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SUPERINTENDENT’S FORUMS ENLIGHTEN STUDENTS AND PARENTS ABOUT VAPING

Truth about vaping’s harmful effects prompts calls to action

***PHOTO ATTACHED: Laurel Olsen, the district’s supervisor of student assistance programs, listens to a student’s suggestions on how to keep students from vaping.***

PATERSON – Vaping is not safer than smoking cigarettes. This was just one of the facts that surprised students and parents at roundtable discussions about vaping’s harmful effects held on Tuesday by Paterson Public Schools Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. The two meetings – one with high school students, another with parents – focused on the harmful effects of vaping.

Among the most startling facts presented by Laurel Olsen, the district’s supervisor of student assistance programs, was that a single vape cartridge can contain as much nicotine as 20 to 30 cigarettes. Many who attended the meetings thought that the opposite was true and had believed that vaping was a healthier alternative to smoking.

“Many parents came here tonight believing that vaping wasn’t as serious as smoking,” said Tiffany Jacobs, a parent of five students who attend Paterson Public Schools. “Tonight’s workshop helped parents understand the truth about vaping.”

Shafer said that the group of high school students she met with earlier in the day were just a surprised by the harmful health effects of vaping.

“The students didn’t know. They really believed that vaping is safe,” Shafer said.

As of October 8th, 26 deaths in 21 states related to vaping devices have been reported, including one in New Jersey. Nearly 1,300 lung injury cases have been reported throughout the country.

A representative of the Coalition for a Drug Free Paterson said on Tuesday evening the companies that manufacture vaping pens and cartridges falsely marketed their products as safer than cigarette smoking. She also said that in recent years marketing efforts have been aggressively targeting minors. That has led to a 78 percent increase in youth e-cigarette use among high school students from 2017 to 2018, and a 48 percent increase among middle school students.

“This is very alarming,” said Linda Reid of the Paterson Education Fund. “We need to get to the younger kids before these companies do to keep our children from vaping.”
Shafer said that the forums on Tuesday were only the first steps of a larger anti-vaping campaign the district is planning. The next steps are to work with the principals and students to develop effective ways to make sure students know the truth about vaping.

“I know you’ve seen in the news stories about the number of vaping-related deaths,” Shafer told the parents. “We are racing as quickly as we can so that we can keep children from being harmed from vaping. It is an epidemic.”

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