



PAYMON ROUHANIFARD
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CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Grad Rate Up, Dropout Rate Down: State of the Schools Improving

After eight-stop listening tour, Superintendent Rouhanifard cites progress, persistent challenges

Monday, December 12, 2016 – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – Superintendent Rouhanifard cited an ever-increasing graduation rate and a falling dropout rate among many other points of progress this morning as he reported the State of the Schools. Before a crowd of students, parents, and community partners, Rouhanifard gave his annual progress report and noted continual gains, though there remains a very significant need for further improvement.

The graduation rate rose from 49 percent in the 2011-12 school year to 70 percent in the 2015-16 school year. During that time, the dropout rate fell from 21 percent to 12 percent.

Rouhanifard cited many other improvements, including students feeling safer, school staff feeling better supported, chronic absenteeism going down, home visits going up, and many more.

"Our students are making real gains, and I applaud them as well as their teachers and families for working hard and earning this progress," said Superintendent Rouhanifard, who noted the feedback he'd heard from more than 150 school community members during his eight-stop listening tour, which preceded today's event. "We have more to do for more of our students, especially the most vulnerable ones. By continuing to partner with our community and the Board, we can continue seeking the difficult but necessary improvements that have made this progress possible."

As one example of progress, in 2013, when the Superintendent was appointed, no school buildings were under new construction or being renovated. Today, more than \$313 million is being invested in over a half-dozen public school projects across the City.

"The state of our schools is strong, certainly stronger than it was four school years ago when Superintendent Rouhanifard started leading the District," said Mayor Redd. "With hard work by our students, staff, and families, Camden schools are consistently improving and are helping Camden rise. I'll continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Superintendent as we do everything we can to make sure that every Camden family can send their child to an excellent public school."

Other points of progress include:

- the tech team's response time to school's service request falling from 41 days on average in 2014 to seven days on average in 2016;
- truancy court referrals falling from 36 at this time in 2015 to 20 so far in 2016;

- more than 200 students who live between 2.00-2.49 miles from their high school now receiving bus access;
- more than 120 additional students gaining proficiency in math in 2015-16 than in 2014-15;
- more than 240 additional students gaining proficiency in English in 2015-16 than in 2014-15; and, among others,
- nearly 70 percent of net teachers feeling supported by the administration in 2016, compared to 28 percent in 2013.

“In ways big and small, the Superintendent and his team are listening to students, staff, families, and the community, and they’re acting on that feedback to significantly improve our schools,” said Board President Martha F. Wilson. “We can’t stop now—too much of our city’s future depends on the quality of education our students can access. The Board members and I will continue to push and support Superintendent Rouhanifard to build on this progress and help reach all of our students and families.”

Three of the District’s five high schools—Big Picture Learning Academy (92 percent), Brimm Medical Arts (100 percent), and Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy (95 percent)—have graduation rates above past State averages (90 percent in 2015; the 2016 State average has not yet been released). The District’s other two high schools have graduation rates up at least 19 points since 2012 (Camden High up 19, Woodrow Wilson up 22).

Also, students with IEPs continue to make gains with a graduation rate of 64 percent, up 26 points from 2012. Additionally, the dropout rate for English language learners is down a quarter since 2012, and the dropout rate for African-American students has been cut in half.

Information on graduation pathways—how high school students earned their diploma—is not yet available from the State. In past years, nearly half of Camden high school students have graduated through the State’s appeals process.

As Rouhanifard noted repeatedly, the District has much more work to do. Parents at the State of the Schools Listening Tour that Rouhanifard held around the City in advance of Monday’s event cited several areas they’d like to see additional focus in 2017, including special education and parent-teacher relationships. Student proficiency in reading and math, as determined by State tests, is still in the single-digit percentages.

The Superintendent has now held 77 public meetings in the nearly three and a half years he has been Superintendent.

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