

MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION BOARD RETREAT

September 8, 2022 – 6:08 p.m.
Remote - Zoom

Presiding: Comm. Vincent Arrington

Present:

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Susana Peron, Deputy Superintendent
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel
Boris Zaydel, Esq., Board Counsel

Comm. Emanuel Capers
Comm. Jonathan Hodges

Comm. Dania Martinez
Comm. Corey Teague

Absent:

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz
Comm. Manuel Martinez
Comm. Nakima Redmon, Vice President
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, President

Comm. Arrington read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused adequate and electronic notice of this meeting:

**Board Retreat
September 8, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.
Virtual
90 Delaware Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

GOAL-SETTING WITH NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Comm. Arrington: At this point, Kathleen, we're going to turn the meeting over to you according to the agenda. I would call you by your last name, but I don't want to mess it up so I'm just going to say Kathleen. Welcome Kathleen and I'm going to turn the meeting over to you at this point.

Ms. Kathleen Helewa: Thank you so much. I appreciate that. It's wonderful to see Paterson familiar faces and just for those of you who are not so familiar with me, I am Kathleen Helewa, your Field Service Representative from New Jersey School Boards. I just want to make sure that my audio is okay. I'm in a school district and I'm wearing a mask right now. Can everybody hear me okay?

Comm. Capers: We can hear you good. Good afternoon, Kathleen, it's good to see you.

Ms. Helewa: It is very good to see you and to hear you. Thank you very much. I hope to see you again at future county meetings that the association puts on and also to provide you with the kind of professional development that you need. I will tell you that my favorite conversation to have with boards is the annual goal-setting session. It's really a very visionary exercise. It's about looking forward and in Paterson I was very privileged to help facilitate the development of your 5-year strategic plan. It's very exciting for me to work with the Board again. As you know, as experienced Commissioners know, once you have that strategic plan in place, it really does make goal-setting an awful lot easier for everybody involved because your community has participated in telling you where your focus areas should be, all of your stakeholders. It was a very robust, well-attended process. It was a real joy to facilitate and to present to the Board and to see that pass. Thank you again for having me and for inviting me here. I did prepare a PowerPoint that I think some veterans have probably seen some of the graphics, but when I was preparing for it earlier this afternoon, I thought it might be a useful visual. So, if you don't mind, I can share my screen. Is that good for everybody? Everybody good and can see our opening slide? We're going to go through this in a pretty efficient manner. I'd like to start out with this graphic and I know our veterans have seen it before. These are the types of goals that boards need to be aware of and that we discuss as we go through our year on the dais. Merit goals and superintendent goals are not something that we typically talk about. Merit goals are contractual so that's not part of the conversation tonight and superintendent goals are set by the superintendent to further their own professional development. So the Board's not really involved in those settings. When talk about district goals and Board goals, those are the two larger circles on this graph, those are of crucial importance to Board governance. Everybody here owns the district goals. The Superintendent is responsible for completing them, and your Superintendent presents draft goals to the Board because she has a unique viewpoint, the 10,000-foot view over what the school district needs. She has the boots on the ground, she brings those concerns to you, and we encode them into district goals that are ultimately approved by the Board to help move you forward for the next academic year. District goals hit all of these areas. Your program, your instruction, your staffing, professional development is a big one, facilities and finance, all of those are addressed and affected by your district goals. Board goals are the smaller circle because that's the domain of the Board. Board goals are not required by law, but they're certainly a best practice and they help keep the Board focused on the most crucial areas of its processes and procedure in its governance role. That being said, and please do unmute yourself if you have any questions because I can't see everybody's visual with my screen, but does anybody have any questions about these particular types of goals or the conversation we're about to embark upon?

Comm. Arrington: We're good, Kathleen.

Ms. Helewa: Moving on, I also want to have us focus a little bit on what these goals are going to inform in particular. When you're sitting together in the spring, you're going to be doing the Superintendent evaluation piece and it is in statute that your

Superintendent's evaluation does need to be based in part on district goals. It's a requirement, unlike the Board goals, but as I said, this is one of the most rewarding conversations that we have because district goals drive school improvement and student achievement. They set annual priorities in front of your public. This is a very public exercise. These are going to be publicized and voted upon by the Board, so you have that accountability to your stakeholders. Also, it ensures that the Board and your Superintendent and your administration were all on the same page. Questions that need to be asked before these goals are written and voted upon are all asked here so that we all demonstrate the level of understanding that we need to make sure that the Board can provide the resources that administration needs to move your district forward. District goals are a crucial part of that. You can't do it without them. When we're looking to set district goals, the Board needs to consider all of the following: your mission and vision for your district, your strategic plan, the data that your administration presents you throughout the year, and we'll talk about that tonight, and previous goals, sometimes there are multiyear goals and goal areas that you need to keep revisiting. That's important too. To revisit your mission and vision, I think these are probably very familiar to you, but it's worth reading aloud. Your mission statement is that as a district, recognizing your proud traditions, diverse community, and partnerships, the mission of the Paterson Public School District provides an academically rigorous, safe, and nurturing educational environment that meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students as you prepare them for post-secondary education and career. That is what your mission is self-stated. This didn't come from Trenton. This came from Paterson. Your vision, where you want to be, is that you will develop, and you will be a leader in 21st century innovation where your students will develop habits of lifelong learning and excel academically in order to become future ready leaders. Keep those themes in mind as we go through tonight's exercises. Those are uniquely Paterson. Those are Paterson central. Going forward, revisiting your four goal areas for your strategic plan, your goals need to touch some of these goal areas, your annual goals. They are teaching and learning, facilities, communications and connections, and social/emotional learning. I'm wondering if anyone has any thoughts or questions before we go on to the draft district goals.

Comm. Arrington: I'm good so far, Kathleen.

