



NJDOE News

Contact: Richard Vespucci
For Release: December 6, 2000

Paterson Test Scores Rise in Eight of Nine Areas in 1999-2000

Paterson Public Schools showed another year of improvement in 1999-2000 under state operation, according to Dr. Edwin Duroy, state district superintendent of New Jersey's third largest school district. In an annual progress report made today to the State Board of Education, Duroy noted that scores on state exams showed increases in eight of nine measured areas when compared with the previous year.

In addition, Paterson reported solid student attendance levels for the third consecutive year. The district's dropout rate of 13.5 percent in 1999-2000 was at its lowest level since the measurement was first calculated in the 1995-96 school year.

"Overall, Paterson has made significant gains in 1999-2000," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "Dr. Duroy has the district moving in a positive direction. With continued hard work and successful implementation of whole school reform throughout the district, I expect to see continued improvement in the years to come."

"I am encouraged by the progress we have made in Paterson and I anticipate even greater improvements in the coming years," Duroy said.

Student achievement as measured by state tests given to fourth, eighth and eleventh graders increased in nearly all areas, especially in areas where special programs have been established to encourage gains in performance.

Of the fourth-grade students who took the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) in May 2000, 34.9 percent scored at the advanced proficient or proficient levels in language arts, compared with 28.1 percent in the previous year. In mathematics, 39.1 percent performed in the top two levels, compared with 29.7 percent in the previous year; and in science, 64.6 percent performed in the top two levels, compared with 57.0 percent in the previous year.

Of the Paterson students who took the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) in March 2000, 48.8 percent scored in the top two proficiency levels, compared with 38.4 percent in the previous year. In language arts literacy, a decline was reported, with 64.2 percent scoring in the top two proficiency levels, compared with 66.3 percent in 1999. Students in 2000 took the science section of the GEPA for the first time; 37.6 percent scored in the top two proficiency levels.

High school students showed across-the-board gains in the High School Proficiency Test, with 53.6 percent passing the reading section, a 1.3 percent gain; 66.5 percent passing the writing section, a 4.5 percent gain; and 74.5 percent passing the mathematics section, a 6.5 percent gain.

Duroy noted that before- and after-school programs and extended year programs of 190 and 195 days had a positive impact on student performance. In nearly all categories, students who participated in such programs scored higher on state tests.

Student attendance in Paterson continued to meet the state monitoring standard for the third consecutive year. The 1999-2000, average daily attendance of 92.3 percent reported compares with 92.7 percent in 1998-99 and 92.6 percent in 1997-98. Among the strategies used to produce the successful results have been home-school community liaisons, small learning communities and career academies, attendance officers, health and social service coordinators at each high school and a Truancy Task Force Program.

Paterson's 13.5 percent dropout rate reported in 1999-2000 compares favorably with rates of 15.2 percent in 1998-99 and 18.2 percent in 1997-98. Duroy credited several local initiatives, including alternative high schools known as the "Great Falls Academy" and "Silk City Academy," teen parenting and daycare programs, and the assignment of a dropout prevention specialist at each high school. Duroy said he expected the district to soon meet the state's 10 percent dropout standard.

In other areas, Duroy reported a 26 percent increase in enrollments of three- and four-year-olds in early childhood programs. In October 2000, the district counted 767 three-year-olds served in 26 centers and 995 four-year-olds, also served in 26 centers.

Paterson continued to improve its facilities with the addition of 30 new regular classrooms in 1999-2000 in five elementary schools. In addition, science labs were established in four elementary schools with a fifth one planned.