

Paterson Post

Paterson — A Promising Tomorrow

Together We Can

OCTOBER 2021

NEW SCHOOL IN A NEW YEAR

Joseph A. Taub School opens its doors with a celebration

With bright-colored balloons and Kool & The Gang's classic "Celebration" playing over the loudspeakers, the Joseph A. Taub School opened its doors to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students for the first time on Monday, Sept. 27th.

"This is a great day for our students and families, and a great day for Paterson," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "I want to thank the parents and students for working with us as we have been waiting for the chance to open the new Joseph A. Taub School."

JAT School students had been bussed across town to the former Paterson Catholic High School Building while the new school was being built. Construction continued while school buildings were closed due to the pandemic. The new building allows the students to attend school closer to home, in a brand new facility that was built for 21st century learning.

"This has been a long time coming for the students and families at the Joseph A. Taub School. I am very glad that these students will be able to engage in in-person instruction in a state-of-the-art facility," said Board of Education President Kenneth Simmons. "It is my hope that every student in Paterson Public Schools will be educated in a building that is as modern and as equipped for 21st-century learning as the Joseph A. Taub School."



Students enter the Joseph A. Taub School for the first time.
Photo by Daniel Juan



Superintendent Eileen Shafer welcoming students to the new school. Photo by Daniel Juan

The new school building is equipped with Promethean Boards and students are using their Chromebooks to access online learning resources made available by their teachers. The desks are mobile and ergonomically adjustable, enabling students to collaborate and work while standing.

But on opening day, it was clear that the building's best feature was the people entering it. After so many months of remote learning, students and teachers were glad to be together again.

[CLICK HERE](#) for news coverage of the JAT School's opening day.

School 28 Is Number One!



Public School No. 28 Principal Nancy Castro

Photo by Paul Brubaker



Assistant Superintendent Cicely Warren

Photo by Paul Brubaker

Public School No. 28, a school that is becoming known for achieving significant firsts, is the first school named on *U.S. News and World Report's* lists of the best elementary and middle schools in New Jersey, which the magazine released for the first time last week.

The K to 8 school, which is home to the district's Paterson Academy for the Gifted and Talented, was ranked [number one among 1,370 elementary schools and 715 middle schools ranked in New Jersey](#). The report also noted that both elementary and middle school students performed "well above expectations" in reading and math based on data from the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years. According to the *U.S. News and World Report* website, schools are ranked on student performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare their students for high school.

Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer, Deputy Superintendent of Schools Susana Perón, and Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons all had words of congratulations for Principal Nancy Castro and everyone in the School 28 community.

"School 28's consistent efforts getting this level of recognition should be an inspiration to us all," said Simmons. "Did people at School 28 have down days during those two school years that this report is based upon? Sure, they did. But they kept moving forward. The teachers, the students, the administrators, the custodians, food services workers, nurses, secretaries, instructional aides, everyone at that school kept moving forward. And the result is that School 28 ranks number one."

Principal Castro told WCBS TV news that the honor of being named New Jersey's best elementary and middle school was the result of teamwork.

"We have a hardworking staff. Our parents are collaborative. We operate on a collaborative basis. Our goal is to always showcase our students and their academic achievement," Castro said.

Assistant Superintendent Cicely Warren told the media what impact she hoped the honor would have on the

school's students and staff.

"I hope that it makes them poke their chest out a little bit, stand a little bit straighter and that they feel a little proud of what they accomplished," Warren said.

In 2018, School 28 achieved another district first by becoming [the district's first school to be awarded the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon School award](#), noting that the school had won the "exemplary high performing" distinction.

[CLICK HERE](#) for news coverage of School 28's great accomplishment.

IB DIPLOMAS AWARDED TO FOUR MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2021

Four members of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at International High School's Class of 2021 have met the rigorous requirements to earn the distinguished IB Diploma. Those graduates are:

- Jose Correa, who is now a student at Rutgers University
- Gerson Del Orbe, who is now a student at Rutgers University
- Alyzae Coleman, who is now a student at The New School - Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts
- Aileen Ni, who is now a student at the New Jersey Institute of Technology

"We are very proud of these very special Paterson Public Schools alumni," Superintendent of School Eileen F. Shafer. "The past two years have been largely marked by the pandemic. Overcoming adversity to achieve excellence is an inspiration to us all. I want to thank the IB Diploma graduates for their hard work, as well as their teachers, supervisors, and principal for their dedication to our students. And I especially want to thank the parents of these graduates. Their unfailing devotion to their children helped them achieve great success."



