



PAYMON ROUHANIFARD
SUPERINTENDENT

CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

201 N. FRONT ST, CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY 08102
856-966-2000 • 856-966-2138
www.camden.k12.nj.us

PRESS RELEASE

Media contact:

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

Superintendent Rouhanifard Launches Family-Friendly Resources for Parents to Learn About Public School Options

School Information Cards provide parents a single resource with all they want to know about Camden's public schools

April 23, 2015 – Camden, NJ – In an ongoing effort to provide families with clear and accessible information about the City's public schools, Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard today released School Information Cards for Camden's public schools. The cards are also being published in the Family School Guide and the High School Guide, which families can use to review comparable information across public schools. More than 500 students, parents, staff members, and community leaders informed both the content and design of the cards during two rounds of public feedback, starting last summer.

The new family-friendly resources are a critical element of Promise 4: Serving Parents in the [Camden Commitment](#), the District's strategic plan. After receiving feedback during his 100-day listening tour, Rouhanifard promised to create School Information Cards that provide parents and residents with relevant and comparable information about public, 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. During this round, parents gave feedback on the design, clarity, and usefulness of the cards.

Community feedback changed many features of the cards. For example, school uniform colors, Community School Coordinator names, teacher attendance rates, and special education programs and bilingual programs were all included directly because of requests from parents and community members. In addition, growth is weighted more heavily than proficiency in the academic performance rating due to feedback from the community during the development of the cards. Students, parents, staff, and community members wanted to see progress count more than performance.

The final version of the cards reflects what information the community values most in their schools: great teaching, academic rigor, and a strong foundation for success in career or college. Through school visit and School Community Survey results, the cards include up-to-date information on student achievement, school environment, and parent satisfaction. The cards also include demographic, enrollment, and contact information. Great schools are the result of many factors coming together—not one silver bullet—so the School Information Cards include a variety of figures about each school.

The cards are available in English and Spanish, and information from the cards is [featured in a brand-new online resource for parents](#). This new tool allows parents to look at aggregate data across the School District or select a particular public school one at a time.

The Family School Guide and the High School Guide will be available in hard copy at all District schools, Parent Partnership sites, City community centers and libraries, and the District Parent Center. The guides can also be [downloaded from our website](#).

Camden City School Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard said, “For the first time ever, parents will have a single source for all information about public education options in Camden. With the input of more than 500 Camden residents, these school guides are not just for Camden families but by Camden families. By providing parents with more information about local schools and community programming, we’re empowering parents to learn more about their school options and helping them to make an informed choice about what school is right for their children.”

Advisory Board Member Felisha Reyes-Morton said, “For too long, Camden parents have gone without a clear, apples-to-apples information guide on our schools. In the past year, the Superintendent and his team have gone above and beyond to get input from as many families, educators, and community members as possible so the cards are clear, relevant, and easy to use. Now families have the information they need to make the right choice for their children.”

The information included in the cards represents the most complete data available as of January 30, 2015, plus the grades that schools will serve in the 2015-16 school year. Academic performance information generally reflects the 2013-14 school year. Each School Information Card uses test data provided to the District by the NJ Department of Education, as well as publicly available data on the NJ DOE’s website. Demographic information reflects the current school year.

The school visits and school community surveys are also from this school year. In an innovative step to spur engagement and the sharing of best practices, school visits were conducted by teams made up of school leaders in Camden, including from District, renaissance, and charter schools.

The School Information Cards also include new data from the 2014-15 School Community Survey, which was administered in November and December. Participation rates varied from 53 percent of students to 46 percent of school staff to 12 percent of parents. Overall, student and staff perceptions continued to improve. In particular, school staff perceptions increased in every category. For example, in 2013-14, 37 percent of school staff responded positively about community and collaboration; that figure rose to 49 percent in 2014-15.

The comparable data the School Information Cards include from past survey administrations has been updated to correct errors that were included in the initial reporting. Other District publications citing this original data will also be updated to reflect these changes.

The School Information Cards, the High School Guide, and the Family School Guide will be updated annually. The guides were first shared earlier this spring at the High School Fair that the District sponsored and the K-8 Fair that the District participated in. Families whose children attend schools that are being transformed also had the opportunity to review the cards through the District’s ongoing outreach effort.

All District and renaissance schools were required to fully share information for the School Information Cards. As they are also public schools, all charter schools in Camden were invited to participate in the School Information Card project. Five charter schools chose to participate; incomplete information is provided for the remaining schools.

Camden’s Promise Co-Founder and Principal Dr. Joseph Conway, whose schools participated in the School Information Card project, said, “Camden’s Charter School Network supports any initiative which provides information to parents and the community on the quality of the schools in their Camden neighborhood. The Camden City School Information Card is the first citywide attempt to do just that. We found it to be an informative experience.”