Ms. Helewa: Excellent. Thank you. What I am going to do is I'm going to put up the next slide for Superintendent Shafer to speak to. Here are draft district goals for the Board's consideration which also touch those areas, help to fulfill those areas of your 5-year strategic plan. Superintendent Shafer, if you'd like to speak to these, I would love to be able to have the Board hear your thoughts on what you'd like to propose.

Ms. Shafer: Good evening, everyone. Cicely Warren is in class tonight, but she has been spearheading the equity goal. We have had equity training all of last year with the cabinet, the principals, the vice principals, and this year we started with our Administrative Institute, training principals who will now train their staff. We're now drilling down to the staff, and we have a pretty large committee of about 50 individuals looking at equity in every area possible, from policy to curriculum to after school activities. The goal for equity is to increase district school capacity to be equity focused as evidenced by 70% of the schools completing 5-8 equity based professional learning activities in support of their annual school plans. Every annual school plan for every school in the district has an equity goal and as we drill down to the staff and provide professional development to the staff on equity, we are looking for 70% of the schools to complete 5-8 equity based professional learning activities. Goal 2 is NJQSAC. As everyone knows, we'll be going through a full QSAC review this year. This is the first one since local control. What we're asking here and presenting as a goal is when going

through the NJQSAC evaluation process the district will meet a minimum score of 80% in the DPR areas of instruction and program, fiscal management, governance, operations, and personnel by the end of the 22/23 school year. Our academic goal, which comes under instruction and program under Assistant Superintendent Joanna Tsimpedes is 70% of our students in grades K-2 will increase their reading comprehension levels by a minimum of three levels by the end of 22/23 school year.

Ms. Helewa: Thank you very much, Superintendent Shafer. If you don't mind my stepping in, I can see that your equity goal, and I probably should've added this to the slide, but that's something that hits your teaching and learning goal and certainly your social/emotional learning area. Your QSAC goal hits just about all of them. Your teaching and learning, your facilities as far as operations go, and of course social/emotional learning, communications and connections are all tied in there. So, it very strongly hits your teaching and learning goal and your facilities goal, and certainly your academic goal absolutely is underscored by your teaching and learning goal and helps to bolster teaching and learning in the district. It is exciting to watch you guys get QSAC for the first time when you're under local control so congratulations again, and I can see why that would be worthy of the Board's full support as encoded in a district goal. That's the thoughts from administration and how to relate that back to the strategic plan, so I'll open it up to the Commissioners to see what your thoughts are on these three draft goals. Also, I would like to note, kudos and I think we can thank our strategic plan for this in having a nice, efficient amount of goals. In years past, I know Paterson had like eight district goals and we couldn't even fit them in the online Superintendent evaluation so I do need to offer my kudos on being able to refine things into a more manageable and more salient number of goals for the Board to consider and for your community stakeholders to learn about and to watch you fulfill if the Board sees these worthy of district goals. Again, they're Paterson's goals so with that I'm going to turn this over to the Commissioners for thoughts on these particular district goals as offered.

Comm. Arrington: Do any Commissioners have any questions, concerns or thoughts?

Comm. Hodges: I do. What are some of the equity-based professional learning activities that we should be looking at and be aware of? We have at least eight.

Ms. Shafer: I'm going to ask Joanna, David Cozart, or any of the assistant superintendents what are some of the activities that the schools will be participating in. I know we were going to give them some ideas and then also have them consider their own ideas.

Mr. David Cozart: Ms. Shafer, may I?

Ms. Shafer: Sure.

Mr. Cozart: Good evening, everyone. Each school will have their own team and committee to develop goals. It will look different at each location, but what does equity look like? Each school has to identify that component, look at what we say as the district what equity means for Paterson Public Schools, but the activities could vary regarding small group instruction, regarding kids going to different activities, regarding afterschool programs, the number of kids participating in particular athletic or academic groupings based upon whatever criteria they have. Everything they're looking at regarding equity will look different in each location. The annual schoolwide plan will drive their activities as well. The overall theme is equity and what it looks like in your building as a district goal of equity, but each school will have very unique activities

geared to their student population, whether it's based upon race or gender. It may be a mixture of both, but it will vary between each location and the annual schoolwide plan will drive that as well.

Comm. Hodges: What are some types of activities?

Mr. Cozart: It could be increasing the number of boys involved in coding in a particular school. It could be a number of students, especially the special education population and the bilingual population, getting involved into a general education population in regard to a certain academic activity. It would vary. It's what the equity looks like in that building because equity is not consistent across each district or each school within the district. Again, it was hard to say what activity per say, but it's going to be multiple activities per school. But again, it's based upon race, age, gender, and grade level. It's a variety of activities.

Dr. Peron: I'm sorry. I just wanted to share, Dr. Hodges, that some of the professional development activities are centered around bringing staff together to recognize and address racism, biases, and equities within our school system, and to work towards everyone acknowledging their biases. We want to create awareness and to really train staff on how to be inclusive with all the voices we have in our community, student voice, parent voice, teacher voice, staff voice, and things like that. We've been attending a number of professional development activities with Montclair State and those were based around topics such as that. We worked with all of the admins and the principals to create an equity statement and it was really inclusive of all of them. They were all surveyed, they all had input, they all had to create an equity goal, as Mr. Cozart stated, and we're going to further that professional development for our staff so that administrators can then work with staff, teachers work with kids, and create more advisory councils for students to be active. Taking a look at all of the resources and all of the funding and in the curriculum taking a look at are we diverse, are we really mirroring all of our cultures and languages and ethnicities in our curriculum. Things like that. The academic team is involved in that, as well as the teachers. Those are some of the types of professional development activities that we would be providing to admins so that they can then turnkey to their staff and so on and so forth.

Ms. Shafer: Let me add also that everyone comes with their own biases, opinions, and every school is different. You may have a school where racism is really prevalent. You can see it, but you may have another school where you can't see it, but you can see something else where the males get treated better than the females or something along those lines. Even when it comes to dealing with parents, they deal with parents differently with the male parent versus the female parent. It's really the schools looking at their culture and climate and putting their biases aside. That's what we had all of our professional development on at this point and then making a decision. What is it that we really need to address at our school to make it a better learning environment for the students? Are our male students performing or our female students outperforming our male students, why is that what can we do about that, and is it in certain subject areas? It's looking at all of that and then coming up with these equity-based learning activities that are going to advance the school.

