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A 'wretched' response

New Jersey has scored at or near the top in the latest round of national testing for reading and math proficiency at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. Rather than applaud this little bit of good news, the State Department of Education seems more interested in denying its relevance.

Department of Education spokesman Alan Guenther's comments to Star-Ledger columnist Bob Braun ("Jersey students tops in test scores, but that's irrelevant to Schundler," May 10) dismissing the test results as "irrelevant" and calling teachers, students and schools in New Jersey part of a "wretched system" should have put him in line for detention.

In denying that New Jersey's school funding formula has helped to create one of the best educational systems in the nation, Guenther and the department he represents seem to be more interested in dismantling a system that works and demeaning those who are a part of it, rather than praising its successes and working with those involved in educating our children.

No education system is flawless, and the governor and the Legislature should work together to improve it. We need to do a better job reaching kids who have fallen through the cracks, despite the high-quality education made available to them.

But the latest results from the National Assessment of Educational Proficiency testing program clearly show that New Jersey is heading in the right direction when it comes to educating our students. These results are hardly "irrelevant" or the product of a "wretched system," as Guenther would like you to believe.

State Sen. Richard J. Codey (D-Essex)