



PAYMON ROUHANIFARD
SUPERINTENDENT

CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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PRESS RELEASE

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Camden Schools Announce Gifted and Talented Program to Raise Student Achievement

Years after a program for academically gifted students fell to the wayside, Camden schools announce new pilot program to challenge, excite, and inspire District's brightest and most talented students

May 22 2018 – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard and Deputy Superintendent Katrina McCombs today announced a pilot program for gifted and talented students in the City's two largest elementary schools. Joined by Camden Mayor Frank Moran, District alumni, City Councilmembers, and students at Octavius V. Catto Family School, the Deputy Superintendent announced the pilot will serve 130 third through fifth grader students this fall, and be open to both English Language learners and students who receive special education services.

The District is creating new teaching positions for gifted and talented educators, and will expand the program by one grade each year as the first cohort of students grow. If successful, the program will be offered to all grade levels in two school sites, with the possibility of expanding to other schools in the District. HB Wilson and Catto Family Schools were chosen for their popularity and geographic spread, to make the program as accessible as possible to the largest number of families.

Packed with diverse reading and creative writing activities; opportunities to research and explore a variety of scientific and cultural topics; and advanced problem solving activities, the Gifted and Talented Program seeks to encourage students to make the most of their gifts and engage them to strive towards academic excellence. Guest speakers, field trips, and challenging project-based learning will allow students to think creatively and push themselves further academically and socially.

Students are being selected for the pilot program based on an assessment taken this Spring and will be notified with an invitation to take part over the summer. Students new to Catto or HB Wilson this fall will have a second opportunity to be tested for the program, and all accepted students will begin the program in September.

"Our students are some of the brightest, most inquisitive, and thoughtful young people in the world," said Deputy Superintendent Katrina McCombs. "The Gifted and Talented Program is going to change the lives of some of our brightest students, who may have turned off in class due to boredom or the feeling that they

were isolated from their classmates. After years of thoughtful planning from community members, educators, and families, I am proud and excited to introduce this new opportunity to raise student achievement in our schools.”

Camden Mayor Frank Moran said, “The quality of our schools is growing so quickly, thanks to our dedicated parents, educators, and Superintendent. I see all the new job opportunities coming to our City, and have confidence that our schools are preparing our young people to take advantage of the new industry coming to Camden. I applaud Mrs. McCombs, Catto School, and the Board of Education for bringing the Gifted and Talented Program back to Camden schools.”

Cindi Martinez, a long serving special education teacher and former CHIPS gifted and talented student, spoke at the press conference in Spanish about how the new program will positively impact a diverse group of students. “Our students have so many talents and passions, especially those students with IEPs who receive special services. The District is doing the right thing by our kids to opening this program to English Language Learners and special ed students. I was one of those students, when my mom came to Camden from Nicaragua all those years ago, and I am evidence that these programs change lives.”

“One of the first times I attended a school board meeting in 2007, I remember asking what happened to the District’s old Gifted program, called CHIPS. Now, 11 years later, I am proud and grateful to see what can be accomplished by the District when leaders, community members, and educators put our children first,” said Sean Brown, former Board Member and community leader.

Interested families should contact Christie Whitzell in the Division of School Support at cwhitzell@camden.k12.nj.us for details on how their child can be considered for the Gifted and Talented Program.

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