Ms. Joanna Tsimpedes: Ms. Shafer, may I add to that?

Ms. Shafer: Yes.

Ms. Tsimpedes: A more specific example for you, Dr. Hodges, could be that the school will engage in a book study. One of the books that was recommended by Dr. Virella of

Montclair State was Grading for Equity. That's a book that the school or cohort of teachers can utilize as a professional learning activity to really enhance what grading means for equity and reinforce the work that we're doing as a district when it comes to grading and equity. That could be an example of an activity that a school could do. They can lead a PLC based on a book that centers around a specific piece of diversity, equity and inclusion. What we're going to do as a district is create sample professional learning activities, as well as allow the building administrators to come up with their own because they have come up with their own through the professional development that we've done with Montclair State. So that everyone understands, we are in a 3-year partnership with Montclair State around the work of equity. The mentality is to train from the top down. We as administrators of the district need to lead the charge of what equity is and what that means for our students. All of our administrators in the district received professional development last year and it wasn't a one-time session. It was twice a month for all administrators which was intense, and people had to actually produce something to show that they understood the work of equity. We then took it a step further this year and we started again at the admin institute with the continuation with the work that is going to happen this year, but we're taking it to the next level, and we are now bringing teachers into the fold because admins have now been trained. We need teachers to understand why it's important, what is equity, so everyone really understands the role that equity has in education and for our students. This year our teachers received the first professional development session on September 2nd and that was inclusive of all teachers in the district, all staff, and it's going to be a continuation, Dr. Hodges, where they will on November 8th continue receiving the professional development and build on what they're learning, and I believe there are two other sessions throughout the year. This is something that has been on our radar for a while, but we wanted to roll it out correctly so that everyone embraces it and understands the importance it has for our community.

Mr. Cozart: Just to add to that component, we have student voice as a part of this as well. Students will have opportunities to speak their truths, share their truths, and have other activities where they can demonstrate what equity means to them and their work environment as well.

Dr. Cicely Warren: Good evening, Commissioners. I don't know where you are in the discussion, but if I may give context and an overview and provide some clarity about the goal. Is that okay?

Ms. Shafer: Yes.

Dr. Warren: This started with the social justice committee that Ms. Shafer talked to you all about during the pandemic. A core team of volunteers including cabinet and district leadership received a 2-day training in courageous conversation, so we had a common language and a framework to discuss issues of social justice, implicit bias, identity, etc. That was the foundation. We took it from there to how do we apply that to actually improve conditions for our students and staff in the district. That is the yearlong professional development that Ms. Tsimpedes spoke to and also during that time the social justice committee was doing an internal audit of all the specific areas that we wanted to improve within the district. Those findings were presented during the leadership institute, as well as three priorities for the year. That's one track in which we're working with equity in the district. The other is increasing the capacity of administrators and faculty to lead and deliver instruction within the equity lens. That's what that professional development was about and also, as Mr. Cozart just stated, there's the youth aspect of what we're doing with youth equity stewardship where students, with the support of advisors, had to self-identify equity goals and areas in

which they wanted their schools to improve. The five schools that participated identified a pilot project which they completed last year. Year two of youth equity stewardship will include a new equity goal and project for students, as well as a professional development that students will deliver for their faculty. While that is going on, the expectation is that the administrators will take the training that they have received for the last year and a half and turnkey that to their staff. In order to ensure that they're doing that, two things have happened. Every school has to identify an equity goal that goes in their annual school plans. We already have a process for holding staff accountable for their annual school plans, that's the end of cycle review. Schools that are categorized are done with the support of the state. Our non-categorized schools, that's an in-house process. At the end of each cycle, we look at the goals, and there are four goals that our schools have, and we say did you meet your short-term markers? Have you actually implemented the strategies underneath each of those smart goals? The assistant superintendents will support federal programs in the cycle review. This equity goal is to ensure that number one, people have a goal in their annual school plan, which is the roadmap for every school for the school year, and number two, that they don't just put an empty goal and just wait for it to happen. They actually have to have 5-8 activities to ensure that their staff can actually reach the goal. For example, years ago we mandated that every school have an intervention period. It took us some time to realize that we had to teach people how to do intervention. We don't want to say make an equity goal and not teach people how to actually implement the goal. That's what the activities there are about. Ensuring that principals actually have professional development, dedicated time, and they provide the resources to the staff that is necessary for them to actually achieve their equity goal and their annual school plan. I hope that helped.

Comm. Hodges: I have another issue of equity of a different sort. If you were born here, English is your primary language, but you can graduate school and not be bilingual. But if you're not from Paterson, and the majority of the people here are not from Paterson, then you become or you learn to be bilingual and that gives you a somewhat different status because to serve your community it's very helpful to be bilingual. But if you're born here and you go to school in Paterson, that's not something that you learn to achieve, the ability to be bilingual, and it's something that we're going to have to address because all students that leave these halls in Paterson need to be bilingual, have the ability to speak at least two languages.

Dr. Warren: Dr. Hodges, just for clarification, are you referring to our world language program or the seal of bi-literacy or our dual language programs?

Comm. Hodges: I'm talking about dual language, being able to express yourself in more than one language.

Dr. Warren: Our students do take world language at the elementary level, so that's one opportunity. We also have parents who enroll their children, English and non-English dominant, in our dual language programs. As you're aware, we have the one at EWK and at Senator Frank Lautenberg and we're expanding to School No. 16 and the hope is that those students will continue all the way through so that they can graduate with the seal of biliteracy. Those are two things that are underway at the moment. I understand what you're saying in terms of ensuring that every student has that opportunity, but I'm sure Ms. Tsimpedes can speak more to world language and where that's offered in our schools, because that's the most accessible opportunity for all of our students.

