic Standards invites you to participate in a professional development opportunity for principals and school leaders entitled, “Assessment Literacy: Utilizing Benchmark Assessments.” This professional development session will focus on assisting school leaders to support teachers in the implementation of an informative, data-driven, balanced, and reasonable assessment system in which they can use feedback to raise academic achievement. This support session is designed for school leaders to implement a benchmarking system that utilizes teacher-created assessment materials fully aligned to the Common Core. Mathematics and English language arts content experts will present this nuanced approach to benchmark assessments required by the two disciplines. Please join the NJDOE for this support session as we strive to empower school leaders to work with teachers in the creation, organization, and management of a benchmark assessment system that will enable them to help students succeed academically. Registration information is available on the NJDOE [calendar of events \(education.state.nj.us/events/\)](http://education.state.nj.us/events/).

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## Contest – Win a 2GB Flash Drive from the NJ Educator Resource Exchange



The New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange ([NJCore.org](http://NJCore.org)) has released its first contest. All educators in New Jersey are encouraged to join the Educator Resource Exchange and contribute their instructional assessment and/or professional development resources that they have created. If you are one of the first 50 educators to submit 10 or more resources, you will win a 2GB flash drive to hold and share resources or use for your own personal needs. The process to contribute resources is as simple as attaching a document to an email AND it is free to register.



The New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange is free for all educators, parents, and community members to navigate the Common Core State Standards, New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, and the New Jersey Model Curriculum. You can also search by keyword to find resources that can support the instruction of your students. Other features include downloading resources, collecting resources to build units of study, creating a personalized resource feed to view only resources that pertain to your grade and subject area(s), and accessing resources directly from the site.

The goal of the Educator Resource Exchange is to build a large pool of high-quality resources that are contributed by educators from New Jersey. Also contained on the Educator Resource Exchange are resources from national partners vetted for your use. We hope that you will visit [NJCore.org](http://NJCore.org) and browse for resources, register and start contributing. You could win a 2GB flash drive for your efforts.

**Visit [NJCore.org](http://NJCore.org) to get started.**



## Exemplary Elementary Educator Recognition Program Seeks Nominees

The New Jersey Department of Education needs your help in identifying outstanding elementary teachers deserving of recognition. The department is asking teachers, parents, and community members to reach out to school and district officials to suggest elementary educators (grades PreK–5) worthy of being nominated for the Exemplary Elementary Educator Recognition Program.

The goal of the Exemplary Elementary Educator Recognition Program is to identify extraordinary elementary educators for special recognition. Your recommendations will identify individuals who are valued by their school and community, and who may ultimately receive prestigious national recognition. This program alternates between elementary and secondary every year. A state certificate of recognition is awarded to each candidate that is selected as an Exemplary Educator.

The online application process, to be completed by either a supervisor or administrator, opens on February 4, 2014 and ends on April 4, 2014. Each district may recommend up to three educators. District administrators have access to the online nomination application.

The department strongly encourages every school and district to participate in programs such as the Exemplary Educator Recognition Program, as it is an investment that will pay dividends for years to come by rewarding those who continually demonstrate excellence in their classrooms.

For more detailed information on all the department's recognition programs, please visit:

[www.state.nj.us/education/educators/rpr/recognition](http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/rpr/recognition)