



PAYMON ROUHANIFARD
SUPERINTENDENT

CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

201 N. FRONT ST, CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY 08102
856-966-2000 • www.camden.k12.nj.us

PRESS RELEASE

Media contact:

Maita Soukup
Division of Communications
msoukup@camden.k12.nj.us
c: 856-375-4737

Camden Schools Show Improvement

District elementary and middle schools continue to make steady progress while transformed schools run by renaissance school partners see rapid gains

Tuesday, September 26, 2017 – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – For the second year in a row, the majority of Camden City School District elementary and middle schools improved their results on the New Jersey state test last year, and the District’s renaissance school partners made significant gains, Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard announced today. While progress occurred across the majority of the City, academic results were especially strong in former District schools that were revitalized through new renaissance partnerships in 2015.

Taken together, District and renaissance school students improved from 4.3 percent to 11.4 percent proficient in math since 2014/15, and 6.5 to 15.7 percent proficient in English language arts in the same time. These schools collectively served approximately 10,000 Camden students last year.

The District continued to make steady improvement in the majority of schools:

- Progress—Compared to 2015/16 results, 12 of the 16 District elementary/middle schools made progress in English language arts, and 9 of 16 made progress in math. High school scores fell slightly, except in Camden High School, where student proficiency rose in English language arts, geometry, and Algebra I and II.
- Schools like Forest Hill and Cramer Elementary more than doubled their proficiency in math and made major gains in English language arts last year, thanks to strong leadership and additional District supports.

“Great schools are so much more than just test results, but being able to read and do math at grade level is critical to giving our students the skills to compete with their peers across the state and country, so we’re proud of the steady progress we’re seeing,” said Superintendent Rouhanifard. “Reading interventionists in elementary schools, one-on-one weekly coaching to help teachers improve classroom instruction, and a 53 percent drop in suspensions last year all contribute to the rise we see in students’ test scores. We’re pausing today to celebrate the progress our kids, our teachers, and our parents have made, but I recognize we still have a long way to go.”

The District's renaissance school partners—KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy, Mastery Schools of Camden, and Uncommon Schools Camden Prep—also shared their students' PARCC results.

Uncommon Schools Camden Prep, which started this school year in its brand new Whitman Park school building, served K-5 graders last year. English language arts proficiency at Uncommon rose from 20.5 percent in 2015/16 to 34.9 percent in 2016/17. Math proficiency rose from 28.4 percent to 48.6 percent over the same period.

At KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy, which serves students in grades K-8 and opened a middle school in the newly renovated Whittier school building this fall, English language arts proficiency rose from 28.1 percent in 2015/16 to 29.2 percent in 2016/17. Math proficiency at the school rose from 10 percent to 18.8 percent over the same period.

The impact renaissance schools are having on individual students is best seen on a student-by-student basis, comparing the results of students who attended a District school in 2015-16 and a renaissance school in 2016-17.

- Uncommon Schools Camden Prep— while none of the handful of students had been proficient in English language arts or math when they attended a District school in 2016, 37.5 percent *of those same students* gained proficiency after one year at Camden Prep.
- KIPP—while only 6.6 percent of the students had been proficient in English language arts when they attended a District school in 2016, 23.5 percent *of these same students* were proficient when they attended KIPP in 2016. In math, the percentage rose from 5.5 to 12.7.

“We are very proud of the progress that Camden Prep students have made,” said Michael Ambriz, Chief Operating Officer of Camden Prep, part of Uncommon Schools. “These promising results demonstrate that our students', families' and teachers' hard work is paying off. We also know that we have a lot of work ahead of us to raise achievement for even more Camden students.”

“This improvement is a clear sign of student learning and a strong reminder that the instructional standards we've implemented, along with the support of their teachers and families, are crucial to our students' future success. We are not pausing too long to celebrate, however, because we know there is work to be done, and we will intensify our efforts to help all of our students achieve college and career readiness,” said Drew Martin, Executive Director, KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy.

For Mastery, which opened a brand new school in Cramer Hill last month after taking over operation of three low-performing District schools in 2015, progress is steady.

- Mastery's elementary and middle school students made progress last year. In English language arts Mastery schools' 3rd through 8th grade proficiency rose from 12.6 in 2015/16 to 17.7 in 2016/17. Math proficiency at the schools rose from 6.7 percent to 10.8 percent over the same period.

“Mastery Schools of Camden work hard to give every student a college-ready education, and since partnered with the Camden community to transform three schools in 2015, we are confident in the early signs of progress we are seeing in students' reading and math proficiency,” said Joe Ferguson, Chief Operating Officer for Mastery Schools of Camden. “However, we recognize that our schools have a long way to go, and our

teachers and principals must work tirelessly to give every student attending a Mastery renaissance school in Camden the support they need to be successful in achieving their full potential.”

The progress Camden students made in reading and math last year is in line with other signs of improvement in the City’s public schools. Last year the graduation rate rose to 70 percent, while drop outs fell to 12 percent in the District. Following intensive staff training, school suspensions fell by 53 per cent last year, resulting in an additional 6,642 instructional days compared to previous school years. Finally, this year Mastery and Uncommon opened brand new school buildings in the Cramer Hill and Whitman Park neighborhoods, and KIPP re-opened the doors of the J.G. Whittier School in Lanning Square, following a \$25 million investment to modernize the historical building.

“Camden students can achieve great things, and for too long our schools were not meeting the high expectations we hold for our children,” said City Council President Frank Moran. “Building a world class public education system is critical to our progress as a City, and I applaud the Superintendent, our partners, and our teachers and families for their incredible commitment to putting kids first and improving our schools.”

“This progress is hard-earned, and I salute our school communities on achieving these results,” said Martha F. Wilson, president of the Board of Education. “We must continue to support our students and engage our families so we can improve on these results.”

“Across the City, our schools are improving. Today we are celebrating the progress of District and renaissance schools specifically, but we know that many charter schools are also experiencing an uptick in student proficiency. The future is looking bright for Camden’s young people thanks to the hard work and commitment of countless educators, community leaders, and families,” Superintendent Rouhanifard concluded.

Renaissance schools commit to serve all students in their neighborhood, and serve about the same percentage of special education students and English language learners as the District.

Participation in the 2016/17 PARCC exams remained steady, with 90 percent of District students completing the ELA exam and 88 per cent completing the math exam.

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Contact Maita Soukup from the Camden City School District Division of Communications at msoukup@camden.k12.nj.us or 856-375-4737.

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