Comm. Hodges: I was at a City Council meeting. I think the Superintendent was there as well because I mentioned it to her. Someone came up to me and said if you want to get a job in Paterson, in many cases you need to be able to speak two languages in order for them to hire you because the majority of the people here speak another language other than English. If you come here and apply and you can't speak another language, then you can't get hired. That's a concern. We need to find a way to augment the skills of the people here who have English as their primary language in order for that to be a truly equitable educational program that we're delivering to the students of this city.

Dr. Warren: Understood. I'll defer to Ms. Tsimpedes to talk about our world language offerings, but I will also say that one of the recommendations of the social justice committee in terms of the comprehensive equity plan is to have a dashboard so people can actually see the demographics of the people who are working for the district because sometimes perception doesn't always align with the actual data. That's something that would be helpful in that regard.

Comm. Hodges: I'm not talking about the people who work for the district. I'm talking about people who work...

Dr. Warren: Understood.

Comm. Arrington: Any other Commissioners have any questions, concerns or comments?

Comm. Capers: Yes, I did. Can you guys hear me?

Comm. Arrington: We hear you, Capers.

Comm. Capers: Two questions I have just looking at the goals. Let me pull it up. I just want to make sure I'm reading it right. For goal number three, the academic goal, 70% of our students in grades K-2 will increase their reading. Is it a problem we can't start from Pre-K?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Preschool is utilizing a different measurement. They don't utilize the running records for their comprehension. When we look at our K-2, we're basing it on the foundational skills inclusive of the reading comprehension levels that the students are mastered by research. Preschool has a different curriculum, follows different standards from the state when it comes to identifying what their expectation is by the end of preschool. Preschool would be a whole different measurement than kindergarten would. If you look at the standards, Comm. Capers, that preschool students adhere to and master, it's not inclusive of being able to read to a specific level. That starts in kindergarten with the development of phonics and understanding the sounds, sight words, etc. They start recognizing them in preschool. It's not that they're not recognizing them, but when they get to kindergarten it's a different curriculum that they follow. But also, the assessment that they take in order to measure their comprehension levels is based on the beginning of kindergarten, not preschool.

Comm. Capers: Got it. Another point to add to that academic goal, I know we always talked about it but we never added this component to address it as a goal. We want to improve K-2, but the regarding the African American black and brown males, what are we doing to address that now in this goal, in this academic goal in writing? I know we have the all-boys school coming up and different things we're looking at trying to

address, but what are we doing now as a goal? How can we make this a goal to address this issue now, this coming year?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Is it that you're asking that the academic goal be specific to black and brown students?

Comm. Capers: Male students, the least performing kids. That's a fact and that's a statistic, right? So, what are we doing to address that?

Ms. Tsimpedes: When we look at K-2, that's the foundation for all students and if you look at our district, our district is made up of all different subgroups inclusive of English language learners, special education students and so forth. That captures many of the different populations that we have. It captures all of our populations. What we're doing here for K-2 is ensuring that our students are increasing their reading comprehension levels and if they're not, we're providing that additional piece of progress monitoring to the students who are not making those gains. Schools will be able to see. Right now, they're coming in in kindergarten and we're going to assess them where they are in their reading comprehension levels, same thing with 1st and 2nd, and based on where they are, and I don't want to say put into treatment, but when we teach to them and incorporate the progress monitoring skills and the interventions, we should be able to see their growth. If we're not seeing a growth and we look at the demographics we can then see. It could be English language learners too. It's not just black and brown because English language learners also are a deficit when it comes to comprehension levels.

Comm. Capers: How about addressing middle school, high school reading comprehension and stuff like that?

Ms. Tsimpedes: There are interventions. What we did a few years ago, Comm. Capers, was we actually had for the first time an intervention program for our K-8 ELA students which we didn't have before. We had iStation come in and iStation was able to assess students where they were and provide that level of intervention and help teachers understand where the kids are in their learning and what is it that they need to have in order to progress to the next level. That was something new that came aboard because of the fact that our students were home for 15 instructional months during the pandemic, so we knew we were going to have students reading at a deficiency and that's based on all research that's out there right now. I'm sure you've all seen it when it comes to assessment results showing that our students have experienced learning loss, especially in our challenging areas. We are going to see that so what we want to do is start from kindergarten and ensure that we are providing what they need in order to read on grade level. The goal is for our students to read on grade level. For our middle schoolers, we're providing that intervention, we're having the teachers differentiate, and we're putting in the progress monitoring. Some of the schools have reading specialists, some of the schools have intervention teachers where the students are working with these specific teachers in identifying and addressing the deficiencies that they have. At the high school level, we have strategic reading for our students that they're placed in where it gives them an additional level of support to help them to read on grade level. Are we where we need to be? Absolutely not, and unfortunately the pandemic took us a little bit back in our phase of learning because of having virtual learning. The whole purpose is to get our kids starting from kindergarten where they need to be and if we're able to bridge that gap in a lower grade it will help them as they progress so that the gap doesn't widen as they progress through middle school and high school.

Comm. Capers: I think I know where Dr. Hodges is going but before he goes there, can we change the goal to K-12 with the same kind of outcome and projection that we want? Change it from K-2 from K-12.

Ms. Tsimpedes: When we're looking at reading comprehension, the chart goes to K-5 where the students are on. Actually, it can go K-8, but the depth of it is in K-5 when they're doing the reading comprehension skills. To go to K-12, we don't have a level of measurement at the high school besides lexile level and we would have to purchase a program where the students would take a diagnostic and it would measure their lexile level. There are certain schools that have Achieve 3000 but it's not across the board. We use it for our English language learners predominantly.

Comm. Capers: Can we change it to K-8 then, instead of K-2?

