

Historic Education Reform For Camden

Governor Chris Christie visited KIPP Whittier Middle School in Camden today to discuss the unprecedented improvement of public education thanks to innovative school choices in the City of Camden. The Christie Administration has made great strides saving children from being trapped in chronically failing schools in need of reforms.

At the time of the state's intervention in 2013, the Camden City School District had been steeped with challenges that were decades in the making. Through inconsistent leadership of 13 Superintendents in a 20 year span, the District suffered severe financial mismanagement, grade-fixing and incident reporting scandals that left the City's children behind. This resulted in less than half of students graduating from high school, and even fewer students with reading and math proficiency in elementary and middle school. School facilities were left in shambles with half of the District's buildings constructed before 1928, and many falling into disrepair. Here are some of the statistics before the Christie Administration's intervention:

- Nearly 90 percent of Camden schools were in the bottom 5 percent performance-wise in all of New Jersey.
- 49 percent of Camden students were graduating from high school, 37 points below the New Jersey average.
- 1 in 5, or 21 percent, of all high school students dropped out.
- Half of Camden's schools were built before 1928.

[Governor Christie: We Cannot Fail The Children Of Camden Any Longer](#)



New leadership, new infrastructure, and a new culture in the City of Camden has charted a new course for what was once an education system failing its responsibility. The Christie Administration, along with the help of Mayor Dana Redd, has made dramatic steps in helping Camden meet its obligation to its students, families, and community. The leadership of Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard has reinvigorated a once dismal District of schools, and the Christie Administration is proud to leave the City of Camden on a path to incredible growth.

New Leadership In Camden. Since Governor Christie's Administration intervened in the City of Camden the education system has flourished. Governor Christie appointed his first State Superintendent in Camden, Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard, who has brought renewed energy to the district and implemented a number of significant steps to reform the District. Superintendent Rouhanifard has held more than 160 community meetings, immersing himself in the community through listening and responding. His leadership and remarkable work had earned him a contract renewal of three years in July 2016.

On Track For Graduation. Camden's graduation rate has increased for the fifth straight year, and stands at 70 percent for the 2015 - 2016 school year. (Leslie Brody, Camden Graduation Rate Hits 70%, [Wall Street Journal](#), 12/12/16)

- Since 2012, Camden City School District's graduation rate rose from 49 to 70 percent while the dropout rate fell from 21 to 12 percent.
- Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) continue to make gains with a graduation rate of 64 percent, up 26 points from 2012
- The dropout rate for English language learners is down a quarter since 2012, and the dropout rate for African-American students has been cut in half.

Paving The Way For Better Education. In 2012, Governor Christie signed into law the Urban Hope Act, which allowed the Camden City School District to partner with proven nonprofit organizations to create renaissance school projects. Renaissance schools partner with the District to offer families a high-quality neighborhood school option with a new or significantly renovated building. Like District schools, they serve a specific neighborhood and accept all students in their catchment area who choose to attend. Through these partnerships, the District has provided students and their families the opportunity to choose among three new high quality school organizations: KIPP: Cooper Norcross, Uncommon Schools: Camden Prep, and Mastery Schools of Camden.

[Governor Christie: I Love Camden](#)



Since the Christie Administration stepped in, 11 new, high quality Renaissance schools located in nine new or significantly renovated buildings have opened. These schools will serve around 3,950 students this school year. Renaissance and District schools combined have improved around 7 percentage points in math and around 9 percentage points in English Language Arts proficiency from 2015 to 2017. Students in these schools have shown dramatic improvements, and at the District's Forest Hill Elementary School, the percentage of students proficient in reading and math have tripled between 2016 and 2017.

Charting The Course In Camden. During the Christie Administration, four high quality charter schools have opened or expanded in Camden. Working with local leadership, the Department of Education has been able to hold low-performing charter schools accountable. Since 2012 the State has closed three charter schools that were failing in their responsibility to offer students a strong education. At the same time strong charters that are producing real results for students and families have remained open and thriving under this Administration.

The number of Camden students enrolled in charter and renaissance schools has more than tripled, going from 2,426 students in 2009-2010 to 8,513 students in the 2017-2018 school year.

Investing In Camden's School Infrastructure. The School Development Authority has made great headways in investing in Camden's school infrastructure under the Christie Administration. The SDA has

invested nearly \$47 million in Camden school projects, and since 2010 has completed 14 projects in the Camden City School District.

The rebirth of Camden's pride, The Castle on the Hill, is a historic achievement for the City of Camden. Camden High School will be open for a new generation of students, thanks to a historic \$133.6 million investment in a state of the art facility that will be home to the Panthers and the City's three magnet high schools as early as 2021. The school is expected to serve over 1,200 students, an major increase from today's school which serves just 350 students.