



For Immediate Release

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School 16 Students Lead Parent Workshop to Support Student Attendance

YES Ambassadors use student voice, research, and family engagement to support improved attendance outcomes

Paterson, NJ (May 13, 2026) – Students participating in School 16’s Youth Empowered Stewardship (YES) Ambassador program hosted the school’s first student-led parent workshop on April 28, focused on improving student attendance through student leadership, research, and family engagement.

As part of the initiative, YES Ambassadors were challenged to help increase student attendance among 7th grade students through peer-centered outreach and community engagement efforts. As a result of the project and related outreach efforts, School 16 saw a 12% decrease in persistent absences among 7th grade students during the project period.

“We are incredibly proud of the leadership and initiative displayed by the YES Ambassadors at School 16,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Laurie W. Newell. “By leading meaningful conversations with families and taking ownership of challenges within their school community, these students are demonstrating the powerful impact student voice can have on student success.”

During the workshop, students presented research-based information and facilitated interactive discussions that engaged parents in identifying barriers to attendance and developing practical strategies to support student attendance. The session highlighted the connection between attendance, academic achievement, and long-term student success while fostering collaboration between students, families, and school staff.

“Our YES students are changemakers who are deeply invested in our school community,” said School 16 Principal Ms. Nancy Tavarez-Correa. “Through their work to improve student attendance, they remind us that when students use their voice, families take action, and schools provide support, children take the most important step toward success: showing up to school.”

District leadership attended the event and commended students for creating an informative and engaging experience that elevated student voice and strengthened school-family collaboration. Students were guided throughout the initiative by advisors Renee Cleaves-Bryant and Angela Saray. Attendees also included Assistant Superintendent Dr. David Cozart, Supervisor of Student Support Services (SAC) & Social Emotional Learning Laurel Olson, Full-Service Community Schools Coordinator Carolina Franco Guzman, parents, teachers, and community stakeholders.

Overall, the workshop was informative, engaging, and demonstrated the effectiveness of student leadership in driving meaningful change.

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