

Back to class: Mesa's top-rated and most-improved public middle schools



Hoodline • August 27, 2019



How strong are the public middle schools in Mesa?

With a fresh school year kicking off, we analyzed newly released data from [Niche.com](#) — which include comprehensive report cards, rankings and reviews — to identify those schools that made the biggest strides last year and those that lead their peers.

Taylor Junior High School's overall rating improved the most among similar schools in Mesa, rising from a C+ to a B, according to data from Niche.

For the 2019-2020 school year, the school, located at 705 S. 32nd St., enrolls 1,110 students. Taylor Junior High School serves a diverse population: 52% of students identify as Hispanic and 37% identify as white. Niche graded the school a B- for academics (on an A-D scale).

The overall ranking comes from Niche's proprietary algorithms. A

school's ranking might change due to many factors, including the relative rankings of similar schools and whether a school gained or lost peers due to openings or closings. Other numbers come from current public data from the U.S. government.

Academically, 33% of Taylor Junior High School's students scored as proficient or above in math, and 31% did so in reading. That's compared to city averages of 46% in math and 45% in reading. The school's improved overall rating is notable in that it serves a less-affluent population, with 70% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, 19% more than the city average.

It's not the only school that's climbed Niche's rankings this year.

Stapley Junior High School saw its overall rating increase from a B to an A-. The school is located at 3250 E. Hermosa Vista Drive and is a bit smaller, currently serving 983 students, of whom 72% identify as white and 16% identify as Hispanic.

Niche graded Stapley Junior High School an A- for academics on an A-D scale. The school's latest math proficiency was at 61%, and reading proficiency was 54%.

Highland Junior High School also saw improvement in its overall rating, from B+ to A-. The school is located at 6915 E. Guadalupe Road and has 1,200 students currently enrolled, of whom 74% identify as white and 17% identify as Hispanic.

Niche graded Highland Junior High School an A- for academics on an A-D scale. Its latest math proficiency was at 56%, and reading proficiency was 52%.