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DISTRICT'S HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE ON TRACK TO REACHING PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

Students needing to work due to the pandemic's economic impact effect graduation numbers

PATERSON – District officials reported to the Board of Education on Wednesday that Paterson Public Schools' high school graduation rate is on a three-year upward trend and is on track to reaching pre-pandemic levels.

“The data that has been presented is encouraging, but it also indicates the challenges our students, families, teachers, and administrators have been facing since the COVID-19 pandemic began,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “Our Academic Services Department, assistant superintendents, principals, and teachers have worked hard to reach out to students and families to help our seniors earn the credits they need to graduate high school. Those efforts helped achieve the positive trend we've seen in the past three years. But there were many students who simply needed to work in order to help earn money for their families as they faced the economic duress of the pandemic. That is also reflected in the data we've seen tonight.”

At Wednesday's Board meeting, Assistant Superintendent Joanna Tsimpedes reported that the district's overall high school graduation rate for 2021-2022 is 81.3 percent, higher than the 2020-2021 rate of 80.2 percent and the 2019-2020 rate of 78.8 percent.

This three-year trend indicates that the district is on track to achieving its highest graduation rate during the past decade, which was 87.8 percent for the 2016-2017 school year. All of these graduation rates are significantly higher than those of the 2009 and 2010 graduation years when roughly half of the students in those cohorts graduated high school.

Tsimpedes also reported that many of the 256 students in the 2021-2022 cohort who did not graduate either moved away from the district or needed to take jobs to help their families meet expenses. Others simply could not be contacted, despite many efforts by district and school administrators to reach them.

No students last year were denied high school graduation solely because of failing a course's state assessment exam, substitute competency tests, or the portfolio appeals process, Tsimpedes said.

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