Ms. Tsimpedes: The reading levels go to grade five and stop. When you're looking, Comm. Capers, at the tool that we use, the heaviest growth happens between K-2. We had this discussion last year when it came to the reading level growth chart. I'll repeat what I had said last year so that everyone gets an idea of where we're coming from. In kindergarten, as soon as they start, they're on AA. That's the lowest that they have. That's when students are starting off with their reading comprehension. Not only are they reading for fluency, we've also added the piece where they're reading for comprehension. Back in the day, it used to be just for fluency and because kids were able to read a book and read it fluently, everyone assumed they were reading on grade level. But when you went back and asked them questions about what they read, they could not recall the main idea. They could not recall specific facts in the story. Years ago, and this is back to when I was teacher, we added in the second piece which was measuring reading comprehension because reading fluently and reading comprehension are not the same thing. It's the comprehension piece that we need to ensure students have as they move across levels. In kindergarten, they would go from AA, and if they're on D they would be considered reading at the end of grade level mastery in kindergarten. Then we go in grade one and it would be from level E to level J. There was more room for the students to grow in 1st grade as they're acquiring more language within their vocabulary. They're able to identify sight words, decompose words and so forth. Then you go to 2nd grade, and it goes three levels, K through M, and then 3rd grade NOP. The levels get shorter where the students have room for growth because they have ascertained the maximum level. And 4th and 5th grade goes the same, QRS for 4th grade, TUV for 5th grade. The goal is for our kids to read on grade level by 3rd grade. That is where we want to be. That's where research shows that if the students are reading on grade level by 3rd grade, they will have success moving with their future courses they take and educational experience. Last year when we had this goal, our goal was to increase two levels by the end of 22/23, and we had done two levels coming back into in-person instruction from being virtual. We knew that we would have challenges and this year looking at the data and knowing that our kids are in with us, we increased it from two levels to three levels because we know that our students are with us and when a teacher is with the students in person they have more of an impact than they do remote when it comes to teaching students how to read and reading for comprehension.

Comm. Capers: If we are going to make the changes, if I'm understanding, don't switch it to K-8, switch it to K-5 because of the reading programs.

Ms. Tsimpedes: What I'm saying is when you go to grades 3, 4, and 5, you will not get the three levels because there are only three levels within that piece. We're not looking for mastery, we're looking for growth because you have to take the kids from where

they're starting and getting them to see that there is growth occurring so that they're progressing. If a child is not progressing and let's say we have students in 1st grade on AA still, that's an area of concern because the child is not able to navigate through the reading material. That may be a case for students needing additional support whether we may have to look at what challenges the child is facing when it comes to their instructional level in the classroom. That's why I'm saying when you go K-5, you cannot increase it three levels because 3, 4, and 5, the bands are less than they are K, 1, and 2. There's less room for growth when it comes to that.

Comm. Capers: Got it. I think Dr. Hodges wanted to jump in. I'm just taking it all in, Joanna.

Comm. Hodges: That brings me, of course, to the preschool program and we've had this discussion on many occasions before. The idea behind preschool was to get the students reading earlier and to enhance their vocabulary. It was patterned after HeadStart and HeadStart was to address the fact that in urban districts, in urban communities, the vocabulary of students was at least 1,000 words fewer than it was in other communities. So, what you wanted to do as supplement that and get them to the point where they could enter kindergarten where they were able to begin reading by enhancing their vocabulary and training them appropriately. I still don't know, after two years of preschool, whether 65% of those students come out are entering able to read. Not emergent reading, but able to read. If we were able to do that, then they would be further along in that scale that you're measuring with the three levels in kindergarten, would they not?

Ms. Tsimpedes: I'll also ask Dr. Peron as she oversaw early childhood, and she started her background and this is conversations that we've had. In preschool, the goal is to expose them. The goal is not that they are leaving preschool and reading. They are to be able to identify books, their favorite words. But the goal is not to say that a child is able to go into kindergarten and be on the level B or the level C. Because when you look at what are students walk in with, they're able to recognize letters, sounds at some point, but they are not fluent readers.

Comm. Hodges: Why isn't the goal to have them be able to read? That's what HeadStart did. That was the whole point of HeadStart. That was the push for preschool. You have two years of preschool and if you've gone through two years of preschool, there is no reason why you shouldn't be able to make 1,000 words and be able to begin to read, if the program is instruction.

Ms. Tsimpedes: It is instruction. It absolutely is instruction, and they have the gold standards that they follow through the creative curriculum. But also, Dr. Hodges, I want you to keep in mind that preschool is not mandatory for all students, that's the first thing, and secondly attendance. They're not coming to school like they do for kindergarten, 1st and 2nd. That is also a hindrance that we have, and we've been trying to reinforce the importance that preschool has on building the foundational skills of our students and that has been our biggest pet peeve when it comes to preschool. The kids do not come every single day and not all students attend preschool, which often causes a hindrance when they do go to kindergarten because you do have varying levels of students who have gone to preschool for two years and have been successful in attaining skill sets that would make them be right on par to start kindergarten where they're supposed to be. Then you have students who have not gone to preschool and now the students are working on a different level than those who have shown up. There are varying levels in the kindergarten classroom because we can't say that every child has gone to preschool. We can't say that they have attended 180 days of preschool. When a

teacher receives them in kindergarten, in some cases she's starting with a blank slate for everyone.

Dr. Peron: The goals of preschool are always to develop students, especially all of their domains, the cognitive domain, the language domain, as well as the affective and physical domain. Not every child is developed mentally at the same stage, even if they're 3 or 4 years old chronologically, so the goal of preschool is to give those students those prerequisites, such as vocabulary, fluency, and all of that to develop their sense of lifelong learning, curiosity, problem solving skills, and thinking skills. Yes, some of them do come out reading, but not all of them come out reading. There are certain sets of skills that are set out in the standards, emergent reading, which preclude and are necessary for them to be developed readers. The preschool program does measure that. Their assessment does have the amount of children who are at those stages and those levels, and the department of early childhood keeps that assessment data which has been shared through the program plans of the early childhood when they present it to the Board every three years. And then every year they update that plan. That assessment data is available through those program plans.

