

GLEN ROCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

I'm writing to you about the recent release by US News magazine of school rankings. This year, Glen Rock High School was not considered for a 2017 rank. School leaders tremble at a rise or fall in such rankings and real estate agents delight when their territory does well! Unfortunately, these rankings succeed at selling magazines but do not accurately depict one's local school system. The information offered can lead to a confused and upset parent community.

As a result, when these rankings are made public, school district leaders spring into action to not only present accurate and informative data but simultaneously explain why those glossy magazines and slick websites bear little resemblance to what is actually taking place in the schools. ***It is simply impossible for a school district to improve or decline dramatically over two years.*** Accurate year-to-year data, provided by district leaders, and state agencies, over time is necessary to have a true picture of the quality of a school system.

As you know, since their inception, the PARCC assessments have generated a strong negative response from some parents, and educators, within Glen Rock and neighboring communities. During SY2014 – 2015 and SY2015-2016, Glen Rock High School experienced a large "test refusal" and as a result the NJ Department of Education required action plans to address increasing participation on the PARCC assessments in three of the schools. Now that the PARCC assessment is a NJDOE graduation requirement, it is safe to assume that PARCC participation will increase. I am happy to report that our high school had fewer PARCC test refusals this year and this bodes well for the school.

This year, the US News publishers used 2015 – 2016 data from the PARCC state assessments to calculate the 2017 rankings – step 1 in their methodology. Additionally, they adjusted the methodology to include state assessment results for economically disadvantaged student performance in step 1. In my analysis, corroborated by US News, the low PARCC participation rates at GRHS on the SY2015 - 2016 PARCC assessments contributed to the high school not passing step 1 in their 2017 methodology to be considered for the rankings. This does not mean that Glen Rock High School is not a great school; or that anyone neglected any aspect of the school program, etc. I have tracked Glen Rock's rankings throughout my time as superintendent and there is no consistency to the rankings over time.

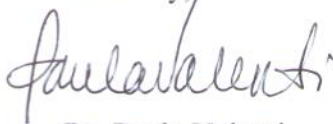
The Glen Rock Public School system is moving forward and great things are happening within the schools; for SY2017 – 2018 we are positioned to expand district communications and K-12 instructional programs with curriculum updates, three terrific technology initiatives: a new website, learning management system and a 1 to 1 laptop program for grades 9 - 12! Additional facility improvements are also underway.

Your experience with the Glen Rock Public Schools should serve as your quality guide. Your children are the best barometer. Are they learning? Are they growing academically? Are they graduating with the skills, knowledge and aptitude they need to be the type of adults/citizens we want and need?

If you are looking for information about our schools, begin with the NJDOE published School Performance Reports. The NJDOE School Performance Reports are in their second year of publication and were discussed at the April 24, 2017 Glen Rock Board Meeting. Credit should be given to the NJDOE for attempting to gather and publish data that is consistent, updated with the input of school leaders, based on current research, and equal across all districts in New Jersey.

All districts, regardless of their success level, have to be continually focused on meeting the academic, social and extracurricular needs of their students. The most important attributes of the Glen Rock Public School district is the excellent teaching and learning that goes on in our classrooms, on our stages and fields of competition. That is where we will continue to concentrate our efforts. Everyone will continue to do their best to make to make our schools a welcoming, progressive and successful place for students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paula Valenti".

Dr. Paula Valenti
Superintendent