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**“The Greatest Key Any Of Us Can Be Bestowed With Is Knowledge”**

*Outgoing Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer Receives Paterson’s Key to the City for a sterling career in education.*

[Link to City of Paterson Facebook video](#)

In a ceremony held in the City Council Chambers at Paterson’s City Hall on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer received the Key to the City from Mayor Andre Sayegh. The ceremony was attended by City Council members, school district officials and guests. The award was given in recognition of Superintendent Shafer’s decades of service to the students of Paterson and for the leadership that she provided in the six years that she held the top position of the school district.

Ms. Shafer’s career actually spans forty-two years, the first ten was in another school district. She came to Paterson in 1992 as a supervisor. She would spend the rest of her career climbing the ladder, with notable positions such as the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. She became the Deputy Superintendent in 2012. After the resignation of her predecessor, Ms. Shafer became the Acting Superintendent of Schools in 2017 and eventually the Superintendent of Schools. For the last six years she lead the Paterson school district through teacher union contract negotiations, a pandemic, the resultant year of remote-learning, and the reopening of schools. Highlights to her tenure as Superintendent of Schools include improvements in graduation rates, facility upgrades, providing students with modern laptops to close the “digital divide”, establishing two five-year contracts with the Paterson Education Association teachers’ union, the reopening of Hinchliffe Stadium, and meeting all New Jersey Department of Education standards to regain local control of the Paterson school district which allows the Paterson Board of Education to make all of the final decisions in the school district’s operation. Superintendent Shafer will retire on July 1.

Superintendent Shafer said, “The greatest key any of us can be bestowed with is knowledge. It unlocks hidden potential and opens pathways to new possibilities. In a city like Paterson, with its wide-ranging socio-economic and cultural diversity, effective public education is the best chance for our youth to attain a level playing field

with our surrounding districts.” Referring to June 20<sup>th</sup> being International Refugee Day she said, “I want to point out that families who have fled from dangerous conditions in their countries of origin and came right here to Paterson to enjoy safety and a stable education for their children.”

Speakers at the event besides Superintendent Shafer included Mayor Andre Sayegh, Councilman Louis Velez, Board of Education President Nakima Redmon, and Sheriff’s Department Deputy Coordinator Robert Scott.

“The true testament to a leader’s legacy is the foundation in what you leave behind to the next leader to assure his or her success,” Mayor Sayegh said. He continues, “You’re fond of using the phrase, ‘Together we can’, and together we did. We did a lot.” Finishing with, “So today we salute you for being a champion for our children.”

“You will be missed. You will be missed,” said Councilman Velez. “Despite what anyone else says, we had a relationship,” he added in referring to the close working relationship city had with Superintendent Shafer’s administration.

Nakima Redmon, Board of Education President said, “You are leaving this district in the better,” continuing, “When I say the better, you forced us to think outside of the box.”

“As a parent, as someone working for the public, I just want to thank you for everything that you have done, especially with bridging the gap between our kids,” said Deputy Coordinator Robert Scott, continuing, “working together and pushing forward for a good working relationship.”