Comm. Hodges: What I'm looking for, and we've had this discussion many times before, and I went back to my developmental pediatricians, the people that I trained with at St. Joe's, I went back to them individually and raised this question about reading. I was told there is no reason, by and large, that students, ages 3 and 4, after having two years of preschool, can't be able to read.

Dr. Peron: That's very true, if they persist and they attend two years of preschool. Some of our students come in speaking a second language, so they have to work on not only developing their heritage language, but they also have to develop the English proficiency. There are many different factors and variables.

Comm. Hodges: I understand, and I definitely do appreciate that. My only concern was if you've gone through two years of preschool here, what is our expectation for them to be able to read? Because what I'm hearing is it isn't that high.

Dr. Peron: I certainly did not hear that, and I know that that is not our sentiment. We have mirrored all of the activities to persist attendance at the preschool level, but if you take a look at our data, our lowest attendance and our chronic aposematism is at that level, at the 3- and 4-year-old level and our universe we have yet to meet. The state gives us a universe, a certain number of students that are in Paterson that reside in Paterson that could attend preschool, and we have not met that yet and there are many different reasons why. Parents do not choose to enroll their students in preschool. They don't believe in it, they think they're better at home, and they don't see it as school. We've been working for years and years to try to change that mindset and I believe we have. We used to call it daycare for many years and then we moved to preschool because it is preschool. It's educational and it's a formal education setting. We still have a lot of work around that, Dr. Hodges.

Comm. Hodges: Perhaps what we need to do is do some planning around trying to find ways to decrease the absenteeism and put together some sort of plan to address that. If we are able to get them in preschool, we won't get everybody into it for two years, but we can get a substantial number of people and get closer to our universe. I think those two years, if the expectations are what they could be, would substantially ease the problems we're having in level K in terms of reading.

Dr. Peron: Absolutely. I can't agree with you more. If they do persist and attend preschool for two years, they will have all the prerequisites and all of the instruction that they would need to make them successful in kindergarten. Recognition of letters, emphasis on self-regulation and vocabulary development, language development, fluency, listening, being able to take turns, being able to think critically, all those things that make up a good reader and that's what preschool teachers do every day. We have reading stories two times a day, we have access to books, and we have access now to technology. They listen to stories online. Everything is based around that. They have small group instruction to differentiate learning within the classroom and then they have whole group activities. The goals are to have them become social, to learn consistency and self-regulation, and executive function skills, those kinds of things which all fall in line and make a student a better reader and a better student.

Comm. Hodges: Let's have a goal to increase the attendance level of students in preschool. That's an easy addition to the academic goal and it would help us move it closer to a more effective kindergarten experience.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Dr. Hodges, along those lines, I've spoken with the director too because I've actually had these conversations with Dr. Peron. As she has stated, when it comes to our attendance, that's where we take a hit with our preschools, so I had asked the early childhood department when we meet with the parents we need to meet with them more regularly and explain to them the importance of what preschool is. I actually had this conversation today in my visit to the Anna Landoli Early Learning Center. I said we have to really put out there to the parents the importance of what preschool does to the trajectory of a child's education as they move forward. Consistency is key and it can't be thought of as babysitting. I'm sorry to say it, but that's what it sometimes comes out to. There is a purpose for preschool, Dr. Hodges. We all know that. It is the foundation of getting students ready to be successful moving forward. These are some of the charges that we have instructed. We have to get the parents to understand what it is that students are really learning in preschool, how is that going to help them in kindergarten so that they are not struggling. There are little things, and it starts with back-to-school night and when we're talking to the preschool parents solely and having that conversation for them and maybe they really need to look at what that curriculum is. What is the social/emotional learning aspect that is really big in preschool? That's how they are developing their skill set, and also just the importance of reading to your child.

Dr. Peron: Yes, talking to them and asking them questions.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Those things may seem minimal, but they play such a larger role in the scale of things when it comes to children's reading comprehension levels where the parents are asking the students what did you learn today, what book did you read? Or even reading a book with them and asking who's the main character and where was the setting? These are things that happen in preschool. When you walk into a classroom, when the teacher is doing a read aloud, she pauses, and she asks questions. What did we just see? Who was this? What do you think about this? Let's look at the picture. What does the picture mean? How else would you do it? You get the kids' creative thinking going. That's why it's important that we have our kids every day in schools with us. I can't stress enough how in preschool we don't have that same buy-in as we do in the other grade levels and we take a hit when it comes to students, not only their absenteeism rate but also to their academics because it does make a big difference to them if they have attended two years as you say, Dr. Hodges. Consistency and getting kids there, that's something we're tasking ourselves with to ensure that parents really understand the benefits of the program it has to their children.

Ms. Helewa: With that, I believe the question that is before the Commissioners and administration right now is should this be encoded in a district goal, the efforts to bolster preschool. If anyone has any ideas for draft language for a goal like that, if we focus on attendance or just in strengthening the preschool program after all, that is probably worthy of inclusion in your district goals for 2022-2023.

Comm. Hodges: That's what I'm looking for.

Ms. Shafer: Let me just add. The attendance during the pandemic and after the pandemic, the worst was the preschool for a number of reasons. First of all, the parents need to get their child to preschool. There is no bussing, so they need to get them there, which means the parents have to get up, make sure the child's ready, and get them there. Because it's not required, what happened when the pandemic slowed down a little bit and we came back in person was that the parents were not getting their children to preschool. We took a big hit at the number of students going to preschool when we came back to in-person. I would suggest that if we're going to have a preschool attendance goal, and that's what I hear from Dr. Hodges, is that we have it separate and apart from our academic goal.

Comm. Hodges: I would include it as part of your academic goal.

Ms. Shafer: This is talking specifically about K-2 students and the problem with the preschool is what I just said. It's not required so parents say I don't feel like getting up today, I'll take you tomorrow. They don't bring them to school and so because they took the biggest hit right after the onset of the pandemic when we returned to in-person, we need to keep that a separate goal.

