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SUPERINTENDENT SHAFER UNVEILS POSITIVE TRENDS IN PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Shafer credits educators' and administrators' efforts in bringing chronic absenteeism down, standardized test scores & graduation rate up

Photo: State Schools Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer addresses Paterson Public Schools administrators at her Superintendent's Institute this week.

PATERSON – State Schools Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer kicked off her Superintendent's Institute for district administrators at Passaic County Community College this week by unveiling positive trends in the district in school attendance, standardized test scores and the graduation rate.

Of the nine grades that take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PAARC) exam, six showed improvement in math and eight showed improvement in language arts and literacy, according to data released by the state.

“This is growth, right here,” Shafer said as she displayed a presentation slide. “There’s still a lot of work to do. But this is great news for each and every one of you here because you put a lot of time, a lot of energy, and a lot of work in making this happen.”

At the same time, Paterson Public Schools’ district-wide campaign launched last year against chronic absenteeism showed positive trends. Half of the district’s elementary schools improved their chronic absenteeism rate from the 2016-17 school year to the 2017-18 school year, according to district data. A third of the high schools also improved in chronic absenteeism for the same time period.

“There’s still a lot of work to do,” Shafer said. “But for the first year of having a campaign and really focusing on chronic absenteeism, I think we really put a dent into it. Everyone is pushing as we continue to improve attendance. But we can’t let our guard down.”

To bolster the district’s efforts to make sure students get to class, 17 chronic absentee specialists will be hired on a part-time basis, Shafer said.

Shafer also noted that the district’s high school graduation rate increased 42 percent from 2009 to 2017 to reach 87 percent.

“This is a lot of hard work by a lot of people and I’m very appreciative of that,” Shafer said. “Once you get that high, it’s hard to keep it up there so we’ve got to work even harder.”

Paterson School Board President Oshin Castillo said the data indicated that the Paterson Public Schools district is heading in the right direction as it anticipates moving to local control in the year 2020.

“We recognize that there is much work that still has to be done,” Castillo said. “But we applaud Superintendent Shafer, her administration and all of the district’s educators for taking these great steps forward.”

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