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## **PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS RELEASES LATEST PROGRESS ON SPEECH THERAPY COMPENSATORY SERVICES**

*District's in-house speech therapists working toward eliminating backlog that began in 2016-17*

PATERSON – Paterson Public Schools special education administrators reported today that 6,468 hours of compensatory speech therapy services have been completed as of November 30, reducing the backlog of those hours that began in the 2016-17 school year.

“Special education students who need speech therapy must get the services to which they are entitled,” said Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer. “We still have a long way to go in working through the backlog of compensatory services. But we are moving in the right direction and we will not waver in our commitment to our students and their families.”

“The students always must come first,” said Chief of Special Education Cheryl Coy. “We are doing everything possible to provide students with the services they need. We face some challenging circumstances, but we are undauntedly moving forward.”

In addition to the completed hours of compensatory services, the backlog was further reduced by 709 hours due to students being discharged after completing their programs and parents declining the offer of compensatory services.

A backlog of 11,622 in compensatory service hours remains from the 2016-17 school year, and 17,024.5 hours remain from the 2017-18 school year.

Public school districts are obligated to provide speech therapy services to those students who have them included in their individual education plans, or IEPs. Paterson Public Schools is facing the same challenges as other New Jersey urban school districts in providing those services. Those challenges can be exacerbated by the sheer volume of students who need the services, and the scarcity of education professions qualified to provide the services.

Paterson Public Schools has recently hired 20 new speech therapists, bringing the district's total number of speech therapists to 48. Also, the district will begin providing speech therapy sessions to students on Saturdays beginning on January 26, 2019.

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