Ms. Helewa: I do think that having a goal that's titled a preschool goal is probably closer to what you want. The focus is on preschool and that particular grade. Again, it's up to administration and the Commissioners, but I don't think that delineating it in a separate goal diminishes its value or its focus at all. It's four goals rather than three goals and all four of them need to be an area of focus equally to the administration. That's what the Board would be tasking administration with if you go down that particular road.

Dr. Peron: May I add that we also need to look at kindergarten as well because we also have that problem and because kindergarten is also not a mandatory grade, we experience some of what we experience in preschool. Not at the extent of pre-K-3, but also these early grades are very important. Even for the child that does not attend any preschool but goes right into kindergarten and doesn't persist in attending, they're going to have the same exact results as the children who do not persevere in preschool who were enrolled but didn't go. What I'm saying is the prerequisite skills in kindergarten, by the end of kindergarten you should be learning to read sight words, you should be learning to read sentences, you should be learning to do all of that and if you don't attend, you're going to miss out on those skills as well. First grade is a critical grade for reading. We focus on preschool, but we can't negate that early childhood is pre-K through 3. Those early grades are critical, all of them are critical, and we do see the highest rates of absenteeism in those grade levels.

Comm. Hodges: What I'm looking for then is a 3rd academic goal, which is to somehow decrease the chronic absenteeism in preschool, ages 3, 4, and kindergarten. I'm not particular. Whatever is going to work for us to enhance... Reading is our big problem in this district. The earlier we start an effective program, the better off we're going to be.

I don't want to wait until 1st grade in order to get the kids reading. That's too late. What we have to do is find a way to improve what's happening in preschool and what's happening in kindergarten. I do know that all kids don't go to preschool, I recognize that, but if you have gone for two years you should be able to read. Let's find a way to decrease the absenteeism and enhance those three years of education for our students. Craft a goal that says let's address the chronic absenteeism at the beginning, but we should also be able to enhance the overall reading posture of those students when they're in kindergarten.

Comm. Arrington: Comm. Teague has been patiently waiting.

Comm. Teague: I wanted to piggyback off the comments that were made concerning preschool. One of the biggest issues I have with a lot of the parents is that some of them, they'll reach out to me. We try to get them situated and they'll say it's no big deal for me to get them to preschool because they're just going to babysit them anyway. There's this pervasive sense in the community that preschool is just that. It's just something to keep the kids occupied while they're at work or doing whatever they have to do. In some kind of way, we have to find a way to change that frame of thinking because as long as that thinking remains the same, these goals are awesome but it's going to be very hard to get through to a lot of these parents because in their minds they believe that it's daycare. They think preschool and daycare are the same thing. Somehow, we have to find a way to erase that blurred line and try to find a way to make them understand and realize that it's not the same thing and that our children are actually being prepared to enter school so they can do the best they can. I'm not claiming to have all the answers, but some kind of way we have to try to figure out a way to get the parents to understand that they're not dumping them off just for somebody to watch them like their aunt or uncle, but it's an actual program that's designed to help the children get from point A to point B. My daughter went through HeadStart so I actually saw the benefit of that program. If we can get the parents to understand the importance of these first years, if the foundation is messed up, I don't care how big you build the house, it's not going to be solid. Somehow, we have to change the framework of the thinking of these parents so they can understand how important these earlier years are.

Comm. Hodges: Especially to reading.

Comm. Teague: Absolutely.

Comm. Hodges: We need to craft a program which addresses the understanding of parents of the importance of school and part of that process which decreases the chronic absenteeism then enhances the learning that goes on particularly around reading.

Comm. Arrington: Kathleen and Eileen, I just want to do a quick time check looking at the agenda. I know we're supposed to go into public comments in 12 minutes. I don't know if this is a hard schedule. I don't know if you had a hard stop, Kathleen.

Ms. Helewa: I do. If we could be done by 7:15 or so, I'm actually getting ready to go in and present to another district.

Comm. Arrington: That's what I wanted to establish, if you had a hard stop.

Ms. Helewa: Thank you so much for your consideration. I really appreciate it. I appreciate the conversation. I'm not sure if my screen is still being shared, but I did put

a draft goal for the Board's and administration's consideration which I'll put in a memo. When it's time to accept the goals formally you can use that as a base or approve as written or perhaps change the language. What I've written is to decrease chronic absenteeism in Pre-K and kindergarten by educating families on the value and importance of authentic Pre-K and kindergarten programming for children's reading skills available to them in the Paterson Public Schools. That's based on the conversation that I heard and again I can put that in a memo that I'll draft for you after tonight's session is concluded.

Comm. D. Martinez: I just wanted to make a comment. Regarding the Pre-K and kindergarten, I think that's a very good goal, but I think this goes back to parent engagement, getting them involved. I think this could be easily addressed for workshops, addressing the importance of enrolling your child into these programs. I think in every grade level, informing parents of getting involved in the education of their children. Now that we are back to normal and in-person, I think this is the time to engage our parents better and providing these workshops, so they understand. I think it's also cultural, especially within the Latino community. This goes back to our equity, informing them about the educational values. Not to say that they don't have, but it's just giving them a different insight of what education means and when it starts. It starts in preschool.

Comm. Arrington: Good point, Dania. Alright, Kathleen, I had a comment but I'm going to keep you going. I think we're going to have a very quick public meeting. I don't think there are any participants, so we have another 20 minutes or so to keep you on schedule.

Ms. Helewa: Terrific. Thank you very much. I think we've done our work surrounding district goals unless there are any further comments or other additions to the conversation.

Comm. Arrington: I had one quick one, Kathleen. Sorry, but my 30 years at UPS kicks in. To me, a goal is always some type of measurement. For me I like to see a baseline. Decrease chronic absenteeism is very vague to me. If the universe is 100 students and our goal is to have 90% of Paterson preschool-aged students in the program, to me I think the goal should reference say 90% participation rate. It's just me. I know Dr. Hodges and I had these conversations but to me just to say decrease something is very vague. I usually like to see some type of number in there.

