

Paterson Post

Paterson — A Promising Tomorrow

Together We Can

June 29, 2020

Tassels Turned Online



Thousands of district high school seniors, eighth-graders and kindergartners graduated in virtual ceremonies online on June 19th. The ceremonies featured the elements that would have been experienced in a live ceremony including speeches by Superintendent Eileen Shafer, class valedictorians, and district officials. The virtual ceremonies were broadcasted online in compliance with executive orders issued by New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy. Many of the

virtual high school ceremonies can be viewed on the district's website, paterson.k12.nj.us, at the "High School Graduations" Quick Link. More recent executive orders from the governor allow for in-person high school graduations to be held in July. The district is scheduled to hold in-person high school graduations on Wednesday, July 8th and Thursday, July 9th with rain dates scheduled on July 10th and July 13th. The schedule is below:

Day 1 – Wednesday, July 8th

| BAUERLE FIELD | | PENNINGTON PARK | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------------|----------|
| TIME | | | |
| 10:30AM – 11:30AM | EHS-GoPA | 9:00AM – 10:00AM | JFK-BTMF |
| 1:30PM – 2:30PM | EHS-CAHTS | 12:00PM – 1:00PM | JFK-SET |
| 4:30PM – 5:30PM | EHS-SolT | 3:00PM – 4:00PM | JFK-ACT |
| -- | -- | 6:00PM – 7:00PM | JFK-STEM |

Day 2 – Thursday, July 9th

| BAUERLE FIELD | | PENNINGTON PARK | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| TIME | | | |
| 9:00AM – 10:00AM | RPHS | 10:30AM – 11:30AM | GMA & IHS |
| 12:00PM – 1:00PM | HARP, STARS & PANTHER | -- | -- |

Cabinet Marks Graduation Time With TikTok Video

Amid the pomp and circumstance of the graduation season, the Superintendent's Cabinet released its own TikTok video. The 30-second video features the cabinet members dancing in graduation gowns, masks, and socially distanced from each other. The clip ends with their congratulations to all of the district's graduates. So who came up with the idea? A child of one of the cabinet members? One of the district's students? Nope. It was one of the state-appointed highly skilled professionals who has been working to guide the district's efforts to restore local control. "Dr. [Alexis] Colander suggested that this was something we could do, so we just took it from there," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. Eliza Rodriguez of the Superintendent's Office was the choreographer, Shafer said. Response to the video, which has been viewed more than 5,000 times, has been overwhelmingly positive. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the video.



MLK's Nephew Talks About Greatness with YMLA Graduates



Isaac Newton Farris, Jr.

Isaac Newton Farris, Jr., nephew of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered the keynote address for the virtual graduation ceremony of the Young Men's Leadership Academy (YMLA)'s eighth-graders on June 19th. In his remarks, Farris – whose mother is Christine King Farris, sister of the assassinated civil rights leader – encouraged the graduating eighth-graders to pursue greatness. "I learned what it was to be great from a great man, Martin Luther King, Jr.," said Farris in the ceremony that was shown online. "He taught me that the only thing you need to be great is the ability to do the right thing, even when no one is watching. If you always do the right thing, you will always be great." Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer thanked YMLA Principal Marc Medley for his efforts in arranging for Farris' message to be brought to his graduates, and she thanked Assistant Superintendent Cicely Warren for supporting those efforts. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the entire message by Farris.

91 Graduating Seniors Get State Seal of Biliteracy



Ninety-one graduating seniors have qualified for the New Jersey State Seal of Biliteracy, which is awarded to students who demonstrate reading, writing, speaking and listening proficiency in at least one language in addition to English. This distinctive honor will be noted on the graduates' high school transcripts. "To receive this honor, a student must be more than being conversationally fluent in a second language. A student needs to have developed true mastery of English and another language," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. To qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy, students must demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting state high school graduation requirements, and as well as demonstrating proficiency in a foreign language other than English by passing an international language proficiency test and demonstrating ability to read, write, speak and listen in that language. [CLICK HERE](#) for the list

of seniors who met the requirements for the New Jersey State Seal of Biliteracy.

District Has A Banner Day For HS Grads

District officials displayed banners at all of the district's high schools on June 19th congratulating the seniors who were graduating through virtual online ceremonies that day. "We didn't want our graduates to think they were forgotten. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We're all thinking about them, wishing we could celebrate this time with them, and that's really why we decided to put these banners up at the high schools," said Schools Superintendent Eileen F. Shafer. The banners, which were hung outside of each school building, had photographs of every graduating senior. Shafer thanked district Chief of Staff Pamela Powell and Executive Director of Facilities Neil Mapp for making sure the banners were put up.