These four graduates increase the district's total of IB Diploma recipients to 12.

There were 59 IB students in IHS' graduating Class of 2021, with 22 students vying for the IB diploma. Other IB highlights from the Class of 2021 are:

- IB Spanish was offered for the first time at International High School during the 2020-2021 school year. All 17 students passed the course with a score of four or higher, and five of those students earned perfect scores of seven. All of the IB Spanish students are now eligible for college credit.
- A new IB math course called Applications and Interpretations was also offered for the first time, and 17 students of the 29 passed with a four or higher making them eligible for college credit.
- Thirteen of the school's 18 students enrolled in the challenging IB Physics course scored a four or higher earned college credit.
- In IB Mandarin, 10 students out of 16 enrolled in the course earned a score of four, with two of them earning a perfect score of seven.
- IB World Religions, 23 students out of 32 enrolled in the course earned a score of four or higher, with two students earning a perfect score of seven.

"We are immensely proud of our students who took on the challenges of the IB Program and have reaped the rewards of preparing for college and, in many cases, earning college credit," said International High School Principal Catherine Forfia-Dion. "We are looking forward to the rest of the year ahead, and all that our current students will accomplish through the IB Program."

Elevate New Jersey Seeks To Elevate Students Through Mentoring

Statewide program launched at Eastside Educational Campus

Community leaders joined with district officials at the Eastside Educational Campus to launch Elevate New Jersey, a new statewide program that pairs students with teacher-mentors who are available round the clock to the students they serve.

The Rev. Carolyn McCombs, Elevate New Jersey's executive director, said that Elevate New Jersey's mission is to build long-term, life-changing relationships with urban youth, equipping them to thrive and contribute to their community. The organization's unique, relationship-based approach employs full-time staff who represent the community they serve. Dedicated team members – who are part teacher, part mentor, part life coach – make themselves available 24/7 to building relationships with students.

At the Sept. 24 news conference, McCombs was joined by Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer, Assistant Superintendent David Cozart, Board of Education Vincent Arrington, Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, Paterson City Council Members Maritza Davila and Lilisa Mimms, Paterson Education Fund Executive Director Rosie Grant as well as Elevate New Jersey Board Member Brittany Belmont, a number of teacher mentors and Eastside High School students.



Rev. Carolyn McCombs, Executive Director,
Elevate New Jersey Photo by Daniel Juan

24-7 Online Tutoring Coming To PPS HS Students

The District has entered a partnership with Tutor.com, an affiliate of the Princeton Review, to provide round the clock, one-on-one tutoring to all high school students. Expert tutors in more than 200 subjects will be available, as well as for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. Services will also include prep for the PSAT, SAT, and ACT tests, review of students' writing assignments, and help in reinforcing study skills. The service will launch in the coming weeks.



Six Steps To Better Student Meals

Superintendent Unveils Corrective Action Plan At BOE Meeting

Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer unveiled a six-step corrective action plan at the Oct. 13th Board of Education meeting to address the quality of students' meals, which had been seen as below the district's standards in photos posted on social media in recent weeks.

Under the banner of "Taking Ownership and Making It Right," the plan's six steps that were presented were:



Food service workers at a Sept. 30th staff meeting with Superintendent Shafer at Public School No. 25. Photo by Daniel Juan

1. Staff Meetings. Shafer and Business Administrator Richard Leon Matthews held a series of meetings with food service workers to emphasize the message of, "If you would not eat it yourself, do not serve it to our students." These meetings were followed by training provided by Executive Food Services Director David Buchholtz.

2. Complete Meal Trays. Every student is to be provided meals that include protein, bread, fruit, vegetable, and milk.

3. Staff Monitoring/Quality Control Teams. Meals served to students will be observed by Food Service Department staff, principals, and cabinet members to ensure students are receiving nutritious, appetizing meals.

4. Food Services Assessment. At the Board of Education's direction, the district is assessing the delivery of food services in schools.

5. Student Surveys. The Food Services Department will conduct a survey of students about their views on food services.

6. Advisory Committee. An advisory committee will be established to help develop menus that are nutritious, inclusive, and acceptable to students based on the student survey responses. The advisory committee will also help ensure that meals are prepared properly and presented in an eye-appealing manner. The advisory committee will include principals, teachers, parents, district administrators as well as Food Services Department staff.

