



NJDOE News

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Department of Education Identifies 245 'Early Warning' Schools for Grade Eight; Announces Nine (9) Schools Added to "Needs Improvement" List for Elementary Data *Commissioner Librera Again Cautions, 'These are Not Failing Schools'*

The New Jersey Department of Education today released a list of [245 "Early Warning" schools](#) and [nine \(9\)](#) new "Needs Improvement" schools based on 2003 Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment data and New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK4) results, respectively.

The preliminary, Cycle I data are the latest reports as required by the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB). The release today fulfills Commissioner of Education William L. Librera's promise that the information be made public as quickly and efficiently as possible. In releasing the information, the Commissioner again cautioned that the schools listed are "in no way failing."

"These are not failing schools," Commissioner Librera said. "The Department of Education continues to see these schools unfairly, and inaccurately, labeled as such. These are schools that are either in the 'needs improvement' category, or are in danger of being placed in the category next year."

Early Warning, Based on 2003 GEPA

The list of 245 "Early Warning" schools announced today are based on the 2003 GEPA results. It is a further breakdown of what the Department released last week.

There were 367 schools discussed last week, based on 2003 GEPA results:

- six (6) schools were newly-identified last week as "in need of improvement";
- 101 schools remain on the "needs improvement" list based on 2003 GEPA data and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), the previous federal law for marking school progress;
- 15 schools that have made safe harbor, based on 2003 data. Safe harbor is attained if the proportion of students in the subgroup scoring partially proficient is reduced by 10 percent over the previous year.

The up-to-date number of "Early Warning" schools, given the above information, is 245. Of these schools, 145 missed the AYP benchmarks for 2003 in two or fewer categories (roughly 60 percent). Additionally, 190 schools out of 245 missed for fewer than four categories (roughly 78 percent).

"This speaks to some of the problems we see with the implementation of this federal law," Commissioner Librera said. "We think the goals of this legislation are admirable, but the implementation of this is fraught with many problems. Much of this information, coupled with the problems in implementation, creates unfair conclusions about these schools."

'Needs Improvement,' Based on 2003 Data

Based on 2003 NJASK4 data, the nine (9) schools released today have been placed on the "in need of improvement" category. The schools have been placed in this category based on the 2003 NJASK4 preliminary data and the 2002 Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) test.

The schools identified as "in need of improvement" based on 2003 NJASK4 data are as follows: Alexander Denbo Elementary School in the Pemberton Township District, Burlington County; F.X. McGraw Elementary School in the Camden School District, Camden County; Dr. William Mennies Elementary School in the Vineland School District, Cumberland County; and the Mildred B. Garvin MicroSociety School in the East Orange School District, Essex County.

Also identified were: Madison Elementary School in the Newark School District, Essex County; Kennedy Elementary School No. 9 in the Jersey City School District, Hudson County; N.M. Butler Elementary School No. 23

in the Elizabeth School District, Union County; Evergreen Elementary School, Union County; and Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Pennsauken Township School District, Camden County.

Last week, the state announced that six (6) schools were being added to the list of 250 schools in need of improvement based on 2002 GEPA and Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) data. Those six schools, plus the nine announced today, mean that there are currently 265 schools in need of improvement.

An "Early Warning" list of elementary schools will be released once all NJASK4 data are finalized. Due to coding problems on the part of the vendor, ETS, the data are not yet finalized. Both ETS and the DOE remain committed to finalizing the data as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Criteria for "Early Warning" and "Needs Improvement"

Schools are judged each year by 40 indicators. Should a school miss the mark in one content area for two consecutive years, it would be deemed "in need of improvement." The 40 indicators are as follows: 95 percent participation rate in language arts literacy and math tests, as well as meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark target in the same subject areas. Data are then examined by looking at 10 subgroups.

The 10 subgroups are: total school population, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency (LEP) students, white, African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Native American, Hispanic, other, and economically disadvantaged.

Attached is the list of "Early Warning" GEPA schools, as well as the number of indicators they made out of 40. Also attached is the list of nine (9) schools identified as in "Need of Improvement," based on 2003 NJASK4 data.

More information about the DOE's reporting of AYP can be found online at the Department of Education's Web site: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/>. Please note that all data are preliminary and subject to change as the verification process continues.

For additional questions, please call the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.