



# SCAVENGER HUNT

## Does Your State's Report Card Answer Your Questions?



Everyone, from families to community members to state policymakers, deserves information about the quality of their state's public schools. Unfortunately, that information is often difficult to find and understand. This activity will take you on a tour of your state's report card through the eyes of a parent. The search terms and questions here are based on the items that the Data Quality Campaign searches for when we review states' annual school report cards. This tool will help you go deeper—looking at school and district performance and starting a conversation about whether the information your state provides about district and school performance meets the needs of people in your community.

**Who do you think uses and most needs your state's report cards?** Many stakeholders need information about districts and schools in your state. Community partners (like Boys and Girls Clubs), school principals, mayors, realtors, and small business owners all seek out information about how students and schools are performing. For the purposes of this activity you will wear the hat of a parent, but keep in mind the multiple actors who want and need information found on your state's report card.

### Your Role

During this exercise, imagine that:

- You are a parent or guardian who has only a few minutes to learn about the schools in your community. You may be a parent who has the opportunity to choose a school for your child or a parent who just wants more information about whether the district or school has what is best for your child.
- You must use a computer at work or in a public library to have access to the Internet.
- You may choose to “wear the hat” of another parent as you explore demographic information (e.g., a minority, someone who speaks English as a second language, a military family).

### Find It

1. Use your favorite search engine to search for “(State name) school report card.”
2. Look for your state's report card among the results. Click on the result. What comes up when you click on that link?
3. If your state's report card was not the first link, where in the search results did it show up (e.g., third from the top)?
4. Once you have landed on your state's report card, locate the information about your local school district.
5. Next, search for your local district directly. Type “(District name) report card” in a new tab (e.g., Hamilton County Schools report card).

#### TIP

If you were from Tennessee, you would search for “Tennessee school report card.”

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU SEARCH

- Was it clear which search entry you should select to get information about schools and districts in your state?
- How many clicks did it take you to get to information about your local district? \_\_\_\_ clicks
- Could you easily tell which information came from the state and what may be from a third party or the district itself?
- When you searched for information about your district directly, were you easily able to find information about your district provided on the state report card among the search results?

## Use It

Use the available information about your district or school to answer the following questions. You may need to look at an elementary, a middle, and a high school to find answers.

### Language and Terms

- Is this report card in language that is easy for me to read and understand?
- English is not my first language—how will I understand the report card?
- How does the state measure academic performance and other indicators of student performance?
- Is there an explanation that I can easily understand?

#### TIP

Look for Spanish, but also languages like Chinese, Arabic, and more.

#### TIP

Look for acronyms, particularly those that are undefined, and terms like “value-add” that may not be easy for parents to understand.

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### Student Performance

- How are students like mine doing in:
  - Reading
  - Math
  - Science
  - History
- I want to know more than math and reading performance. Are there other measures that show me how students perform?  Yes  No  
  
If so, what are they?

#### TIP

For “students like mine” look for easy comparisons to all students and subgroups—e.g., English language learners or students with disabilities.

- How much are students learning during a school year? Are students progressing and growing?
- How do I know students were prepared for kindergarten before they started?

#### TIP

Keep an eye out for how student growth is explained.

- How many students graduate from high school each year? \_\_\_\_\_ students
  - Do students go on to college (two year or four year) after they graduate?
  
  - How do I know students are ready for college?
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## School Factors

- Are students like mine safe in this school?  Yes  No
  
  - Are there a lot of instances of suspensions? Bullying?  Yes  No
  
  - Are there afterschool or summertime opportunities for students?  Yes  No
  
  - What other opportunities are available at this school?
  
  - How do I know the teachers are of high quality? What about the school leader?
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## Comparability

- How does my district compare to other districts?
  
  - How do the schools within my district compare to one another?
  
  - How did students in this district or school perform last year or even the year before? Has the school gotten better—or worse—over time?
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## Reflect on It

Now that you have spent some time digging into the information your state provides, reflect on what you liked and what you did not like. Consider whether this report card would have worked for you as a parent short on time.

- What was great about the report card?
- What was the worst thing?
- What stood out most on your school's report card?
- Try finding the same information on another state's report card. How did your state's information compare?
- How long did it take you to find the information needed to answer the questions?
- Is there anything missing that you think would be helpful to parents, advocates, or policymakers like you?

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## Act on It

- Now that you have seen your state's report card through the eyes of a parent, what will you do next?

- Which additional stakeholders do you need to engage to improve your state's report card?

- Parents       Teachers       Business owners       Others:  
 Principals       Community leaders       Mayors

- What remaining questions do you have?

### TIP

List other people you might need to talk to or other people who need to see these results.

For more on what information all 50 states and the District of Columbia report, how they display it, and whether they make it accessible and understandable to a broad public audience, visit [www.dataqualitycampaign.org/showmethedata](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/showmethedata).