The corrective action plan made good on promises made by district officials and Board of Education Commissioners at an impromptu Sept. 30 news conference to address concerns raised about the quality of student meals.

"Many of the district's students are being served meals that meet our expectations. But I regret that this is not the case at some of our schools," Shafer said at the news conference. "That is why I am taking action to remedy the food services situation. The strength of our district has always been in our diversity. And working together, we will make sure that all children will have the food they deserve – food that is nutritious, prepared well, and appetizing."

With Shafer were Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons, Vice President Manuel Martinez, Jr., Commissioner Oshin Castillo-Cruz, and Commissioner Nakima Redmon. The district's Business Administrator Richard Leon Matthews and Executive Director of Food Services David Buchholtz were also present.



A Complete Tray: Lunch served at Eastside High School on Oct. 12. Photo by staff

“We want to address this issue head on,” said Simmons. “This is a matter that we take seriously. It is important for us to make sure that our students are eating meals that were prepared properly and that the presentation is good.”

“The bottom line is this: We recognize that we, as a district, have to do better,” said Martinez. “The only thing that will matter at the end of the day are the results: the quality of the food, the way it’s presented and the assurance that our children are getting the nutritional value that they need from their meals.”

“This community deserves better,” said Redmon. “When it was brought to our attention, we wanted to make sure that we addressed it as fast as possible. We want to make sure that all of the children of Paterson are getting nutritious food.”

“We want to continue to work with the parents, the children and the community to make sure that our students are getting their best nutrition,” said Castillo-Cruz.



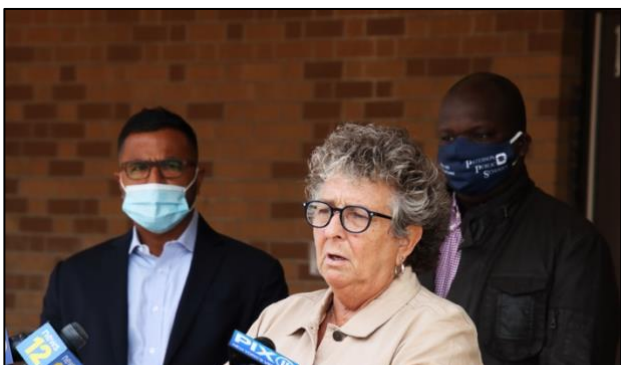
Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons Photo by Daniel Juan



From left, Board of Education Commissioner Nakima Redmon, Food Services Executive Director David Buchholtz, Board of Education Commissioner Oshin Castillo-Cruz Photo by Daniel Juan



Board of Education Vice President Manuel Martinez, Jr. Photo by Daniel Juan



Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer Photo by Daniel Juan

Shafer affirmed her personal commitment to rectifying food services issues.

“I want all Paterson Public Schools students to have nutritious food that is properly prepared and looks appetizing. I know our parents and our staff feel the same way,” Shafer said.

School 24 Principal Earns Doctorate

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Florita Cotto, Ph.D. Photo courtesy of Dr. Cotto

Florita Cotto, principal of Public School No. 24 and the Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, earned her doctorate from Montclair State University's Teacher Education and Teacher Development program in January 2020. Her dissertation, *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: The Views of Latinx Students Inform Teacher Professional Development on Critical Consciousness*, led to acceptance as a presenter at the American Educational Research Association's annual conference.

Cotto pursued her doctorate as a personal goal while hoping to set an example for her students and community. Her message for everyone is that regardless of one's background, success is achievable if one is determined and does not give up.

School 24 Vice Principal Working On Creating Native American And Indigenous Studies Minor At MSU



Dr. Lisa Brooks and MSU President Jonathan Koppell. Photo courtesy of Dr. Brooks

Dr. Lisa Brooks, vice principal of Public School No. 24 and the Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, recently met with Montclair State University (MSU)'s president about creating a Native American and Indigenous Studies minor at the university.

Brooks, who is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, is also an MSU professor and is a part of a team at the university that seeks to promote Native American issues.

"I am proud of my tribe and my roots as a transplant from Oklahoma," Brooks said. "I write curriculum and teach classes at the university level that promote an understanding of Native American experiences and allow people to reconceptualize modern Native identities. I am currently working on projects that promote Lenape knowledge through K to 12 educational materials."

