



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:**

Brendan Lowe  
Division of Communications  
[blowe@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:blowe@camden.k12.nj.us)  
c: 856-904-1693

**New School Quality Ratings Prompt District to Kick Off Parent Listening Tour**

*Camden Superintendent to meet with more than a half-dozen community groups about state of the schools*

**Tuesday, November 8, 2016** – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard announced today a State of the Schools Listening Tour, a series of at least eight community meetings to hear from students, families, staff, and community members, and to share perspectives on which City schools are making progress and which are most in need of improvement. The impetus for the community kick-off is today’s release of the [2015 School Information Cards](#), a resource the District launched in 2014 to give families parent-friendly information to compare Camden’s District, charter, and renaissance schools. These results are based on qualitative and quantitative data from the 2014-15 school year.

With these results and information on building conditions and enrollment, Superintendent Rouhanifard will join the following community groups to foster a frank and constructive conversation about the state of Camden’s public schools:

<b>Organizer</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Meeting Time and Location</b>
Parents for Great Camden Schools	Wednesday, November 9	6:00 p.m., 419 State Street
Power and Praise	Wednesday, November 16	10:00 a.m., Odessa Paulk-Jones Community Center; 801 Ferry Avenue
DCCB	Wednesday, November 16	4:00 p.m., Cooper’s Poynt Family School, 201 State Street
Camden Community Organizations	Saturday, November 19	10:00 a.m., 1812 Federal Street
The Village	Monday, November 21	7:00 p.m., 324 Market Street
Parent Roundtable	Thursday, December 1	6:00 p.m., Bonsall Elementary School, 1575 Mt. Ephraim Avenue
City Council President Frank Moran	Monday, December 5	6:30 p.m., Baldwin’s Run Community Center, 404 N. Dudley Street
Parkside Business & Community in Partnership	Tuesday, December 13	6:00 p.m., Early Childhood Development Center, 1602 Pine Street

“Overall, our schools are making progress, but we have a long way still to go before every child in Camden is attending a high-quality school,” said Superintendent Rouhanifard. “Before I give my next progress report in mid-December, I want to make sure my perspective reflects the everyday experiences our students, families, staff, and community members have with our schools. I’m looking forward to sitting down with a variety of community groups, listening to their members’ experiences, and learning from these important conversations.”

The results from the 2015 School Information Cards are available now due to reporting timelines from the first year of PARCC administration. They show gains in public schools—District, charter, and renaissance—across the City. For example, on the 2014 School Information Cards, only three of 24 elementary/middle schools were rated On Track or Making Progress. On the 2015 School Information Cards, eight elementary/middle schools reached these top scores.

Camden School Information Cards give four possible overall School Quality Ratings: On Track, Making Progress, Needs Improvement, and Under Performing. These scores are determined by students’ academic performance—largely based on students’ progress on PARCC, the state test—and a school visit whereby a group of school leaders visit the school for in-person observation.

The latest School Information Card results saw 23 schools improve their school visit score, which involves school leaders from a mix of District, charter, and renaissance schools visiting the school to evaluate its environment and culture. Just two schools received a lower score on their school visit in 2015 than the year before.

Ten Camden schools earned high ratings for academic performance, including two District schools—Dr. Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School and Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy (9-12). The academic rating was based on students’ PARCC scores from spring 2014, when the test was administered for the first time.

The District is working toward a five-year target of 85 percent of students attending a school that is either On Track or Making Progress. In order to continue making progress toward this goal, the District will work with its families, educators, and school partners to drive improvements that will lead to more students being able to attend high-quality schools.

Now that PARCC scores are being processed more quickly, future rounds of school information cards are expected to be released much closer to the relevant school year. The 2016 SICs, for example, are expected to be released this winter.

The State of the Schools Listening Tour will inform Superintendent Rouhanifard’s State of the Schools address in December, which will be presented as part of the regular progress reports on the District’s strategic plan, [Phase Two of the Camden Commitment](#). Since being appointed Superintendent in August 2013, Rouhanifard has held 70 community meetings.

“Meeting directly with parents is the best way to hear what is happening in our schools,” said City Council President Frank Moran, who is partnering with the District and Board member Taisha Minier to host a community meeting in his ward. “Our schools have made real progress, but this is not the time to rest on our

laurels. We must keep pushing until all of our public schools are providing our students with an excellent education.”

Community groups interested in hosting an additional parent meeting as part of the State of the Schools Listening Tour should contact Brendan Lowe at [blowe@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:blowe@camden.k12.nj.us). All meeting dates will be listed on the District website, [www.camden.k12.nj.us](http://www.camden.k12.nj.us).

After receiving feedback during his 100-day listening tour in fall 2013, Rouhanifard promised to create a family-friendly resource that provided parents and residents with relevant and comparable information about District, charter, and renaissance schools in Camden. The School Information Cards were designed based on input collected during the Let’s Talk About Great Schools engagement in July 2014, when hundreds of Camden students, educators, parents, and community members shared their views on what’s important to them in their child’s school. This input informed an initial draft, which Rouhanifard shared during a second round of community engagement in November 2014. During this round, parents gave feedback on the design, clarity, and usefulness of the cards. Overall, more than 500 students, parents, staff members, and community leaders informed both the content and design of the cards.

All District and renaissance schools were required to fully share information for the School Information Cards. Some renaissance schools have a “Rating is not available this year” for Academic Performance since they did not serve grades 3-11, which take PARCC. As they are also public schools, all charter schools in Camden were invited to participate in School Information Cards. All but two charter schools chose to fully participate and collaborated on school visits.

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*Contact Brendan Lowe from the Camden City School District Division of Communications at [blowe@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:blowe@camden.k12.nj.us) or 856-904-1693.*

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