



University Academy

CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL
AT NEW JERSEY CITY UNIVERSITY

275 West Side Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey 07305

"Educating tomorrows leaders, today"

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SCHOOL IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

September 14, 2011

Dear Parents:

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* (NCLB) requires that adequate yearly progress (AYP) in language arts literacy and mathematics be measured annually for each school in New Jersey.

AYP is based primarily on the results of the New Jersey state assessments given to students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. Schools must meet the state's academic proficiency benchmarks (see below), as well as other indicators such as test participation and attendance, to make AYP. These benchmarks increase on an incremental basis every three years.

Subject	Percent of Students Proficient		
	Elementary Grades 3, 4, & 5	Middle Grades 6, 7, & 8	High School Grade 11
Language Arts Literacy (Reading/Writing)	79%	86%	92%
Mathematics	83%	80%	86%

AYP is calculated for the total school population and for subgroups with students who have been enrolled in the school for the full academic year. The subgroups are as follows:

- Total Population
- Students with Disabilities
- Limited English Proficient
- White
- African-American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- American Indian/Native American
- Hispanic
- Other
- Economically Disadvantaged

NCLB allows for a "safe harbor" provision so that schools are not penalized for a particular student group's performance being below the goal, providing sufficient progress is made. For example, if the student group improved its performance by decreasing the number of students not proficient by at least 10 percent over the previous year, the student group would make AYP by qualifying for the safe harbor provision.

Schools that do not make AYP for one year receive an Early Warning designation to alert them that students did not meet at least one of the AYP indicators. If a school does not make AYP for *two or more* consecutive years in the same content area (language arts literacy and mathematics), it is designated a "school in need of improvement."

We have made significant improvement over the last 4 years University Academy but we are still identifies as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI) because we need to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in Mathematics and Language Arts for 2 years in a row on the High School Proficiency Assessment. However, we are not the only High School in Jersey City with a SINI designation. The list below represents the High Schools in Jersey City that are considered SINI. For More Info: <http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/accountability/ayp/1112>

- Henry Snyder High School – Year 8
- James J. Ferris High School – Year 8
- Lincoln High School – Year 9
- William Dickinson – Year 9

All schools in need of improvement that receive federal Title I funds must assemble a school improvement committee to develop a school improvement plan that identifies areas of need and programs and activities to help increase student achievement. As a parent, you are encouraged to contact your child's school principal to provide input to the school improvement plan.

Some of the steps we have already taken or plan to implement this year to address the problem(s) that placed your child's school in improvement status include the following:

- School Improvement Committee formulating School Improvement Plan
- Testing Skills Course for all 11th Graders
- Recruitment and Retention of Highly Qualified Teachers
- High Quality Professional Development for all Faculty/Staff
- Data-Driven Instruction Program that targets teaching/learning areas of need
- After-School HSPA Prep program for 11th and 12th Graders
- Motivational Speakers for increased academic achievement

In addition, Title I schools in need of improvement must implement certain interventions. For each consecutive year that UACHS does not make AYP, additional interventions must be applied. The school improvement requirements that apply to your child's school are checked off below.

☐ **Year 2 – School Choice:** Under NCLB, schools that did not make AYP for two consecutive years must offer students the opportunity to transfer to a high-performing school within the district if capacity is available. Your child may transfer to one of the following schools [**LIST SCHOOLS**]. Attached is an information sheet on the academic record, programs, and other features of these choice schools. The school district has certain obligations to provide or pay for transportation to the choice school. If you would like your child to be considered for transfer during the [**SCHOOL YEAR**] school year, please notify the school principal in writing by [**DATE**] so we can begin arrangements for these services. You will be contacted to discuss the specifics of your request. If you wish your child to remain at his/her current school, no action on your part is required.

☒ **Year 2 – Supplemental Educational Services:** Our district is unable to provide the choice option due to the following reasons: 1) University Academy Charter High School functions as a district and only has one school. 2) All other open enrollment public high schools in Jersey City are also considered Schools In Need of Improvement (SINI). In lieu of school choice, supplemental educational services (SES) will be offered to income-eligible students.

☒ **Years 2 & 3 – Supplemental Educational Services:** These services, such as tutoring, are offered over and above those ordinarily provided in the regular classroom during the normal school day and after-school program. *Students must be income eligible to receive SES.* Parents will be notified separately if their child is eligible. SES providers must be state-approved and posted on the New Jersey Department of Education Web site at www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/title1/ssp.pl?string=r&maxhits=10000. If you exercise this option and *your child is eligible*, the school must pay for these services, up to a threshold, using Title I funds. You will receive a list of local providers describing the services, qualifications, and evidence of effectiveness for each provider. Upon request, your child's teacher or principal will assist you in selecting an appropriate provider. (School choice must also be offered in Year 3.)

☐ **Year 4 – Corrective Action:** In addition to school choice and SES, as noted above, corrective action schools must also update their school improvement plans and describe the steps they will take to improve their students' performance. These include 1) providing scientifically based professional development; 2) instituting a new scientifically based curriculum; 3)

extending the school day/year; 4) replacing school staff; 5) decreasing management authority at the school; 6) restructuring the internal organization of the school; or 7) seeking advice from outside experts. You are encouraged to become involved with your school in this process.

Schools in corrective action must also participate in a comprehensive school review process called Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA). During the CAPA review, teams of educators, including those from outside of the district, will examine all aspects of the school's operations. The team will issue an extensive report summarizing its findings and recommendations. These recommendations are then included in the school's improvement plan.

Your child's school was identified for corrective action for the following reasons: **[LIST REASONS]**

- ☐ **Year 5 – Planning for Restructuring:** Because the school has not made AYP for five consecutive years, the district must restructure it, developing an alternate governance plan during Year 5. In addition to school choice and SES, as noted above, one or more of the following governance alternatives may be selected:

- Implement any major restructuring of the school's governance.
- Re-open the school as a public charter school as defined by and consistent with state statute and regulation.
- Replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make adequate progress.

The district develops its plan for restructuring the school in Year 5 of improvement. If this school does not make AYP for the next consecutive year, the restructuring plan will be implemented at the start of the next school year. You are encouraged to provide input to the district's deliberations during this planning year.

- ☐ **Year 6 – Restructuring:** The school has not made AYP for six consecutive years and is now in restructuring. The district, in consultation with key stakeholder groups, has selected the following governance alternative:

- Implement any major restructuring of the school's governance.
- Re-open the school as a public charter school as defined by and consistent with state statute and regulation.
- Replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make adequate progress.

In addition to school choice and SES, as noted above, this alternative along with other changes to the operations and academic programs at the school will be implemented during this school year to help increase student academic achievement. You are invited to participate during the implementation of the restructuring plan.

We want to continue serving your child, and we'll use all the resources available to us to help our students achieve. An important part of this effort involves parental involvement and support. University Academy is currently implementing a Title I Parental Involvement Policy and through our PTO hope that you can help develop a new Title I School-Parent Compact. **We encourage you to become involved in this and other initiatives at your child's school by attending Parent's Night on Thursday September 22, 2011 from 6-8pm or by contacting Dean Erie Lugo @ 201-200-3200 (UACHS Principal).** Remember that Building and maintaining a high-quality school is a job for all school stakeholders and the local community.

We will continue to communicate with you throughout the year regarding the school improvement efforts underway and hope you will join us in supporting our students and teachers as we work toward reaching our goals for next year.

Yours in education,

Erie Lugo, Jr.
UACHS Dean/Principal