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DISTRICT ANNOUNCES NEW PRINCIPAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2022-2023

Top school administrators take on new roles in leading district schools

PATERSON – Paterson Public Schools officials today announced the new assignments for some of the district’s principals for the upcoming school year.

“The district has gone through a number of changes in the past year. Some of those changes were initiated by the district, such as the reorganization of our schools. Other changes came by way of the retirements of beloved, longtime principals who served Paterson for decades,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “These 10 principals have taken the helm of their respective schools and we have every confidence that they will serve the students and families at their schools with the same dedication and devotion that was the hallmark of many of their predecessors.”

Principals who are taking on new assignments this year are as follows.

Dr. Vanessa Serrano, Principal, Public School No. 2

Vanessa Serrano has served Public School No. 2 as vice-principal for the past five years and has worked in the district for a total of 22 years. She has also worked at John F. Kennedy High, the Central Office, and as a teacher. Originally intending to go to law school, Serrano began considering changing to a career in education when she began working as a permanent substitute teacher at Public School No. 15. Serrano thanks the parents of School 2 students for entrusting her with their children and says that her door is always open to parents. “It takes a team. We are, together, preparing our students for high school, college, and beyond.” To the students, Serrano said, “We are going to continue to be responsible, respectful, and ready” Always keep your eyes on the prize and know that the staff, the administration, and the community are always here to support you.”

Althea Brown, Principal, Senator Frank Lautenberg School

Althea Brown has worked in the district for 23 years, the last eight of which she served as vice-principal of the Senator Frank Lautenberg School (SFLS). She is looking forward to a greater return to normalcy in the upcoming school year and continuing the growth that had been started at SFLS before the pandemic. Much of her administrative philosophy can be summed up in the advice from one of her mentors who said that school should be a combination of Harvard and Disneyland, meaning equal parts academic excellence and fun. “As the principal, you’re uniquely positioned to balance the two,” Brown said. “We are looking forward to academic success, but we are going to have fun at the same time.” Brown said that she is looking forward to working with the SFLS parents and that she is “dedicated and committed” to their children’s academic success. To the SFLS students who are returning, Brown offered a hearty, “Welcome back!”

Pamela Powell, Principal, Public School No 7

Pamela Powell has worked in a variety of administrative roles in Paterson Public Schools. Most recently, Powell was principal at Public School No. 29. She had been a principal at Eastside High School and Kennedy High School, and had served as a high-ranking district administrator, as well as working as a supervisor and teacher. “If I had to look at all of the positions I have had in my career, I believe that being a principal has been one of the most rewarding,” she said.

Powell is also a proud graduate of Eastside High School and Public School No. 6, now SFLS.

Powell and the staff and students who were with her at School 29 will have a bigger building at School 7, complete with a cafeteria and gymnasium. But what Powell is really looking forward to is beginning the second year of in-person instruction without masks and partitions. Powell intends to work in partnership with the School 7 parents. “I really need the parents,” she said. “I really believe we can do great things together. My aim is to make this school the very best school in the city of Paterson.” When it comes to the School 7 students, Powell said she wants them to work hard, ask questions, and be the best they can be. “I want them to have fun in learning. The world is open to them. The sky isn’t the limit. They can go as high as they choose to go,” she said.

Dewitt Evering, Principal, Public School No. 19

This year, Dewitt Evering has taken the helm at Public School No. 19 after serving as principal at Senator Frank Lautenberg School last year and, previously at the School of Architecture and Construction Trades at Kennedy High School. Evering began his career as an English teacher and appreciated the chance to make a difference in the lives of young people – helping them “across the rivers of ignorance,” as he put it. However, Evering found that the number of young people who could help was limited as a teacher, which is why he became a principal. “Now, I have access to be able to influence changes in the lives of an entire institution,” he said. When asked what he is looking forward to most this year, Evering said, “I’m looking forward to the celebration. When success is arrived at, it’s going to be a celebration.” Evering is also looking forward to working with the School 19 teachers and staff and said that parents are essential to the education of their children. “I need you (parents) to be a part of the process of success for our school, our students,” he said. His advice to students was, “Be in school regularly. Obey the school rules. Study and do your homework. And make sure that you work with us as a student. You will be successful.”

