

August 19, 2009

Dear Howard Parent/Guardian,

The Delaware Department of Education has released the school accountability ratings using the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) criteria. We wanted to provide you with information about Howard's rating, how the rating was calculated, and what instructional initiatives/options we have in place to address the areas identified for improvement.

**NCLB Regulations** - The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires that schools and school districts annually measure student performance on standardized tests. In Delaware, we use the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP). Based on student performance, schools and school districts are assigned an accountability rating, with the goal of achieving adequate yearly progress. On the state tests, a student can earn one of five performance levels. A score of 3 or higher means the student has met or exceeded proficiency.

**Adequate Yearly Progress and Accountability** – Accountability ratings for schools and districts are determined by the number of students who have scored at level 3 or higher on the DSTP. The formula used to determine a school rating measures the test scores of separate subgroups of students and the progress made by those students as a group and overall. Each subgroup must perform at or above a state-determined percentage for proficiency. Student scores must improve in **ALL** subgroups and must meet or exceed a prescribed percentage of proficiency in order for a school to make adequate yearly progress (AYP).

There must be at least 40 students in each subgroup for a group to be included in the calculation. The sub-groups include: American Indian; Asian American; African American; Hispanic; White; Economically Disadvantaged (determined by participation in the Free or Reduced Lunch meal benefits program); Special Education; and English Language Learner. There are 16 possible categories (eight subgroups for the Math test, eight subgroups for the Reading test) in which a school must meet adequate yearly progress. If, for example, a school met improvement targets in every subgroup but one, the school would not have satisfied the adequate yearly progress required by NCLB, and therefore could not earn a commendable or superior rating.

A school's final rating is determined by using March DSTP results on Math and Reading tests and an additional State Progress measure, which includes Science and Social Studies test results from the previous school year.

**Howard School Rating** – Based on the scores of students who took the DSTP tests in March 2009, Howard did not meet adequate yearly progress in Math or Reading. The school rating is *Academic Watch, Under School Improvement*.

Of the 18 public high schools in New Castle County, 13 are classified as Under Improvement and one was not classified (new school status).


**Efforts to Improve Student Achievement** - The following initiatives and changes will be introduced this year to increase student achievement:

- Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a 1 or 2 performance level on the DSTP math and/or reading test will use computer-based instructional programs to help strengthen areas of need. (Students who have earned a level 3 or higher meet or exceed proficiency.)
- Howard will continue to offer after school tutoring on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.
- For students receiving special education services, the focus continues to be teaching at a high standard, utilizing small class sizes, and offering additional classroom help as well as a nationally acclaimed, research based reading program, Read 180.
- Teachers have been granted access to the individual DSTP results for their specific students in order to tailor instruction that addresses individual student needs.
- Students entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade who are performing below standard will receive additional course time in math and reading.
- Career programs will have “instructional coaches” assisting career teachers with students who perform below standard.
- PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies) Literacy will be offered to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who have reading deficits.
- Howard receives federal Title I funds designed to help students who are not achieving at grade level in high-poverty schools. As a Title I school under improvement, Howard is required to provide choice as an option. Additionally, students who receive Free & Reduced Lunch may choose to receive Supplemental Education Services, including tutoring. More information on these options is enclosed.
- A Title I Math teacher has been hired to work with low performing Math students.

**Parent Involvement** – The Howard staff believes that parental involvement is necessary to improve student achievement. Communication with your child’s teachers and guidance counselor is vital to his/her overall success. We encourage all parents to use our Home Access Center, which allows you to check your child’s grades, assignments, discipline, and attendance throughout the year.

NCLB challenges us to find better ways to meet the educational needs of all students. We provide high-quality career and employability training to students, who earn outstanding ratings from employers. We will continue to provide your son or daughter quality educational opportunities. We will keep you informed of our progress.

Sincerely,

  
Evelyn Edney  
Principal

Si desea su correspondencia en español, por favor llame al 995-8188.

(If you desire this correspondence in Spanish, please call 995-8188.)