Dr. Peron: Agreed, Comm. Arrington, but can we go back to our numbers and look at our data and come back to you? Because to throw in an arbitrary number...

Comm. Arrington: Yes, you need a baseline.

Dr. Peron: Yes, I would like to take a look at the data.

Comm. Arrington: Make it achievable. We don't want to set a goal that's so lofty that it's not attainable, but something that's a stretch goal, but not too easy. I'm sorry, Kathleen.

Ms. Helewa: Please don't apologize. Those are fantastic points. Again, this is draft language so administration will take it and refine it and present their suggestions to the Board at your next meeting. You can take it from there and see if that fits the Board's definition of specific enough, measurable, and achievable. And as you mentioned, a stretch goal, there's some interest in that. Commissioners, as we're having this

conversation, I will draft it up in a memo but do remember that the next time you're at the table and you're looking to approve these goals. I think we're in good shape on the goals. I know Comm. Teague has a hand up, but I'm not sure if that's from his previous comments or if there's anything else.

Comm. Teague: That was previous comments.

Ms. Helewa: Thank you very much for offering that. As you speak to that, Comm. Arrington and for everyone, this is a graphic that I think a lot of us have seen before, but the action plans are going to be crucial. The Board does not approve the action plans, but you need to understand what steps are being made to achieve these goals. This is the measurement part. An action plan that the Board will be able to read fluently will show you what major activities. Comm. Martinez mentioned these parent workshops. They'll likely show up in these action plans. What staff, what resources will be needed to achieve these goals, what the timeline is, and what does success look like. That's where I believe your baseline will also come in, Comm. Arrington. That would be a pretty fair ingredient in order to determine whether success has been achieved or not. Thank you very much for offering that and I'm please to speak to that. The only other thing that I'd like to put out in front of the Board is about Board goals. Board of Education goals are only for the Board and discuss the Board's progress. They are not mandated by law, unlike the district goals. It really revolves around the special tasks that the Board has to do. I happen to know that the most important job of a Board of Education is one that is faced by the Paterson Board of Education this year and that is in finding a new permanent superintendent for your district. Personally, I think that is a very important goal that the Board has to achieve and must achieve very carefully. If you encode that as a single district goal, I think that would be something for the Board to consider and it would also demonstrate to the public just how seriously you are undertaking that endeavor. It's just a point of consideration. If the Board is aware of areas that it needs to gain in professional development surrounding its own role, then we could encode that in a goal. What kind of support that you need for your individual members and for your Board as a whole, we could encode those in Board goals. Again, that's an optional part of the goal setting, but it is certainly a best practice. I'd like to get the Board's feeling on that.

Comm. Arrington: Any Board members have any comments or concerns?

Comm. Hodges: I've said enough.

Ms. Helewa: I'm not hearing anything from the Board for Board goals. I think what our work has done tonight is focus on the district goals, is that correct? We are leaving with some draft district goals for the Board to consider.

Comm. Hodges: Maybe what we could do is look at the importance of goals and being able to plan them out and measure them. I've had some difficulty with some of the goals that we've had in the past on all levels, not measurable, not being able to follow up and really evaluate. We should become a stronger Board when it comes to defining goals that are useful for our students and for our district as a whole.

Comm. Arrington: I agree. Thank you, Dr. Hodges.

Ms. Helewa: Thank you.

Comm. Arrington: Okay, Kathleen.

Ms. Helewa: Alright. Our next steps, as I mentioned, all of this will be encoded in a memo and the Board will formally vote to improve their district goals at a meeting in the near future. Action plans will be developed by the Superintendent and her cabinet and her team, and the Board will review those plans. Just make sure that you understand them. To Dr. Hodges point, that requires a conversation, and this is one of the most important jobs. I will say, finding the right superintendent is the most important job of the Board, but how do you evaluate the Superintendent? On the progress towards district goals and that's the first half of your evaluation. If the Commissioners don't have a very clear understanding of the efforts that are going to be undertaken to achieve your goals, then you're really operating with both hands tied behind your back so do have those conversations. Not just at your next meeting but throughout the year. It's important. Out of all the stakeholders that are served by Paterson Public Schools and out of all of the kids and families that count on you, you are the decision makers - only the people who are around this dais. That's a big duty. That's a really admirable vocation that you've taken up so give yourselves the tools to do it correctly. Throughout the year, establish dates with your administration at your public meetings to discuss progress towards these district goals. They should be data rich and they should have questions and answers, and no one should say I've talked too much. These are valuable conversations. I'm not kidding when I say this is my favorite kind of work to do with the Board. Provide regular updates to your public on how these district goals are progressing. That's very important and they culminate in the Superintendent evaluation that happens annually. With that being said, unless there are other comments, I would like to thank you very much, not only for your commitment, which I am very appreciative. I've been a Board member myself and it is my honor to serve the Commissioners of Paterson. You're doing important work at a very important time. I would also like to thank you for your hospitality and for the invitation in the first place. It's great to see you and to be able to facilitate a conversation like this. Thank you to the Board and thank you to Superintendent Shafer and all the administrators here. Thank you very much, Comm. Arrington, for facilitating the meeting in such a smooth and seamless way and for making me feel very happy to be serving Paterson again. Thank you.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you for the awesome job you did. It was a good brainstorming session here. The additional goal we had is awesome. Thank you, Dr. Hodges, for driving that.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Capers, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

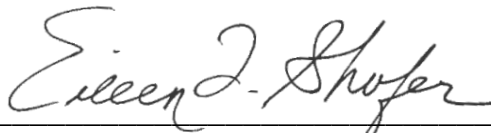
No speakers.

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Capers that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Capers that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eileen F. Shafer", written in black ink. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools/
Board Secretary