Dr. Jalyn E. Lyde, Principal, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex

Jalyn Lyde, a veteran educator with more than 24 years in the district, is the new principal at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex, a.k.a.” MLK.” She started as an instructional assistant and worked in a variety of roles including as a special education teacher and principal of the Rosa L. Parks School of the Fine and Performing Arts. Noting that she comes from a long line of educators in her family, Lyde majored in exercise science/physical education in college. She later earned two master’s degrees and completed her doctorate last year. Lyde said she is looking forward to seeing people she hasn’t seen in a long time at MLK. “I’m embracing the culture and mission and vision of Martin Luther King as we strive to reach the goal of Paterson Public Schools,” said Lyde, noting that the theme at this month’s summer leadership institute was, “The Power Of Us.” Lyde encouraged MLK parents to take advantage of her open-door policy. “We are here to serve you,” she said. “Come in so that we can embrace, and build, and work together on this journey.” Her words for MLK students were, “You have goals and dreams and it’s time for us to pull them out so that others can embrace your reality.”

Miguel Sosa, Principal, Newcomers High School

There was a time when Miguel Sosa might have been able to help prepare tax returns. But those days are long gone for the former accountant. “I wasn’t fulfilled. I wanted a purpose in my life,” said Sosa, whose parents were both bilingual guidance counselors in the district. “I quickly found out that there is a high honor in teaching where you grew up,” said Sosa. Sosa had that high honor as a teacher at Eastside High School, where he later worked as a supervisor, a vice-principal, and a principal. Today, Sosa is the principal of the new Newcomers High School, which will educate students who have just arrived in the United States. The position is a continuation of the work Sosa did last year as principal of the Newcomers Elementary School. When asked what he is looking forward to the most in the upcoming year, Sosa said, “A successful year...and the continuation of building trust and relationships.” To the parents at his new school, Sosa said, “We’re in this together. I invite you to reach out to me.” With regard to the Newcomers students, Sosa’s thoughts came down to one word he repeated, believe. “I believe that the students are going to succeed,” he said. “I believe that they will eventually graduate. I believe that they will learn English and acclimate themselves to this beautiful culture of the United States.”

Rebecca Cecala, Principal of Instruction, Joseph A. Taub School

After serving as principal of Public School No. 7 for seven years, Rebecca Cecala will be one of two principals at the Joseph A. Taub School. Cecala will be working alongside **Amod Field**, the school’s new **principal of operations**, whom she called “wonderful.” “I think we make a great team,” she said. “And both of us are very excited for the upcoming school year.” Cecala, who has previously worked as a teacher, testing coordinator, and a literacy coach, was drawn to work as a principal because she started to develop ideas for supporting students by supporting school staff. “In order to support our students, we need to support the people who are teaching,” she said. Cecala is excited about coming to a school building, the district’s newest, that has many possibilities and “amazing technology.” Cecala wants parents to be assured that students’ safety and wellbeing will be the number one priority in the new school year. As for the students, Cecala said, “We are very excited to be able to meet them. We are looking forward to getting to know them. We want them to understand they we have high expectations of them. It’s a new school year, we’re going to start fresh, but it’s going to be a productive one.”

Amod Field is now the principal of operations at the Joseph A. Taub School. He previously served as vice-principal of Public School No. 25.

Kelli White, who had been serving as principal of HARP Academy is now the principal of Paterson STEAM High School, located at the former Paterson Catholic High School Building, 764 11th Avenue.

Dr. Natalie Heard-Hackett will continue in her role as the principal of the STARS (Students Transitioning and Achieving Real Success) Academy and will also be the principal of the STARS Academy’s TIES (Transitioning for Independence, Employment, and Success) Program. Both programs are at the former Paterson Catholic High School Building, 764 11th Avenue.