

# CONNELLSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## Notice of Adequate Yearly Progress, Public School Choice Please Read: Important Information Affecting Your Child

August 12, 2009

Dear Zachariah Connell Parent or Guardian,

We would like to make you aware of the choices and resources available to you based on the progress of your child's school under the guidelines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I am writing to let you know that Zachariah Connell is Making Progress, based on 2007-2008 Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA) results and is in Making Progress: in School Improvement I.

### ***What are the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?***

The PSSA is an annual exam given to Pennsylvania students at various grade levels to measure their academic progress. The state uses the PSSA to determine whether Connellsville Area School District and each of our schools are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is determined by how successful districts and schools are in meeting state goals for attendance, graduation rates, test participation and academic progress.

To make AYP, a school must meet the state goals for the student body as a whole as well for each subgroup of students. A subgroup consists of 40 or more students in a school in the following categories: ethnicity, socio-economic status, Individual Education Plan (IEP) – Special Education, and English Language Learner (ELL) status. The number of subgroups that a school has determines the number of "targets" that it must meet to make AYP. For the prior 2007-08 school year, students at the Connellsville Area School District made remarkable progress in Reading and Mathematics proficiency on 94% of the 15 targets.

Zachariah Connell met 100% of AYP targets in 2009. Below are highlights of reading and mathematics achievements:

#### **Reading**

- In Grade 3-5 the percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced increased from 56.8% in 2008 to 58.8% in 2009.

#### **Mathematics**

- In Grade 3-5 the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced increased from 62.5% in 2008 to 73.84% in 2009.

However, based on the performance of some subgroups, Zachariah Connell has been identified in AYP STATUS by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Zachariah Connell's PSSA results indicate that the school did not meet the state's academic achievement targets for the SECOND year in a row, based on 2008-09 PSSA results.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Proficient/Adv</u>	<u>State Target</u>
SUBGROUP	58%	63%

<u>Math</u>	<u>Proficient/Adv</u>	<u>State Target</u>
SUBGROUP	73.2%	56%

Please review the attachment for an explanation of school improvement and more information on how the Connellsville

Area School District compares to other Pennsylvania schools.

**Action Plan for Improving Student Achievement**

As a result of an in depth needs assessment, Zachariah Connell has identified the following areas as key strategies for instructional improvement:

- Alternative Method of Instruction in Reading
- Additional Instruction Time
- Targeted Instructional Content
- Professional Development

As outlined in our school improvement plan, the school district and the Pennsylvania Department of Education will be offering Zachariah Connell assistance to implement these strategies.

**Explanation of School Choice Option**

According to NCLB, Zachariah Connell must offer students the choice to transfer to another school in the district not in School Improvement. Please know that the staff at Zachariah Connell has a relationship with your child and wants to continue serving your child all the way through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. However, if you feel your child will be better served in another school in the district, you may request a transfer for your child to one of the following schools: (1) Connellsville Township, or (2) South Side. If you are the parent of an exceptional child or a child with limited English proficiency, please call Mr. Ira Chrise at 724-628-3300 ext. 314 for the available public school choices that best meet the needs of your child. (Educational records are confidential and access is limited to school officials having a genuine need to know.)

Choice options are limited based on geography, attendance zones, magnet schools and eligible school alternatives.

Transportation to one of these schools will be provided by the school district for as long as Zachariah Connell remains in Title I School Improvement. (Zachariah Connell must make AYP for two consecutive years to exit School Improvement.) If a requested transfer is approved, your child will be permitted to attend the choice school until he or she completes the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, however the district will not pay transportation costs once the school exits school improvement.

If you would like to request that your child be transferred to one of these other schools, please complete the "Request for School Transfer" form enclosed for each child and return the form to Mr. Ron Keefer, Director of Federal Programs at 732 Rockridge Road, PO Box 861, Connellsville, PA 15425 by September 4, 2009. The district will respond to your request by September 11, 2009 with written notice regarding your child's school assignment and transportation availability. You then will have an opportunity to communicate whether you accept the approved choice or want your child to remain at Zachariah Connell. If you do not complete this form and return it by September 4, 2009, we will assume that your child will remain at Zachariah Connell.

**How parents and Families Can Help Improve Student Achievement**

Parent support is essential to the success of Zachariah Connell. Communicating with your child's teachers, making sure your child attends school regularly, helping your child with homework, monitoring your child's television time, volunteering in the classroom, and participating in school decision-making are important.

The district-wide parent involvement policy will be updated this fall. If you are interested in providing input for this policy, please call Mr. Ron Keefer at 724-628-3300 ext 307. In addition, Zachariah Connell will have its annual meeting to revise our school parent involvement policy and parent compact and to review parent rights under Title I.

The many successes at Zachariah Connell cannot be measured in one test and we appreciate your continued support. We must admit, however, that if ALL of our students are not doing well, we are not as good as we can be. That is our challenge, our goal and our commitment. Please continue to work with us to make sure that we achieve success for every student.

Sincerely,

Traci Kuhns  
PRINCIPAL

Enclosures:     Additional NCLB Information  
                      Choice Selection Form

## **ADDITIONAL NCLB INFORMATION**

### **Explanation of School Improvement**

Any school that fails to meet state targets or Adequate yearly Progress (AYP) for one year is considered in Warning and is not identified for School Improvement. However, when the school fails to meet targets for two years in a row the school must be identified as a school in need of improvement and given the designation of School Improvement I. For each successive year that a school does not make AYP, the school advances to another level of school improvement. For example, a school that is in School Improvement I that fails to make AYP will be identified as School Improvement II. A school that fails to make AYP for the fourth year is listed in Corrective Action I and for the fifth year, Corrective Action II.

If a school makes AYP at any point after being identified in School Improvement, the school will not advance to the next level. The status is defined as Making Progress and still considered in School Improvement at the same level as the previous year. If the school makes AYP for the second consecutive year the building is no longer in school improvement. On the other hand if the school misses AYP after a year of Making Progress the school proceeds to the next designated level of School Improvement.

### **Comparison of SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME with other schools in Pennsylvania**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education tracked statewide gains in student achievement between 2002 and 2008 in reading and mathematics for the following subjects and grades:

#### **Reading**

- At Grade 5 the District had a gain of 2.2 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 2 percentage points.
- At Grade 8 the District had a gain of 1 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 3 percentage points.
- At Grade 11 the District had a gain of 10 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 0 percentage points.

#### **Mathematics**

- At Grade 5 the District had a gain of 2.2 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 2 percentage points.
- At Grade 8 the District had a gain of 3 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 2 percentage points.
- At Grade 11 the District had a gain of 14.7 percentage points compared to a statewide gain of 3 percentage points.

### **What are Supplemental Educational Services?**

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) are extra academic services available in schools identified for School Improvement II or Corrective Action. Free tutoring is offered after school or on Saturday to help eligible students to improve in reading, mathematics and science.

### **How Parents and Families Can Help Improve Student Achievement**

Your support is not only essential to your child's success, but to the success of the school as well. Under NCLB, parents are to be involved in the school improvement process and to help write the school's School Plan. This is the plan to help raise the student achievement of all children in the school. Parents also have the right to help create or update the school's parent involvement policy and the home-school compact. You can contribute to your child's academic success by ensuring that your child attends school regularly, comes prepared to learn and completes all homework. Please plan to attend the Title I and Parent School Community Council meetings to obtain more information about school improvement activities and parent engagement opportunities at your child's school.

