

The Word (from pg. 1)

WE ARE ON THE WEB!
VISIT US ON OUR NEW
WEBSITE FOR IMPORTANT
UPDATES, EVENTS, AND
INFORMATION ON HOW
YOU CAN HELP!

WWW.NEHEMIAHCDC.ORG

• Continued use of the SRA should not be supported, as it obscures the failure of district K-12 systems, preventing true reform, and undermines the value of the state's high school diploma.

"The SRA is still abused and absolutely an invalid source of a high school diploma. I don't see how anybody who pays taxes in New Jersey can accept second best, and that's what this is."

Assemblyman and State Democratic Party Chair
Joseph Cryan (D-Union)

position of 24 was found by comparing this adjusted number to data released by the National Center for Education Statistics ranking state graduation rates for the 2005 school year.

"...the situation of passing out diplomas to children who don't have the skills is duplicitous to the public and unfair to the students."

Former State Commissioner of Education
Saul Cooperman

To read the full article please visit:

http://www.nje3.org/schoolwatch/giving_diplomas_meaning.pdf

*Note: New Jersey's graduation rate of 72.1% was found by multiplying the percentage of students who receive their diploma via SRA or via exempt status, as indicated by the State Department of Education on the 2005-2006 NJ School Report Card (19.1%), by the 90% statewide graduation rate reported in the Education Week study, Diplomas Count. New Jersey's relative

Tutoring (from pg. 2)

provide tutoring. As of January Free Tutoring Services will be offered on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings for 4pm to 6pm at Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church. While initial turnout was impressive the program hopes to expand its service, capacity, and available resources in the coming years.

Please join us in helping to provide our children with the education they deserve. To find out more about or to have someone you know participate in the program please contact us— at the information provided.

WHAT: Free Tutoring!

WHO: Any child grades K-12

WHERE: Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church - 9th and Kaighns Avenue Camden, NJ

WHEN: Tuesday-Thursday 4-6 PM

Contact: Rochelle Jackson

(856) 365 4520

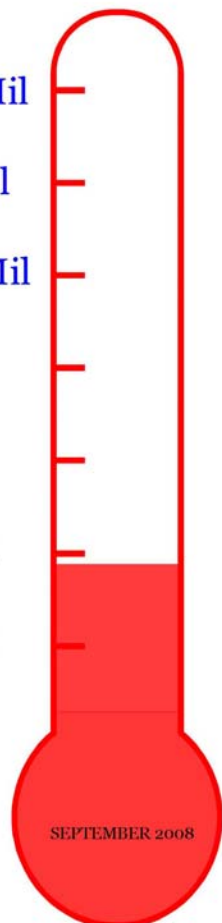
info@nehemiahcdc.org

Faith - o - Meter 2 Million!
Know your goals!

Help us Rebuild the
Kaighn Avenue
Baptist Church
Community



1.75 Mil
1.5 Mil
1.25 Mil
1 Mil
750K
500K
250K



Donations to:
Nehemiah Project CDC
www.nehemiahcdc.org



Nehemiah Project Community
Development Corporation
P.O. Box 2031
Camden, New Jersey 08101-2031
Phone: 856 365 0034
E-mail: info@nehemiahcdc.com

The Nehemiah Project Community Development Corporation (NPCDC) is a certified 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in the Gateway neighborhood of Camden, New Jersey. The explicit purpose of the NPCDC is to promote the holistic revitalization of the community surrounding the Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church



THE GATEWAY

WINTER 2009

VOLUME II, ISSUE 1

SPECIAL ISSUE: FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Word from the Chairman, Nehemiah CDC



BRITT A. STARGHILL,
CHAIRMAN NPCDC

During especially hard times the greatest way to ensure a brighter future is through enlightening our youth. In light of this, 2009's first issue of the Gateway has a special focus on education. The Word will be left to these excerpts from a recent article regarding the state of our education system:

GIVING DIPLOMAS MEANING

THE SPECIAL REVIEW ASSESSMENT

NEW JERSEY'S URBAN GRADUATION SCAM

Overview

The Special Review Assessment (SRA) is an exam given to New Jersey's 11th and 12th graders as an alternate route to receiving their high school diploma. It is only given to students after they have failed one or both portions of the standard High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) at least three times. In 2005-2006, 19.1% of

HSPA takers statewide either needed the SRA, or were exempt from having to pass the HSPA at all—nearly 13,000 students, many of whom are minority and live in the state's Abbott districts. Many officials, and the State Board of Education, agree that the SRA, once meant for a limited number of students who "froze" taking

