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NEW SCHOOL 20 AUDITORIUM OPENS WITH HIGH-ENERGY FANFARE

New facility opens with a “day of celebration.”

Photos attached: See end of release for captions.

PATERSON – Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer, Principal Dr. Moses McKenzie, Jr., and N.J. State Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly joined a house packed with enthusiastic students for the grand opening of the newly renovated auditorium at Public School No. 20.

“Today is a day of celebration,” said McKenzie, after cutting the ribbon at the auditorium’s entrance and leading hundreds of students, as well as many friends and family members, into the new facility.

“I can feel the energy in this new auditorium,” said Shafer as she took the podium. The students responded with enormous cheers.

Wimberly felt the students’ high-energy vibes, too. “We need to bottle some of this and spread this around Paterson,” he said.

The students and staff had good reason to be upbeat. The auditorium’s doors had been closed to them since 2021. At that time, the hardwood floors were blackened by years of neglect. Many of the wooden seats were broken. Sometimes people who sat in them would get splinters.

McKenzie showed images of the auditorium’s previous condition during his presentation, which were followed by photos of the new and improved facility. Two weeks of sanding restored the floor to its blonde hardwood luster. The old chairs were replaced by 736 stadium-style seats.

Some of the auditorium’s improvements couldn’t be seen but could be felt.

“Wow, they have air conditioning,” said Charles Ferrer, Paterson Education Association (PEA) vice-president, and a School 20 graduate. “I know you’re going to feel a whole lot better than I did.”

In her remarks, Shafer said that the School 20 auditorium renovation was part of Paterson Public Schools’ overall effort to improve facilities throughout the district.

“It’s important that our students get what they deserve,” she said. “This is just the beginning.”

Shafer acknowledged the many people who worked to complete the auditorium improvements. In addition to McKenzie, she thanked Assistant Superintendent David Cozart, Business Administrator Richard Matthews, Chief of Facilities Neil Mapp, and the Board of Education Commissioners.

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Wimberly congratulated McKenzie, whom he coached in football and baseball at Eastside High School, on the new auditorium. He also noted the principal's success in lifting the school's overall climate and culture.

"He is truly what Paterson pride is all about," Wimberly said.

The program ended with McKenzie's father, the Rev. Dr. Moses McKenzie, Sr., pastor of the New Creech Temple UHCA, singing his rendition of the 1964 Sam Cooke song, "A Change Is Gonna Come."

Among the people present at the grand opening were PEA President John McEntee, whose teaching career began at School 20; former School 20 Principal Courtney Glover, and former Board of Education Commissioner Vincent Arrington.

Photo 1: Dr. Moses McKenzie, Jr. Principal of Public School No. 20

Photo 2: School 20 students, staff and guests seated in the new auditorium

Photo 3: Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly addresses the audience

Photo 4: Superintendent Shafer and Principal McKenzie

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