



**Pacific Research Institute Study Asks:  
Are New Jersey Middle-Class Public Schools Performing Well?**

***Many may not be as good as parents think.***

February 1, 2016 -- The Pacific Research Institute (PRI), a non-partisan, think tank, announced the release of a ground-breaking study on the performance of students in predominantly middle-class/non-low-income public schools in New Jersey. “Not as Good as You Think: Why New Jersey Parents Should Be Concerned about Their Local Public Schools,” found that of the 114 predominantly non-low-income high schools in New Jersey, which met the state target of 80 percent or more of the seniors taking the SAT, 28 percent, or nearly 3 in 10, had half or more of their SAT-takers fail to score at or above the college readiness benchmark score of 1550. The study, which used 2014 SAT testing data, was authored by Lance T. Izumi, Koret Senior Fellow and Senior Director of Education Studies at PRI, with Alicia Chang.

At the lower grade levels, many students also failed to perform at the target proficient level. Based on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), often referred to as the nation’s report card, the study reveals the following:

- On the 2015 NAEP fourth-grade reading test, 43 percent of non-low income New Jersey test takers failed to score at proficient level.
- On the NAEP fourth-grade math test, 38 percent of non-low income New Jersey students failed to score at the proficient level.
- On the 2015 NAEP eighth-grade reading exam, 49 percent of non-low income New Jersey test takers failed to score at the proficiency level.
- On the NAEP eighth-grade math exam, 42 percent of non-low income New Jersey test-takers failed to score at the proficient level.

The study evaluates regular public schools where one-third or fewer of the students are classified as low income.

“The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that parents in poor, urban neighborhoods aren’t the only ones who should be concerned about their children’s schools,” said Mr. Izumi. “The results should cause middle-class parents to rethink their views on the quality of their neighborhood public school, and consequently, to open their minds to other education options, choices, and policy changes that would allow their children to escape

underperforming schools and attend better-performing alternatives,” he added. The study recommends that New Jersey lawmakers consider school-choice options such as education savings accounts and tax-credit programs, which have been enacted in other states.

“Increased choice for parents of all income levels, therefore, should be the guiding principle for New Jersey policymakers. Too many children in New Jersey, including from many middle-class families, are going to underperforming schools. They have an inherent right to be able to attend a better school, whether public or private,” Mr. Izumi said.

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“Not as Good as You Think: Why New Jersey Parents Should Be Concerned about Their Local Public Schools” by Lance Izumi with Alicia Chang is available at [www.pacificresearch.org](http://www.pacificresearch.org). An interactive page allows visitors to view the results for a particular school. To arrange an interview with Lance Izumi, contact PRI’s press office at 415-955-6110 or email Laura Dannerbeck at [ldannerbeck@pacificresearch.org](mailto:ldannerbeck@pacificresearch.org) or Rowena Itchon at [ritchon@pacificresearch.org](mailto:ritchon@pacificresearch.org).