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PRESS RELEASE

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Community Survey Says Camden Schools Make Progress in Key Areas

Over 500 Camden Students, Educators, Parents, and Residents Weigh In on Next Phase of School Improvement Plan; Note Progress Made Since January 2014

August 24, 2015 – Camden, NJ – The Camden City School District today announced the conclusion of a one-month community engagement campaign designed to solicit feedback on the next version of the Camden Commitment, the 18-month plan for school improvement released in January 2014. Through in-person canvassing, an online survey, and community meetings, the District received feedback from over 500 students, educators, parents, and community members; the majority believe progress has been made *and* there is still room for improvement.

“The Camden Commitment was created with the goal of ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education,” said Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard. “While we have made progress over the past 18 months, we still have a lot of work to do. The feedback we’ve received from the community will inform our approach for the next 18 months to make sure we’re meeting the unique needs of Camden students, educators, and parents. By working together every step of the way, we will make our schools and our communities safer and stronger.”

To ensure that the Camden Commitment continues to address the top concerns of the community, the District plans to release the new Camden Commitment this fall, an updated version of the Superintendent’s January 2014 strategic plan. The refreshed plan will maintain the same key promises but update the goals and action steps to reach each promise. The promises to improve safety, facilities, teaching & learning, student support, parent engagement, and Central Office effectiveness are all areas parents and community members identified during the Superintendent’s 100-day community listening tour as the City’s highest education priorities.

“Thank you to the parents, residents, educators, and students who came out for a candid discussion about our City schools,” said Kathryn Blackshear, President of the Advisory Board of Education. “We need to continue listening to families and residents about what is working in our schools, and where the District must improve in order to do better by our kids. We cannot do it alone, and I am grateful for the continued support of our Mayor and community partners as we work to build great public schools in every neighborhood.”

The five community meetings hosted by Advisory Board members focused on increasing college and career readiness, improving the way families enroll in public schools, and introducing a new, more positive approach to student discipline. These meetings, which bring the number of public meetings the Superintendent has held

in his two years to 55, were an opportunity for the District to gather extensive community feedback that will be used along with the survey results to inform the refreshed Camden Commitment. Improving technology support and vocational educational opportunities, increasing parent involvement, simplifying the enrollment process, and improving responsiveness from the Central Office were frequent themes at these meetings.

“I can’t remember the last time a Superintendent’s gone out of his way to meet with parents, or to take an interest in all of Camden’s public school students – including kids at charter, District, and the new renaissance schools,” said Vanessa Serrano, a lifelong Camden resident and mother of three. “After attending the North Camden community meeting, I am excited about the District’s plan to get all types of Camden schools working together on behalf of our children.”

The survey received 504 responses. Early results indicate:

- The majority of respondents believe that the District has made progress since January 2014 in school safety, modernizing school buildings, student support, teaching and learning, serving parents, and Central Office effectiveness;
- Nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated that the District had made progress on the Camden Commitment’s *Promise 3b, Great Teaching and Learning*, which strives to provide excellent teachers and quality-learning environments to children from pre-K onward.
- Respondents cited *Promise 2, 21st Century School Buildings*, which aims to modernize schools and equip them with top-of-the-line technology, as making the least amount of progress since January 2014.
- Nearly half of respondents want to see enhanced communication with parents through different means, such as text alerts.
- Over 50 percent of respondents believe that creating a positive school culture is the key to safer City schools.

Insights from the survey and community engagement process will be analyzed in the coming month and incorporated into the updated Camden Commitment for release this fall.

Click [here](#) to see the original Camden Commitment.