Brooks was one of three MSU professors who met with MSU President Jonathan Koppell in late September. Koppell, who began serving as the university's new president in August, has also met with Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer.

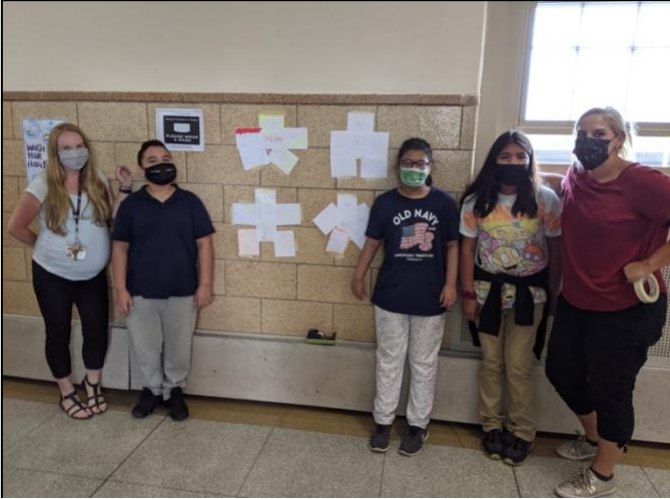
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School 5 Math Students Learn Numbers' Expanded Forms

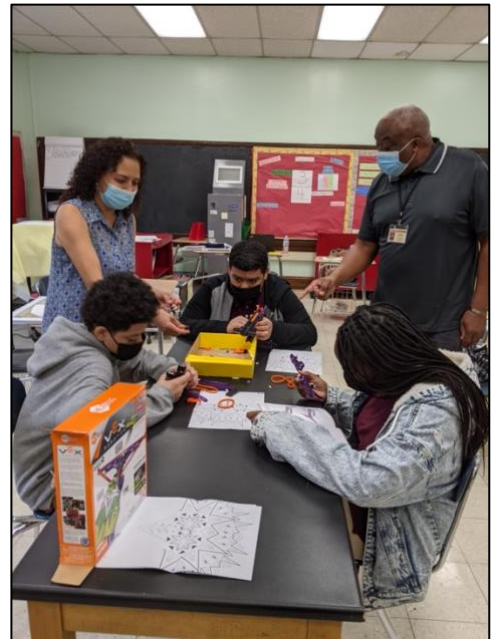


Public School No. 5 teachers and students.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Betsy Golden

Public School No. 5 Special Education Resource Teachers Andrea Williams and Jaclyn recently introduced to their students the topic of expressing large numbers with expanded forms. The lesson was that very large numbers can be expressed in terms of the place value of each digit. For example, 1,234,567 can be expressed as $1,000,000 + 200,000 + 30,000 + 4,000 + 500 + 60 + 7$. The teachers introduced this topic to their fifth graders by inviting them to create "expanded form people." Upon completion, students added their finished projects to the corridor showcase and invited classmates to practice reading their numbers.

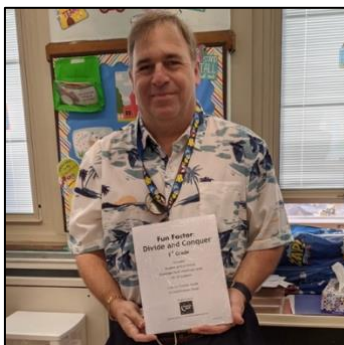
School 12 Students Design Airplanes As A STEAM Project

At Public School No. 12, Special Education Teacher Brigitte Shahin's students have been hard at work designing personalized airplanes as part of a STEAM activity. The project integrates science, mathematics and the arts. Activities like these may lead to students pursuing careers in aeronautics and engineering.



Public School No. 12 teachers and students work on a STEAM project. Photo courtesy of Dr. Betsy Golden

School 5 Math Teacher Attends WPU Summer Workshop



Public School No. School 5 third grade teacher Michael Renn spent part of his summer attending a William Paterson University workshop presented by Bedtime Math, a New Jersey non-profit organization dedicated to helping children love numbers and providing teachers with the tools to take math beyond screen time and worksheets.

Public School No. 5 Math Teacher Michael Renn
Photo courtesy of Dr. Betsy Golden

Back to School -- for Teachers as Students!

