

AVON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lincoln and Fifth Avenues
Avon-By-The-Sea, New Jersey 07717

avonschool.com

Christopher Albrizio
calbrizio@avonschool.com

Superintendent/Principal
732.775.4328

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Dear Community of Avon-by-the-Sea,

During the Superintendent's update at last night's Board of Education Meeting, I shared my reflections about Avon School's recent distinction as a **Reward School** by the New Jersey Department of Education. I feel it is important to not only reiterate last night's message to our learning community who was not in attendance, but also to the entire community of Avon-by-the-Sea:

I happened to do an Internet search yesterday for 'New Jersey Reward Schools' and stumbled upon a story in The Caldwell Patch online news publication. The article identified a school in that district as being on the "reward list" as revealed by the recent release of NJDOE School Performance Report. If you are not aware already, Avon School has also been named as one of the State's Reward Schools which was the basis for my investigation.

However, after some research I was not able to identify many other schools. In New Jersey we have about 600 school districts representing approximately 2,500 schools – Monmouth County represents about 185 of those schools. Out of all the Monmouth County schools, only six schools were identified as a Reward School – five of those six are the magnet Vocational High Schools. Yes, Avon School is the only other school identified in Monmouth County.

As part of New Jersey's new accountability system, schools considered to be "high performing," must achieve proficiency levels in the top 10 percent of the state for every category of students, as well as achieve an overall proficiency rate greater than 90 percent. It actually is a bit more complex than that, but we will share our school data and several supporting information resources on our school website to help you better understand and navigate through the data if you are interested in investing the time to learn more.

I will caution the audience here tonight and our community, although the distinction is very prestigious, it is not about a one-time achievement rating. Understanding statistics and small population size, variations of percentages or percentiles can be more fluid than in a larger sample size.

Furthermore – and I will borrow some important language from NJDOE:

Some viewers of the School Performance Reports may try to utilize them to create a summative ranking of schools, akin to a "Best New Jersey Schools!" list; NJDOE is not encouraging their use in that fashion. As educators know well, measuring school performance is both an art and a science.

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- *While the School Performance Report brings attention to important student outcomes, it does not present data about other essential elements of a school, such as: the provision of opportunities to participate and excel in extracurricular activities;*
- *the development of non-cognitive skills like time management and perseverance;*
- *the pervasiveness of a positive school culture or climate;*
- *or the attainment of other employability and technical skills*

--NJ DOE School Performance Interpretive Guide, March 2013

If you investigate Avon School performance data, you will be able to see our journey to this pattern of high level academic achievement. Our journey to this point started several years back, always routed in our mission statement, and now consistent in our outcomes. Avon School will always be about creating the conditions that produce high levels of growth, achievement, and success for all students.

*As much as the Reward School identification is about data, it is also about **people**. Here at Avon School, every teacher, every staff member, every person who volunteers here, offers feedback, and supports our program in any way has added to and improved our conditions for learning.*

Most notably is our teaching staff. Our team is comprised of amazing, texture rich, and passionate people – people who tirelessly work to engage learners, spark imagination, try new things, and celebrate learning. They show up here day after day ready and charged to continue to help students make progress that will better prepare them for the next stage of their lives and eventually, high level contributing members of our community, our state, and our country. The excitement for learning each day in this building is unmatched. We continue to set our goals very high, ever interested in expanding our commitment to continuous improvement.

I began this report by mentioning another school not to share in the spotlight, but to relate to the celebration depicted in the story's hyperlinked video.

Tonight, Avon-by-the-Sea may begin its celebration – I can speak on behalf of our entire organization that it is an amazing feeling to be recognized as a New Jersey Reward School, we are celebrating the culture for learning we have worked so hard to create and sustain – we should be very proud of our accomplishment.

*To our Board of Education, our staff, students, and the entire community of Avon-by-the-Sea – Congratulations and **Job Well Done!***

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Earning this level of distinction could not be accomplished by any school alone. In fact, I believe we can relate our success to an old proverb that says: *“It takes a village to raise a child.”* Avon School draws its strength from the support we receive from OUR village. On behalf of the Avon School families and staff, we say **Thank You** to our Avon-by-the-Sea village. Your support, encouragement, and energy are the foundation for our continued growth and success.

Please consider sharing our exciting achievement with the community as you have the opportunity. Have a wonderful Spring Recess.

Yours Educationally,
Christopher Albrizio

