

Absecon Board of Education

The Absecon Board of Education and its administration joins with anyone who is concerned about education funding and segregation in New Jersey. This includes Pastor Francois who released a statement discussing the harm that segregation has on students.

Absecon Superintendent Dan Dooley and Pastor Francois have had several positive and productive discussions following the release of the aforementioned statement. At the heart of the issues, Superintendent Dooley and Pastor Francois agree about the importance of educating poor and minority students.

However, as Superintendent Dooley explained, Absecon is an unlikely target for anyone with these concerns. The Absecon's student body is 47% minority, and as its community continues to change, so does its student body, becoming more diverse year-over-year. The Department of Education has found that 45% of Absecon students are "economically disadvantaged" (which it defines as students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch). Absecon is fighting to send its high school students to a quality high school that it specifically selected because, among other important educational factors, has a diverse student body. Absegami High School is nearly 60% minority.

Of particular importance are the actual students that would be impacted by the proposed severance from Pleasantville. Over the past five school years, Absecon sent an average of 31 students to Pleasantville High School as part of its sending-receiving agreement. These are the students who would be impacted by creating a new sending-receiving agreement with the Greater Egg Harbor School District; 92% of these Absecon students are minority. This is illustrated in the below chart:

School Year	Total Students	Minority Students	Minority %
2015-16	30	29	96.67%
2016-17	43	38	88.37%
2017-18	27	26	96.30%
2018-19	27	25	92.59%
2019-20	26	22	84.62%

These minority high school students have driven Absecon to seek to provide them with the opportunity to attend a diverse, high performing high school.

Absecon also hopes that by offering a higher performing high school as an option for its students, it will encourage those students who traditionally have used the School Choice Program to instead attend a high school with a more diverse student population. Presently, a majority of Absecon students who use the School Choice Program attend either Ocean City High School (12% minority) or Mainland Regional High School (30% minority).

There is no question that Pleasantville over the years has not operated in an efficient and effective manner. Absecon has made numerous efforts to be part of the conversation to help improve these issues. Instead, each of these attempts have been ignored by prior administrations (who sadly have not remained in place long enough to establish and sustain lasting educational change in Pleasantville). Unfortunately, for years, Pleasantville has disregarded Absecon's efforts to have a seat at the table. As with any relationship, Absecon has chosen to find a new partner that not only provides its students with a diverse,

high quality education, but also has been clear in its intention to create a partnership with the Absecon community.

The Absecon Board of Education has a responsibility to provide Absecon students with a diverse, high quality education that will prepare them for the challenges ahead. Presently the District has a 47% minority student population, which continues to grow each year. Of the students presently choosing to utilize the District's sending-receiving agreement, 92% of these students on average are minority. Absecon has an obligation to provide its minority students with the best possible education for their development. Upon analyzing all options in the neighboring communities, Absecon determined that Greater Egg Harbor Regional's Absegami High School provided its students with an extremely diverse educational environment, while also providing the most opportunities for its students growth and success. Just as Pleasantville makes decisions it believes are in the best interest for its students, Absecon must do the same.