"The SRA was a good idea at its inception and it did help many people who had legitimate difficulties with standardized tests graduate from high school, but now the number of students using this alternate route process has gotten completely out of hand. It is just not working. It's time to get rid of it and refocus our efforts on helping our kids pass this test." Former Commissioner William Librera NJDOE News Release, 5/18/05

standardized tests, is "abused" in many school districts, where in some schools over 80% of students use the SRA, or are exempt from having to pass the HSPA, yet still receive their diplomas. It is worth noting that these students receive the same diploma as those who pass the HSPA. This failure is compounded by two factors. First, a recent analysis of the HSPA shows it tests academic skills more equivalent to the 8th grade, not the 11th when the test is first given. As Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy describes, the HSPA is essentially "a middle school level test." Second, despite advertising from the New Jersey Education Association and others that New Jersey has the nation's highest graduation rate, if one removes the graduates who could not pass the HSPA from the state's graduation tally, New Jersey does not have the highest graduation rate in the country. We are 24th*, despite being 2nd in spending at \$13,800 per pupil according to the U.S. Census Bureau. A disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic high schoolers are being passed through the system, in some of America's most expensive school districts, without the skills necessary to compete in the global market place. The SRA is a cruel farce that covers the failure of our schools to educate in excess of 13,000 children annually in one

of the country's most expensive public education systems.

Giving Diplomas Meaning EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The state's High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is intended to test mastery of high school skills but is widely viewed as testing just 8th grade skills, according to Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy.
- The SRA, or Special Review Assessment, is given to 12th graders who fail one or both portions of the HSPA at least three times.
- Almost one out of five graduates statewide cannot pass the HSPA, but receive a high school diploma anyway through the SRA process, or are exempt from passing the HSPA at all.
- If all the students who cannot pass the HSPA are removed, New Jersey is not 1st in graduation rate nationally, as is often and falsely advertised by

Giving Diplomas Meaning EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

the New Jersey Education Association—we are 24th despite being 2nd in public school per-pupil spending.

- Failure of the HSPA, and subsequent abuse of the SRA, are disproportionately high in urban and Abbott districts, where over 80%, and sometime 90%, of students in some schools need the SRA after failing one or both portions of the HSPA three times, or are exempt from having to pass it at all.

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(CONTINUED PG 4)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Tutoring program kicks off with a bang!
- ◆ New partnerships could lead to improved programs.
- ◆ Everyone wins with support of local school
- ◆ Building Update
- ◆ Updates, Congratulations, and More!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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New Tutoring Program Provides Free Help to Our Youth

The rebuilding a community requires a multi faceted approach that utilizes the unique skill sets of a diverse group of dedicated stakeholders. Even more reversing the effects decades of blight has had on our community requires time and patience. One sure investment in the future of a community is an investment in its youth. The construction of any building or the redevelopment of any site cannot be successful if there is no one with skills to work in its offices; the acumen to balance its finances; the technical ingenuity to maintain its facilities; or the organization to lead its programs. For years Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church has administered various educational programs including its successful summer enrichment program. These programs have served the congregation and community well. However recent legislation, primarily from the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, allocates funding for students attending schools that do not meet federal standards. This funding provides eligible students the opportunity for free tutoring services. Unfortunately each of Camden's public schools do not meet the federal



EVENING TUTORING PROGRAM AT KAIGHN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

requirements and do not have the infrastructure to provide tutoring to all of the students the require it. The Kaighn Beacon Renaissance Corporation and NPCDC recognized this as a unique opportunity to utilize the facilities at Kaighn Avenue to not only start an after school tutoring program, but to build the foundation of a comprehensive community education program. A recent recommendation led the organization to the Arline Group, a Camden based organization with extensive experience working in Camden Public Schools. Kaighn Beacon Renaissance is currently partnering with the Arline group to

(CONTINUED PG 4)

