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## Rental assistance recipients in Bergen and Passaic counties live near worst schools, report finds



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on January 02, 2013 at 11:15 AM, updated January 02, 2013 at 11:24 AM

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"Linking housing funding with failing schools is the norm rather than the exception."



Schools in Bergen and Passaic counties that were located near project-based Section 8 rental assistance recipients ranked last out of 100 metropolitan areas.

File photo

[BERGEN COUNTY](#) — Recipients of Section 8 rental assistance in Bergen and Passaic counties live near some of the worst-performing public schools, according to a recent report.

The report, prepared for the [Poverty Race and Research Action Council](#) by researchers from the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University, looked at the elementary schools located nearest to households receiving housing assistance in areas across the country.

The authors of the study created a measure of school proficiency based on test scores.

Based on that measure, schools in Bergen and Passaic counties that were located near project-based Section 8 rental assistance recipients ranked last out of 100 metropolitan areas.

In project-based voucher programs, public housing agencies contract with landlords to make units available to low-income families. The family pays 30 percent of its income toward rent, and the agency pays the landlord whatever the family doesn't cover.

"When we have any form of subsidy for housing, we need to do a better job of making sure that it links families with good schools," Kevin Walsh,

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associate director of the Fair Share Housing Center, which was not involved in creating the report, told NJ.com.

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Representatives from the Housing Authority of Bergen County and Passaic County Public Housing Agency did not return calls seeking comment.

Low-income families often don't have the opportunity to rent housing in more affluent communities with better schools, Walsh said. The zoning in these communities typically restricts rental housing.

Because of that, low-income housing typically ends up in impoverished urban areas with the worst schools. Government policy has to change to incentivize towns with good schools to allow more low-income housing, Walsh said.

"If a community has failing schools, it should be harder for that community to get the housing funding," he said. "Linking housing funding with failing schools is the norm rather than the exception."

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