



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
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**PRINCIPAL**  
Susan Peters

**VICE PRINCIPAL**  
Joseph P. Vespignani

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

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 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* requires that adequate yearly progress (AYP) in language arts literacy and mathematics be measured annually for each school in New Jersey. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about this law and its impact on Christopher Columbus Middle School for the 2011-12 school year.

The law requires districts to teach to grade-level standards, use the most effective methods and strategies for teaching students, and assess student progress each year. A school's progress is determined upon the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced proficient on statewide assessments. The state benchmark is 86% of all students and student subgroups, including special education and ESL youngsters, for language arts and 80% of all students and student subgroups, including those in special education and ESL programs, for mathematics. Schools that did not make so-called adequate yearly progress (AYP) on state tests in even one of 40 separate categories for two consecutive years are identified as "in need of improvement" by the New Jersey Department of Education..

By federal law, performance of the following subgroups is reported:

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| *The school as a whole           | *White                      |
| *African-American                | *Other                      |
| *Asian/Pacific Islander          | *Economically Disadvantaged |
| *Hispanic                        | *Students with Disabilities |
| *Native American/American Indian | *Limited English Proficient |

Included in the AYP calculation is student participation. At least 95 percent of the total school population and each subgroup must take the state assessments. Additionally, NCLB allows for a "safe harbor" provision so that schools are not penalized for a particular group's performance being below the goal, provided sufficient progress is made.

Christopher Columbus Middle School has continued to make improvements in the testing results of its students. The school made increases in several state testing categories. Christopher Columbus made adequate yearly progress in 35 of 40 (87.5%) required categories in 2011. Christopher Columbus Middle School has made improvements in all testing categories and has attained "Hold" status in the area of Mathematics. Because the school did not make adequate yearly progress in every ESEA category, required by federal law, the school will continue to be designated as being in need of improvement and

will continue to implement the restructuring begun in 2009. Given that the school is not able to offer school choice to eligible students due to crowded conditions at the two middle schools, it will, again this year, be providing eligible students with supplemental educational services instead.

Supplemental services, such as tutoring, attempt to help students who meet federal economic eligibility guidelines to increase their level of academic achievement and meet state standards. A list of supplemental service providers will be sent directly to parents of eligible students in September.

In addition to supplemental services, as noted above, schools in restructuring status also must assemble a school improvement committee to develop an annual school improvement plan (Title I Unified Plan) that identifies areas of need and describe the steps they will take to continue to improve their students' performance each year. The district and each school must also develop and implement a parental involvement policy. We encourage you to become involved in these and other initiatives at your child's school by contacting Vice-Principal Joseph Vespignani at 973-470-2360. Building and maintaining a high-quality school is a job for the entire community.

Schools in restructuring status must also continue to implement recommendations from a comprehensive school review process called Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA). Christopher Columbus received the benefit of three CAPA reviews, with the most recent being in the 2011 school year. The results of this review will be posted on the school website. During the CAPA review, a team of educators, including those from outside of the district, examined all aspects of the school's operations. This review helped inform the schools current improvement efforts and is the basis for the school's restructuring plan.

To better serve the academic needs of our students, Christopher Columbus will be focusing on language arts and math skills development. The restructuring option implemented is a change in governance via a new schedule implemented in 2010. A Saturday Academy will again provide enhancement opportunities for students. Substantive staff development initiatives will be provided to staff. Additionally, all teachers will be offering remedial instruction to students during the course of the school year.

I am very optimistic about the academic programs that we are developing for Christopher Columbus students. I look forward to working closely with our parents and our community to generate greater educational outcomes for our students.

Sincerely,

*Susan Peters*

Susan Peters  
Principal