



PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Donnie W. Evans, Ed.D.
State District Superintendent

April 5, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Our school district is currently among New Jersey's lower performing school systems because of our students' scores on New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Performance Assessment (HSPA). Unfortunately, in 2011 almost two-thirds of students in the 3rd through 8th grades scored below proficient in English/Language Arts (ELA) and half of these students scored below proficient in mathematics. At the high school level, 4 out of 10 eleventh graders taking HSPA for the first time scored below proficient in ELA and 2 of every 3 of these students scored below proficient in mathematics.

During the past two years, the district has been implementing extensive programs to help our students improve their reading, writing, and math skills. Although we are beginning to see some improvements, too many of our students continue to score below proficiency on state tests. Adding to this problem is the fact that many of our students do not remember much of the information taught by teachers during the previous year.

School Board Policy #5410 reads "A pupil in the elementary grades will be promoted to the next succeeding grade level when he/she has completed the course requirements at the presently assigned grade; has achieved the instructional objectives set for the present grade; has demonstrated the proficiencies required for movement into the educational program of the next grade ..."

The New Jersey Department of Education has identified 20 Paterson schools that are either among the lowest scoring schools in the state or they have other conditions that must be addressed such as significant achievement gaps. They are identified as "Priority" or "Focus" schools. Districts are required to take steps to help students in these schools improve at a faster rate.

As a result, we in Paterson have decided to require a 4 week summer school for students in these 20 schools who do not meet the district promotion policy and continue to score below proficient in English/Language Arts and/or Mathematics on district or state tests. Students in non-priority or focus schools will also have the opportunity to attend as well. **This means that the district will not promote students to the next grade level until they clearly demonstrate proficiency in ELA or Math or they demonstrate significant gains or growth in these subjects.**

Please note that if your child is underperforming in Math or Language Arts, you will receive a letter from your school principal advising you that participation in summer school could be required for your son or daughter. You should receive the letter within the next two weeks.

Your school's principal will be discussing this requirement at your school's upcoming report card night on April 19th. Please be in attendance. As always, your support and cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Donnie W. Evans, Ed.D.

"Our Children, Our Future"