

CLIFTON
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Superintendent of Schools

973-470-2260

August 26, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Clifton Public School District has made many strides over the past several years. The district has implemented numerous academic programs to enhance student learning. We are dedicated to providing all students with the educational foundation necessary to succeed in school and in life. To ensure your child's success, we have set high standards that are reflected in what is taught in our classrooms. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) required all states to create their own high academic standards for what a child should know and be able to do in language arts literacy and mathematics. Each *school* must achieve the state's proficiency standards each year until 100% of **all** students, including special education and ESL youngsters, meet these standards by 2014. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about this law and its impact on the Clifton School District for the 2011-12 school year.

The measure of the annual targets is called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), made up of 41 indicators in each of the three grade spans K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. If any school does not meet its AYP targets for two consecutive years in the same content area, it is designated as a "School In Need of Improvement." In addition to measuring each school, NCLB also requires the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to annually review the performance of each school *district*. For the school year 2011-2012 the Clifton Public School District was identified by the NJDOE as a "district in need of improvement." A district is identified for improvement if it does not make AYP in **all 41** categories in **each of three grade spans** within the district—elementary (grades 3-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school—for two consecutive years in *either* content area. If you miss the benchmark **in even one category** in each of the three areas this designation applies.

As a Title I district in need of improvement, the Clifton Public Schools must do the following:

- Consult with parents and school staff when developing (or revising) a District Improvement Plan. This plan explains how the district will use Title I and other funds to improve its schools in need of improvement;
- Reserve at least 10 percent of its annual Title I allocation to provide high-quality professional development for teachers and administrators to improve classroom teaching; and
- Continue to provide technical assistance to schools identified as Title I schools in need of improvement.

To be removed from district improvement status, the district must meet the grade span achievement standards, that is, make AYP in at least one grade span for two consecutive years in both content areas.

Parents are an integral part of ensuring the academic success of their children. Here are some suggestions to help you work with your school and the district to support improvements:

- Learn more about NCLB requirements and Title I by accessing the NJDOE Web site at www.nj.gov/education/title1.
- Become aware of strategies to improve student academic achievement. The United States Department of Education (USDE) Web site offers many helpful publications for parents at www.ed.gov/index.jhtml.
- Talk with district staff about the District Improvement Plan to help students meet the state standards in language arts literacy and mathematics.
- If you are income eligible and have a student who attends a Title I school in need of improvement, ask about the school choice option to transfer your child to a high-performing public school in the district. The USDE guidance on school choice is available at: www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolchoiceguid.doc.
- If you are a parent of an eligible student who attends a Title I school in need of improvement, ask about supplemental educational services (SES) that may be available for your child. The SES offers extra academic services provided to eligible students outside of the regular school day. The USDE guidance on SES is available at: www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/suppsvcsguid.doc.
- Visit your child's school and volunteer.

You are encouraged to contact your school principal or local district superintendent's office at 973-470-2260 for further information on any of these requirements and to find out how you can become involved in school improvement efforts.

Helping children become academically proficient is everyone's responsibility. The Clifton Public Schools is implementing support strategies to bring the district out of improvement status. We look forward to working with parents and the community as we continue to increase the academic achievement of our students.

Richard Tardalo,
Superintendent of Schools