The autumn season inspires many with a sense of new possibilities, including Public School No. 5 teachers Tahmina Chowdhury and Fatema Nesa, who recently contacted William Paterson University (WPU) Professor in Residence Dr. Betsy Golden to register for courses that will lead to new certifications (supervisor and alternate route bilingual/ESL, respectively). The teachers join a number of enrolled colleagues who take classes online and in person at the nearby campus, where they can visit the Admissions Department, the library, or the bookstore to pick up some WPU swag.



Photos courtesy of Dr. Betsy Golden

Superintendent Urges For COVID-19 Student Vaccinations As Two Mayors Enter Vaccine Challenge



Superintendent Shafer speaks at a news conference at St. Joseph's University Medical Center *Photo by Paul Brubaker*

As Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh and Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciara announced they challenged each other to vaccinate the most constituents against COVID-19 by mid-December, Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer urged for more students to be vaccinated against the deadly virus.

"They couldn't wait to get back into school, and so we want to keep them in. And how do we keep them in? By making sure that they're vaccinated, those students who are 12 and older," Shafer said at a news conference at St. Joseph's University Medical Center.

Information about COVID-19

vaccines and testing is available [on the district's website](#).

Addressing Security Shortages

More security guards, police officers to bolster security personnel



District Director of School Safety Dalton Price
Photo by Paul Brubaker

District officials have announced their plan to bolster school security by addressing staff shortages and training police officers to work in schools when they are off-duty. The plan, which the Board of Education will vote upon at its Oct. 20 meeting, can be implemented at no additional cost to the district.

“The staff shortages that have been impacting organizations throughout the country have been impacting our district’s Security Department, but we are fortunate that our security team has been working since July to increase the number of professionals to protect our students and staff,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “Every student and every staff member must have a safe environment when they come to school. This plan, along with our other initiatives in social and emotional learning and restorative justice will help us ensure a safe environment for everyone”

Security Chief Dalton Price said that restorative practices would be a focus of training police officers who will work in schools.

“Uniformed officers are trained professionals who have been educated at a police academy, but the approach to doing their job in a school has to be different,” said Price. “These officers will be focused on building relationships with the students and with people throughout the school communities they serve.”

The announcement of the plan came a day after there was a lockdown, followed by a staggered dismissal of staff and students, at the John F. Kennedy Educational Complex, a.k.a. “Kennedy High School,” after a phone call was received at the school that someone possibly entered the school with a gun. District security worked with the Paterson Police Department and the Passaic County Sheriff’s Department in the investigation, which concluded that no gun was brought to school grounds.

Price noted that the response to the report went smoothly.

“The security guards did an outstanding job, even as they were short-handed,” he said. “And there was a lot of thinking through the process that involved the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the school’s two principals, Paterson Police Department and the Passaic County Sheriff’s Department.”

Online community forums on safety in schools will be held in the last week of October.

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Upcoming Events

Oct. 20:	Board of Education Regular Meeting* 6:00 p.m.
Oct. 22:	Staff In-Service/1:00 p.m. Student Dismissal
Oct. 25 & 26:	Community Forums on Public Safety pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents 6:00 p.m.
Nov. 2:	Election Day – District Closed
Nov. 4 & 5:	NJEA Convention – District Closed
Nov. 10	Board of Education Workshop Meeting* 6:00 p.m.
Nov. 11:	Veterans Day – District Closed
Nov. 12:	End of 1st marking period
Nov. 17:	Board of Education Regular Meeting* 6:00 p.m.
Nov. 18:	Report Card Parent Conferences, Grades 9 to 12, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 22:	Report Card Parent Conferences School 7, Joseph A. Taub and New Roberto Clemente, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 23:	Report Card Parent Conferences pre-K to 8, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 24:	Early dismissal; 1:00 p.m. for students, 1:20 p.m. for staff
Nov. 25 & 26:	Thanksgiving Break

*All Board of Education meetings are live-streamed at pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents. Those who want to give public comment should register in advance by emailing public@paterson.k12.nj.us by 5:00 p.m. on October 20th, November 10th, and November 17th. Participants are asked to provide their name, address, and the phone number from which they will be calling.

The Paterson Post is a publication of the PPS Department of Communications. We welcome your submissions on school and district-related news. Submit stories and photos to ppscommunications@paterson.k12.nj.us.