



PAYMON ROUHANIFARD  
SUPERINTENDENT

**CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **NBA Player, Mayor, and Superintendent Welcome Back Students and Staff as 2015-16 School Year Kicks Off**

*As schools look to build on progress, new backpacks and family calendars greet returning students*

**September 8, 2015** – Office of the Superintendent, Camden, NJ – Superintendent Rouhanifard kicked off the 2015-16 school year Tuesday with a whirlwind five-school tour across the City, culminating in a backpack giveaway to hundreds of students at R.T. Cream Family School with NBA player and South Jersey native Jason Thompson. The tour with Mayor Redd and members of the Advisory Board built on momentum generated from 2014-15, when the graduation rate rose six percentage points, more students attended pre-school than ever before, and students, staff, and parents all felt safer.

In 2015-16, the District is seeking to further improve its schools by introducing new curricular materials, revamping its discipline policy to promote positive school cultures and cut suspensions, and decreasing the amount of time students spend taking tests, among other steps.

“I’m thrilled to welcome back our students and families and continue on our mission to give each kid in Camden the excellent education he deserves,” said Superintendent Rouhanifard. “We still have a long way to reach our goal, but with hundreds of our staff members hard at work over the summer we are starting this school year in stronger fashion than any year in recent memory. I appreciate our educators’ our hard work and look forward to visiting all of our schools before the end of the month.”

“We are delighted to welcome back our students for a new exciting and promising school year,” said Mayor Dana L. Redd. “We look forward to building upon the progress we have made through the success of programs like the Second Step Violence Prevention Program, and Positive Behavioral Intervention & Support (PBIS), Police and Congress Enjoy Reading (PACER), just to name a few. Ultimately, it’s all about changing and improving educational outcomes for our children. I am proud to work closely with Superintendent Rouhanifard, parents, and students as we come together to make real change in our schools.”

Today’s tour kicked off at Octavius V. Catto Family School, where Superintendent Rouhanifard greeted students and families and distributed the 2015-16 family calendar. The Superintendent also reminded families and staff that today was the first day the DonorsChoose.org matching campaign is live—contributions can be made at [www.donorschoose.org/camden2015](http://www.donorschoose.org/camden2015).

After a tour of the adjoining Boys and Girls Club, a close District partner, the tour continued at Woodrow Wilson High School, where the group learned about new remedial efforts at the high school level (instead of



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waiting until college). The Superintendent and Advisory Board members also spoke with Preston Brown, an alumnus and the new Tigers football coach, and a former high school dropout who is overcoming extraordinary adversity in order to re-enroll in school.

After a stop at Mastery North Camden, the Superintendent and Advisory Board members had an in-depth discussion about college and career readiness with students at MetEast High School. The day concluded at R.T. Cream Family School, where students and staff were back in their building after a burst pipe forced them to relocate for the last few months of last school year. To celebrate the reopening, NBA player and South Jersey native Jason Thompson donated hundreds of backpacks and school supplies through his foundation.

“I’m a South Jersey guy, born and raised,” Thompson said. “No matter where I play, I always live here in the off-season. Taking care of the kids in this area is really important to me. I hope the kids at R.T. Cream have a great school year.”

“Schools can and should be incubators for academic excellence,” said Katrina McCombs, the Camden native, Camden High alum, and former Camden principal whom Rouhanifard appointed this summer to oversee District schools. “I look forward to continuing to support our school leaders as they establish positive school cultures that foster engaging, rigorous instruction evidenced by maximized student academic and socio-emotional growth.”

The public is encouraged to watch [this new video](#) to learn more about the DonorsChoose.org matching campaign that went live today. Camden City teachers can learn more at [www.camden.k12.nj.us/donorschoose](http://www.camden.k12.nj.us/donorschoose).

Members of the public and media can follow #AllSchoolsRise to learn more about Camden City students heading back to school this fall.

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*For interviews or photos from the first day of school, please contact Maita Soukup from the Camden City School District Division of Communications at [msoukup@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:msoukup@camden.k12.nj.us) or 856-375-4737.*