

## Lamont Repollet, Alumnus The College of New Jersey, '94; Kean University, '00

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Asbury Park, NJ - Think Bruce Springsteen, Stone Pony, wide sandy beaches, miniature golf, cotton candy, Convention Hall, long boardwalk filled with amusement rides, Jersey Shore memorabilia, bicycles built for two and three and four and five, ice cream, taffy, fudge, fries, burgers, fried clams, train station, the "So-Ho-hip" Berkeley Oceanfront Hotel, scenic lakes, and a downtown with some of Jersey Shore's best Zagat-rated restaurants.

"And don't forget the schools," said Asbury Park Superintendent of Schools Dr. Lamont Repollet, an undergraduate alumnus of The College of New Jersey (then Trenton State College) and graduate alumnus of Kean University. Yes, he is talking the public schools, which had the reputation of being a "failing" educational system for the past several decades and something that Asbury Park residents and visitors never would have listed in the same category of assets as the boardwalk and beach.

"I intend to make the schools the anchor of Asbury Park's renaissance - with the high school being the flagship. I am going to build a brighter future for our students and for the entire community. We are going to make the schools and educational, economic and cultural asset for Asbury Park," he said noting that the school district is the largest employer in town with approximately 700 employees.

The 44-year-old Dr. Repollet, who assumed his job in October of 2014, is fond of words beginning with "re" and coincidentally corresponding to the first two letters of his last name. He has no doubt that he and his district colleagues are up for the challenge of a "renaissance" to "rebuild," "retool," and "restore." He will get a lot of help from another "Re" - Reginald Mirthil the Asbury Park High School's principal, who has a Rowan University undergraduate degree, Kean University graduate degree - and an Asbury Park High School degree.

When Lamont Repollet started as a superintendent, he carried a white hard hat at his side. The hat was a message to his students, co-workers, and the Asbury Park community that "we were going to work together like a construction crew to rebuild the school district.

The Repollet "recipe" for successful "results" is a series of step-by-step procedures, which Dr. Repollet labels as ACE - an acronym for Assess, Create, and Execute. "Assessment is the process of collecting and evaluating data from varied sources in order to gain a better understanding of the situation . . . Then create by nurturing new and expansive patterns of thinking . . . and finally execute the strategic plans - actually implement the dreams and reflect on the results."

However, after one year, Dr. Repollet has proven to be a man of his word and more than the inspirational words he likes to reiterate. Asbury Park High School's 49 percent graduation rate in 2013-2014 is now a 66 percent graduation rate in 2014-2015. "And we are just beginning," said Dr. Repollet.

Dr. Repollet sees his ability to transform the schools as directly linked to his alma maters - two senior public institutions of higher education in New Jersey. "I am so honored and lucky to have been enrolled at such a quality undergraduate school like The College of New Jersey. TCNJ really steered me on the right course. I was an Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) student that made education accessible to kids like me - with no resources, but a lot of determination," he said, while giving a shout-out of praise for the New Jersey EOF program that provides financial assistance and support services (e.g. counseling, tutoring, and developmental course work) to students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who attend institutions of higher education in New Jersey.

He grew up in what then was a "scrappy," diverse, lower-class neighborhood of Carteret, New Jersey, known as "Chrome." Dr. Repollet noted that on a recent and first trip to Paris, France (a surprise gift from his wife on the occasion of his birthday), he stood on the top of the Eiffel Tower, gazed in awe over the city of Paris and determined "with tears in my eyes and his wife at his side" to write a book entitled "From Chrome to Paris" - a chronicle of his "pinch-me" journey from his youth to where he is today.

Mr. James Boatwright, director of the EOF Program at TCNJ "absolutely changed my life. He gave me the building blocks for the rest of my life," said Dr. Repollet whose BA was in Communications, class of 1994. "I was awarded the Tri-State Consortium EOF Award of the Year - but all of my success was due to my mentor . . . TCNJ transformed me into a responsible young man."

However, it was Kean's graduate program that shaped him as a leader in his profession. "With a Masters of Arts in Educational Administration from Kean University (class of 2000), I obtained the skills I needed - and developed the passion for the field - to go forward and make a difference," said Dr. Repollet who was appointed to the Kean University Board of Trustees in 2001. "As a Kean trustee, I not only am giving back to my graduate school, but also am still learning from my colleagues on the board and from Kean's fine administrators, who are eager to collaborate on strategies and programs that benefit my students in Asbury Park High School."

He obtained his Ed.D. in Education Leadership at the Nova Southeastern University and then went on to become principal of his hometown high school in Carteret, New Jersey, a position he held for nine years. Residing in Somerset with his wife Darlene and two daughters Lauryn and Taylor, Dr. Repollet said he never will "forget the joy" he felt upon being selected as superintendent of schools in Asbury Park . . . I realized that I had reached the pinnacle as an educational leader . . . I felt humbled but determined to embrace the enormous responsibility in front of me."

Lamont's praise for his alma mater mirrors the comments from Reginald Mirthil about his higher education experiences at Rowan University (class of 2000) as an EOF student and later at Kean University (class of 2005) in the same educational leadership graduate program that shaped Dr. Repollet.

With a Rowan BA in Elementary Education, Mr. Mirthil taught elementary school at Jersey City and then Roselle. "I struggled at first - the students' challenges were overwhelming. During my time teaching, I enrolled at Kean which gave me the tools I needed to face these challenges."

After holding jobs as assistant principal and principal in the Roselle and Edison school districts, Mr. Mirthil was offered in 2012 the job as principal of his high school alma mater, from which he graduated in 1996. Improvements in the academic performance of the students were evident within a very short time. The addition of Lamont Repollet to the mix has been a "dream come true . . . We are going to make this district one of the most respected districts in the state - and if Lamont has his way - in the country," said Mr. Mirthil.