

Better Education is Demand

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Around the same time President Barack Obama delivered his back-to-school pep talk in Arlington, Va., yesterday, roughly 50 Jersey City residents rallied in front of School 11 on Bergen Avenue, demanding improvements in the city's high schools, especially the dropout rate.

The rally was organized by Parents and Communities United for Education (PCUE), the Jersey City chapter of the Statewide Education Organizing Committee, which advocates for better education in low-income school districts.

"We want graduation for all students in Jersey City," said Loyda Golston, vice president of PCUE, surrounded by people chanting "Graduation for All" and "Education, not Incarceration."

"There's a schoolhouse to jail-house mentality here," Golston added. "We want kids to have the equal opportunity to graduate and go on to college or trade school."

According to PCUE's lead organizer Mahmood Ketabchi, more than 450 students dropped out of city public high schools last year.

"We're here to highlight some of the shortcomings of the Jersey City school districts," he said.

According to the state Department of Education's Web site, the Jersey City high school dropout rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 6.2 percent, down from 8.1 percent the previous year.

The dropout rate in the state for the 2007-2008 year was 1.7 percent, according to the Web site.