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SUPERINTENDENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Enrollment Listening Tour Hears 100+ Parents Calling for Improvements

At six community meetings across the City, residents voice desire for simpler enrollment system that involves all public schools playing by the same rules

October 22, 2015 – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – Camden parents are eager to see improvements to the current enrollment process that they describe as cumbersome, confusing, and unfair, according to feedback collected during six community meetings held this summer and fall.

This was the clear message as Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard and his team fanned out across the City to listen and learn about students' and parents' perspectives. Students, parents, or educators shared an interest in having a simpler system that involved as few applications and deadlines as possible.

“Parents looking for the best school for their child have had to wrestle with 17 different applications and deadlines that span October-July, and that’s not right,” Rouhanifard said. “Parents want all schools to play by the same rules so they have a simple and fair way to enroll their child in school. They deserve better service, and we’re looking to make these improvements a reality for the 2016-17 school year.”

District schools, renaissance schools, and charter schools are all public schools, but they all use a different application process, and it is up to parents to navigate the complexities. In the past, not all charter schools have used the same application or had the same deadline, for instance. Transferring mid-year from one District school to another (known as a special transfer) can be just as challenging. For one parent who attended a community meeting, the special transfer process involved a half-dozen trips and an arbitrary decision-making process.

The enrollment listening tour attendees expressed a desire to maintain the right to attend neighborhood schools. There was also strong interest in one location, like a website, that informs all parents about all of the Camden public school options, which they could apply to with one application and submit by one deadline.

“For some schools, on the school website it gives you a mission statement and pretty pictures, but doesn’t tell you that those kids haven’t passed the state test in umpteen years,” said Linda White, a Camden parent.

“That’s what I want to know. It’s nice to see balloons, but I want to know if the children are passing the goals, so I can make the right decisions for my child.”

Some attendees pointed out that a simpler system that all public schools participated in could lead to more parents finding the right school for their children and more educators receiving information in advance about their incoming students, a benefit for everyone involved.

“Students need to have more exposure to high school options,” said David Ferber, a retired Camden City School District teacher who attended a neighborhood meeting. “The more students and families are exposed to their school options, the better prepared they are for high school and post-high school.”

For parents who were unable to attend the listening tour discussions, District schools will send home in the coming days a family-friendly summary that captures the main themes of the tour and what the District will do to address these questions and concerns.

Creating a new, family-friendly enrollment system that ensures all families have a fair way to access public schools is part of Promise 4 in [All Schools Rise: Phase Two of the Camden Commitment](#), which Rouhanifard released in September 2015. The updated school improvement plan is focused on the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.

For interviews, enrollment listening tour photos and quotes, or any other information, contact Brendan Lowe from the Camden City School District at blowe@camden.k12.nj.us or 856.904.1693.