NPCDC Continues to Build Partnerships and Strive for Improvement

In recent months the NPCDC has been meeting with local stakeholders to plant the seeds of partnerships that can be built upon for years to come. While reaching out to our neighbors in Camden is essential to the success of the CDC, we must think of our location within Camden on a regional perspective. Within just a few miles of our offices we have some to regions brightest institutions, strongest businesses, and most venerable community organizations - specifically in Philadelphia and Camden County. The recent progress of our educational program, through Kaighn Beacon Renaissance Development Corporation, is an exciting opportunity to

make an early impact on Camden's youth. While the program is off to an impressive start, in order to develop a top of the line community education program constant improvements will need to be made. Drexel University of Philadelphia has a long standing reputation as one of the top Universities in the country and as a pillar in the community. Recently the NPCDC and Kaighn Beacon Renaissance has met with representatives from Drexel regarding potential partnership opportunities. The CDC is now pursuing grant opportunities that may allow them to utilize the Universities services. Some of these opportunities might include management training for board members and a comprehensive assessment of our education

Building Update: Prudent Progress

While seeing is often believing for many folks, when it comes to building development a prudent planning process will prevent a mirage. The NPCDC has made major progress over the past year towards its vision of a community resource facility, including:

- * building partnerships;
- * site acquisition
- * zoning and regulatory review
- * conceptual drawings
- * layout and services
- * financial programming
- * educational program development

While this progress is real, the hardest part is now upon us. Amidst a financial crisis - strict building development plans that



VACANT SITE ACROSS FROM KAIGHN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

program. The underlying theory is that the more we improve our capacity the more we will be able to improve the community and the more organizations communicate with each other the easier they can reach common goals.



CONCEPTUAL IMAGE OF A HIGH-TECH LEARNING FACILITY.

Building (from pg. 2)

adhere to schedules, budgets, and regulations are more important than ever. The NPCDC has formed a Building Development ommittee whose purpose will be to develop a checklist of needs and assign timeframes and responsibilities to each. This committee will review existing progress and utilize proven processes that will be tailored to this project. This committee will ensure efficient and calculated forward progress and provide bi-monthly reports the NPCDC Board of Trustees.

We Need Your Help Too!

The Nehemiah Project CDC is a community initiative that will require a collaborative community effort. While the NPCDC and its board is working hard to champion change, it will take strong community to leadership become a viable and sustainable neighborhood. Please contact the NPCDC if you are interested in board membership or helping to build your community!

info@nehemiahcdc.org

Congratulations Barack Obama!

Congratulations to Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States of America. On January 20th 2009 Barack Obama was inaugurated and will serve as the first African-American President of our country. He offered the following quote during his inauguration speech:

"We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish



BARACK OBAMA AT KAIGHN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH WITH REV. STARGHILL AND FAMILY

things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit, to choose our better history, to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

NPCDC congratulates Barack Obama on his historic election and offers support during these tough times.

...WE NEED THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL PEOPLE TO "REBUILD THE WALLS" OF THIS COMMUNITY...

KNOW THE NEHEMIAH COMMUNITY : EDUCATION

% OF GATEWAY POP WITH < 9TH GRADE ED. LEVEL - 21.2%

% OF GATEWAY POP WITH AT LEAST BACHELORS: 3.5%
source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, Claritas,

RANK OF CAMDEN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS RESPECTIVELY : 315 AND 316 (OUT OF 316)

OUT OF 1664 CHILDREN AT CAMDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO GET MORE THAN 70% CORRECT ON STATE MATH AND LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT (8TH GRADE): 7

THIS MUST CHANGE NOW!

Kaighn Avenue Helps Camden High, KABC Youth



CAMDEN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ACCEPTS DONATION AT KABC

Each year the Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church asks its congregation to give a donation to the person who is truly celebrated, Jesus. The request for this gift is to give to Jesus the cost of the most expensive gift that is planned for purchase during the holiday season. Each year this donation if earmarked for a cause that is beneficial to both the church and the community. While last years funds went to the purchase of a new organ this year the funds enabled some of Camden's and KABC's youth the chance to participate in a very special event. The Camden High School Marching Band was invited to compete in Washington D.C. for the opportunity to play at the presidential inauguration on January 20th, 2009. This opportunity while historic was also costly.

When a gap in the funding for this trip was presented, Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church took the opportunity to extend its donation to this cause. In a ceremony pictured to the left Camden High School Principal Ms. Marilyn Jamal humbly accepted the donation and stated that although this was her first service at Kaighn Avenue, it will not be her last.

Congratulations to the Camden High School Marching band on their historic opportunity to compete in Washington D.C. For further information on this event visit the following link at:

<http://abclocal.com/wpvi/story?section=news/local&id=6502639>

"...REBUILDING COMMUNITY IS A LONG AND ARDUOUS TASK THAT WILL REQUIRE THE FAITH AND HARD WORK OF ALL THOSE INVOLVED."

