



## School System

Taken from the New Jersey Department of Education, the following best describes what the educational system for public and private sectors provides to its students and parents. Education in other states in the country will be very similar.

“At the threshold to the twenty-first century, New Jersey finds itself struggling along with the rest of the nation to educate citizens who will be competitive in the international marketplace of the future. New Jersey also faces a particular constitutional challenge of implementing a state system of "Thorough and Efficient" public schools.

New Jersey wrestles with a paradox regarding the governance of public education. Ours is a state with a 120-year-old constitutional guarantee that regardless of residency, its children will receive a "Thorough and Efficient" education. Throughout this same time period, the State has evolved into approximately 600 independent school districts that exercise considerable "local control." Confronting the State, therefore, is the issue of how to ensure that all children receive a "T&E" education. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that each district determines its own curriculum. Core curriculum content standards are an attempt to define the meaning of "Thorough" in the context of the 1875 State constitutional guarantee that students would be educated within a Thorough and Efficient system of free public schools. They describe what all students should know and be able to do upon completion of a thirteen-year public education.”

It is important to investigate a town’s “school report card” and rating prior to deciding to purchase a home or lease an apartment in the town. School standards and curriculums vary from district to district.

To search online for the report on any New Jersey school system, please go to: <http://nj.evalsoft.com/>  
Or you may contact the town’s board of education for more information.

To search online for the report on any other states school system, please go to <http://nces.ed.gov/ccdweb/school/index.asp>  
Or you may contact the town’s board of education for more information.

### **School Term and Grades**

The school term in most districts and States begins in late August/early September and ends in late May/mid June. In recent years, some districts and States have classes year round with short recesses during the year.

School terms are broken down into different grade levels within the public educational system.

Elementary School - Kindergarten through Grade 4 (ages 5 –9)

Middle School - Grade 5 through Grade 8 (ages 10 – 13)

High School - Grade 9 through Grade 12 (ages 14 – 17)



In high school, grades also have names:

Freshman      Grade 9

Sophomore    Grade 10

Junior          Grade 11

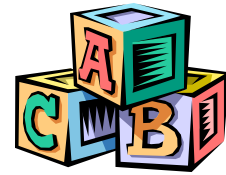
Senior          Grade 12

Each school grade/year maintains a standard curriculum as determined by a State's Department of Education.

### Kindergarten



This year begins a child's first year of education in the school system. Children need to be at least 5 years old in order to begin school. During this year, the child will usually learn the ABC's, reading, math and writing readiness skills, basic arithmetic, physical education, art activities, sing songs, plus classroom discipline, and nutrition.



In general, Kindergarten is a half-day schedule with some children attending in the AM session and some attending in the PM session. However, many districts are beginning to implement a full day schedule for all Kindergarten students.

Also, it is important to note that many school districts offer "Pre-School" for children aged 3 or 4. This is a program that you would pay for and it prepares the child for their upcoming school life.

### Elementary Classes

In most school districts throughout the United States, elementary classes are from first grade to fourth grade. During these formative years, students continue their basic math and reading skills, but are also introduced to history, science, and health; also computers are introduced into the curriculum.



### Middle School

Grades 5 and 6 continue on the basic classes of math, reading, English language structure, history, science, social studies, and computer studies. In grade 7 and 8, the students begin preparation for their high school years.

## **High School**

Grades 9 through 12 are the years in which children start to grow into young adults. In addition to the “required” classes that are needed for a High School diploma, students are also free to take special interest classes. Especially in grade 11 and 12, emphasis is placed on academic preparedness for college.

## **Vocational Schools and Training**

For some students, typical high school academics and college is not what they may want to do after graduation. Although they must continue to take basic academic classes, they can go into a “vocational” program. In that program they spend part of their day learning a particular trade, which will help them in their future employment.



## **Right to an Education**



The United States preserves the right for every child and adult to an education in a public or private institution, vocational school/training, including early childhood educational programs. States also provide special educational classes and programs for mentally and physically challenged students.



## **Private vs. Public Education**

Public education in the United States is free from Kindergarten to the Grade 12. But in America, every person has the freedom to receive an education in a private or academy educational institution. Private institutions are tuition paid. Most private institutions have religious roots, although some are for specialized academics. These private institutions must also follow the State’s standard curriculum, but at the same time provide a more religious atmosphere to its students. Unlike public schools, most private schools do not have a Middle school. They have an Elementary school (Grade 1 to 8) and a high school (Grade 9 to 12).



For more information on private schooling, please refer to:  
<http://www.privateschool.about.com/cs/choosingaschool/>

## **Continuing Education**

Having a degree or a career path does not mean that the learning process stops. Most counties have community colleges that offer both credited and non-credited courses to advance your education. Courses range from Astronomy 101 to Cooking with Capers. Also, your local school district might offer adult education programs during the evening. These programs can range from the academic (Java Programming or Creative Writing) to the fun (Square Dancing to Volleyball).

## **Immigrant Education Issues**

One thing most immigrants coming to the United States will try to preserve is their culture and how to maintain it while still being part of a host country. It is understood that immigrating to the United States, or any new country, can be a very scary and intimidating experience for anyone, especially children. Your local school district will try to assist in acclimating your family to the area and the school routine.

You may want to be prepared to make these transitions and decisions in an educated fashion. There are a number of excellent articles and websites that offer guidance to make the transition into American culture easy for you and your child.



One helpful web site is:

[http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/pathways/immigrant\\_issues/imcult.html](http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/pathways/immigrant_issues/imcult.html)

For more detailed information on the United States educational system, the following are suggested web sites:

<http://www.ed.gov/>

<http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/>

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>

<http://npin.org/> (National Parent Information Network)

For the immediate metropolitan area:

New Jersey <http://www.nj.gov/njpeople/schools.html>

New York <http://a.www.state.ny.us/>

<http://www.nysegov.com/citguide.cfm>

Pennsylvania <http://www.pde.psu.edu/>

Connecticut <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/>