

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION VOTES TO EXTEND REMOTE LEARNING

Reopening of school buildings not possible due to persisting pandemic conditions

PATERSON – Paterson Board of Education Commissioners authorized Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer to continue remote learning until further notice as local pandemic conditions continue to be assessed.

“We owe it to our students, families and staff to not lose focus on the pandemic conditions. At present, the conditions are simply not favorable enough to reopen. The safety of our students and staff must come first,” said Shafer. “Our goal was to prepare the district to reopen buildings according to all of the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Department of Health. I want to thank the Board Commissioners for their support in helping us meet that goal, and I am grateful to everyone in the district who has been working extremely hard throughout the pandemic to meet students’ needs and implement the safety measures in our comprehensive restart plan. Thank you for all that you do.”

“The safety of our students and staff must always be our top priority,” said Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons. “Despite vaccinations being made available to more people, this worldwide pandemic continues and, therefore, we must continue to be vigilant in guarding against our students and staff becoming infected by the COVID-19 virus. I want to thank Superintendent Shafer and her administration, all of the educators and staff members, who have worked hard to keep our students learning during the pandemic, and who have done an outstanding job in preparing our school buildings for the day when we can reopen them.”

The Board of Education Commissioners’ decision came after a thorough review of many statistics of COVID-19 cases in Paterson, Passaic County and throughout the State of New Jersey.

Yesterday, New Jersey officials reported another 4,378 confirmed new COVID-19 cases despite ongoing vaccination efforts throughout the state. Although the number of new cases has declined significantly since January, in March this downtrend reversed as new case rates have started to climb again.

During the past month, the number of new cases has increased by nearly 50 percent in Paterson and Passaic County, and by 16 percent in northeast New Jersey. This uptick marks a localized peak in community transmission, similar in magnitude to what happened in April 2020 and again

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in November 2020. Unfortunately, new cases seem to on the rise even though nearly 1 in 5 adults in the state have now been fully vaccinated.

As more schools have reopened for in-person instruction, the total number of school-linked outbreaks has grown by 61 percent in the past month, up to a total of 221 school-linked outbreaks and 1,002 school-linked infections since September. This includes 12 confirmed outbreaks in Passaic County and 42 school-linked cases.

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