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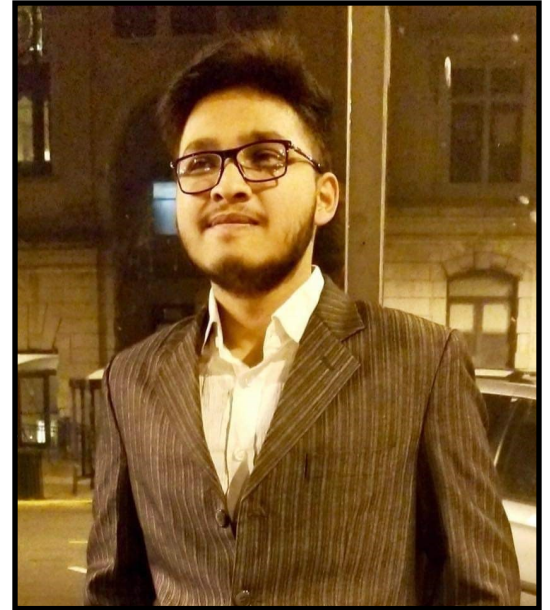
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AHS Graduate Shuffling Off To Buffalo With Many Options

A couple of days after the Adult High School's (AHS) virtual graduation, one of the graduates, Abu-Saeed Islam, took time out to thank one of his teachers who made a difference in his life, and to tell her where he will be continuing his education.

"I have been accepted to the University at Buffalo," wrote Islam, referring to the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, N.Y. "I'll be majoring in electrical engineering/ computer engineering, pre-med. I am thinking about joining ROTC, too. Thank you for helping me to get back on track. I never thought I would get accepted to a nationally well-recognized engineering school, but your motivation has inspired me and assisted me to stay focused."

The teacher Islam wrote to was Linda Veleber, a math teacher, who recognized Islam's affinity for mathematics while he was her student at the Adult High School. "When I realized his high level of math skills, I turned his math class into an SAT prep class for him," Veleber said. "His hard work and perseverance are what brought him his success."



"Students like Abu-Saeed remind us that a student has no less potential for success just because they follow a non-traditional path," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. "I want to congratulate Abu-Saeed on his graduation and acceptance into SUNY Buffalo. He has some decisions to make about his major and other paths he may choose to follow. That is a very good thing, because a good education should provide a person with choices. I want to thank Ms. Veleber for her work in drawing out the best of her student's abilities, Principal Nora Hoover for supporting Ms. Veleber in her work, and Abu-Saeed's family for supporting him every step of the way to his high school graduation."

Islam moved to Paterson from Bangladesh in 2018 when he was 19. Because of his age, he could not enroll in a traditional high school. While Islam was a guest on Passaic County Community College's robotics team, he was advised by a professor about the Adult High School. In an email this week, described himself as a patriot with many goals of serving the United States in the military and even NASA, naming Neil Armstrong and Elon Musk as two of his heroes.

"I really care about the economic and religious freedom that the United States has provided me," Islam said.

Islam said that the Adult High School "works like a machine," and like most machines it has essential parts, which were his teachers. While Islam was thankful to all his teachers, Veleber received his special thanks for helping him achieve an SAT math score in the 93rd percentile.

"Ms. Veleber has helped me like her own son," Islam said.

District's Reopening Plans Reflect State Guidelines, Shafer says

After reviewing the state's guidance for reopening schools, Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer said that many of the state's guidelines are already a part of the plans currently being developed by the district's task force on reopening schools. "The Governor and the State Education Commissioner have always been guided by public health experts and the empirical data they have provided in order to keep people in New Jersey safe," said Shafer. "We will do the same. In the Paterson Public School District, data will be our guide and safety will be our priority. The health and safety of our students and staff must be, and has been, our top priority. We will be prepared to open our school buildings in September." The district has convened a Reopening of Schools Task Force that includes 18 committees focused on different aspects of resuming in-person learning and extra-curricular activities at school buildings. The committees include parents, community leaders, and clergy, as well as teachers, administrators and other professionals from the district. Already, essential staff and visitors are required to wear masks and maintain social distancing while in district buildings. "Based on the guidance we received today, the district is on the right track. But we have a lot of work to do to prepared for the reopening of our school buildings," Shafer said. "We know that the life students will return to when school buildings reopen will be different from the life they had when the buildings closed in March. But we will work together as a community to educate our students as effectively and safely as we can. We'll keep parents and the community updated throughout the summer as we continue working toward reopening our schools."

Online Community Circle Launched To Help People Stay Connected

The "Adjusting To Change Community Circle," a weekly online virtual workshop run in collaboration between the district and the district's Full Service Community Schools, has been launched to help people build connections during the current time of great social concerns and the continuing pandemic. "To say that we are in an unusual time is an understatement. The pandemic confronted us with challenges we never expected to face, and the need for social justice is a concern that none of us can ignore," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. "It is time when people need to be more connected, not less. And that is why this weekly virtual community circle has been launched. It is place where people can go to be connected with others as well as any resources they may need." The "Adjusting To Change Community Circle" is held on Zoom every Tuesday morning at 10 a.m. Anyone in Paterson is welcome to join the meeting. The meeting is moderated by licensed clinical social workers from Health N Wellness Services, LLC. To join the meeting, participants should visit zoom.us/join, then enter meeting ID 613 683 0507, and then enter the password, Circle.

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Upcoming Events

July 3: Independence Day - District Closed

July 6: Summer school begins

July 8-9: In-person high school graduations

July 30-31: Eid al-Adha

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