



SMILES TO GO

CONFIDENCE CLOSETS GET BOOST FROM COLGATE-PALMOLIVE, STAFFER GETS COMMENDATION

The Confidence Closets initiative, a joint venture between the district and the Serve Our Schools coalition of Paterson churches, has received a major donation from the Colgate-Palmolive Company of products that the district's adolescent students need but many cannot afford.

More than 28,500 items were provided by the company including toothpaste, toothbrushes, body wash, and hand soap. Many Paterson families often go without such items as they continue to feel the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing inflation.

"We are deeply grateful to everyone at the Colgate Palmolive Company for this generous contribution that puts personal hygiene products in the hands of the students who need them," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. "When students aren't confident in their personal hygiene, they simply don't come to school. And that has a devastating impact on their academics and their aspirations for future success. The Confidence Closets initiative is aimed at removing this potential barrier out of the way of our students so that they can be at their best while they are in school."

The donated items were delivered to a warehouse in Glen Rock, the use of which was arranged by Pastor Matt Andersen, Executive Director of Star of Hope Ministries, Inc. and one of the founding members of the Serve Our Schools coalition.

"We are so excited to see this initiative moving forward and we are thankful to the Colgate Palmolive Company, and more than 30 churches and organizations who have collected and are continuing to collect toiletries," said Andersen. "To date we have received more than 2,500 items from Paterson area churches, and quite literally the Lord is multiplying our 'loaves and fishes' through donations from companies like Colgate Palmolive. However, the need is still great as we continue to push to set up Confidence Closets at all 33 district locations. The greatest need is for deodorant and feminine hygiene products."

Deliveries of the items have been made to four schools to date, John F. Kennedy High School, Eastside High School, International High School, and the New Roberto Clemente Middle School. The products are being distributed on the basis of the size of schools'



District, school, and city officials with student, Genesis Perdomo, right.

Photo by Daniel Juan

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Needed Toiletries For Paterson Public Schools'

Confidence Closets

Boys

Bar soap
Body wash
Shampoo
Deodorant
Shaving cream/gel
Combs
Hairbrushes
Hair styling products

Girls

Bar soap
Body wash
Shampoo
Conditioner
Skin moisturizer
Deodorant
Shaving cream/gel for women
Feminine napkins
Tampons
Combs
Hairbrushes
Hair styling products
Hair ties
Sweatpants

For Both

Dental Floss
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste

Here's how you can help!

DONATE ITEMS at:

Paterson Public Schools Central Office Building
90 Delaware Ave., Paterson

MAIL a CHECK for the purchase of the items to:

The Fund for Paterson Public Schools

90 Delaware Ave., Paterson, N.J. 07503

Payable to The Fund for Paterson Public Schools.

Write "Confidence Closets" on the check.

OR

Star of Hope Ministries

34 Broadway, Paterson, N.J. 07505

Payable to Star of Hope Ministries.

Write "Confidence Closets" on the check.

DONATE ONLINE via

PayPal (@fundforpps) or www.sohm.org/schools

All monetary donations are tax-deductible.

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Superintendent Shafer presents Raquel Amador with a special commendation. *Photo by Daniel Juan*

populations of students in grades six through 12. When the Confidence Closets initiative was launched last summer, it was estimated that there were 11,500 students in those grades at 33 different district locations. The need remains, especially for deodorant and feminine hygiene products.

The latter has been of particular concern for Raquel Amador, a chronic absentee specialist at Kennedy High School who saw how female students without access to feminine hygiene products would not go to class if they got their periods while at school. Amador began keeping a supply of feminine hygiene products in her office. As word got out among the students, she began keeping other personal hygiene products in what became known as "The She Spot," which is now a partner with the Confidence Closets and will benefit from donations made to the Confidence Closets initiative.

"I think it really speaks to Ms. Amador's character and commitment to students," said Superintendent Shafer as she presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Amador at a November 1st press conference. "In a world where we are not at any loss for people blowing their own horns, Ms. Amador is a person who quietly and humbly saw a student's need, met it, and then committed herself to continuously meet it."

Paterson City Councilwoman Ruby Cotton also presented Amador with a special commendation at the press conference. [CLICK HERE](#) to see NJ Spotlight TV's story on this item.

SCHOOL 21 STUDENTS LEARN TO COPE WITH LOSS OF LOVED ONES

**KHS ALUM TURNED LIFE INSURANCE AGENT RESPONDS TO TEACHER'S CALL,
NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION GIVES TWO \$500 GRANTS TO SCHOOL 21**



School 21 second-graders and staff get ready to release their balloons in honor of loved ones they had lost. *Photo by Paul Brubaker*

PATERSON – On an unseasonably warm November afternoon, Erica Bernard-Parker's second-graders at Public School No. 21 gathered outside of their school building to release balloons into the cloudless blue sky.

Some of the balloons were white. Others were different shades of blue. A few were heart-shaped. Each balloon had a name tied to it, the name of a loved one who had passed away. One student, Ryan Cropper, had lost his father only a few months ago. His mother, Maria, and a family friend were with him. Another student had also lost a parent. Two teachers at the school had died in recent years. Each of their names was tied to a balloon. The same for Eastside High School Principal Dr. Gerald Glisson and former Board of Education Commissioner Chrystal Cleaves, who had recently passed away.

"It's a time for everyone to feel sad, yes?" said Bernard-Parker to her students, just before they let go of their helium-filled balloons. "We can always think of those special memories. And when we're feeling sad, who can we go to for support?"

Students spoke up, almost in unison in response to their teacher's prompting. "We can go to a..."

"Teacher," some said. "A parent," more students said. "A friend," many more said.

The teacher gave a count of three and the children set their balloons aloft with an awestruck "whoa" as they rose to the blue infinite sky. Students broke into applause, pointed upward, and some even smiled and giggled, their grief giving way to the simple joy of watching balloons go higher and higher.

It was just one in a series of activities that have been scheduled at School 21 and six other district schools this month as part of November being Child Grief Awareness month, dedicated to addressing the needs of grieving children and teens.

Bernard-Parker, who attended Rosa L. Parks School of the Fine & Performing Arts, said the initiative began at School 21 after she spoke with Ryan's mother, Maria Cropper, whose husband died suddenly on June 22 leaving her and her son, Ryan, grieving his loss.

"It became apparent that support for the children's social and emotional health was needed not only for students in my class but also for students throughout the district," she said.

She reached out to Lilian Estrella, a Kennedy High School graduate who now works as a New York Life insurance agent. Bernard-Parker previously had Estrella's child as a student.

They worked with School 21 Principal JoAnne Riviello to present workshops to the school's administrative team and a workshop for other school educators about resources available to help students who are dealing with the loss of a parent.

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Balloons continued from p. 3.

“It’s all about giving back to the community,” Estrella said. “As a life insurance agent, I’m impacting people’s lives every day. When someone passes away, we are there to support the family in their grief.”

Before Bernard-Parker’s students went outside to release their balloons, Estrella read two short stories to the students from the New York Life Foundation’s Kai’s Journey book series about coping with the loss of a loved one, *The Girl With The Locket* and *The Golden Sweater*.

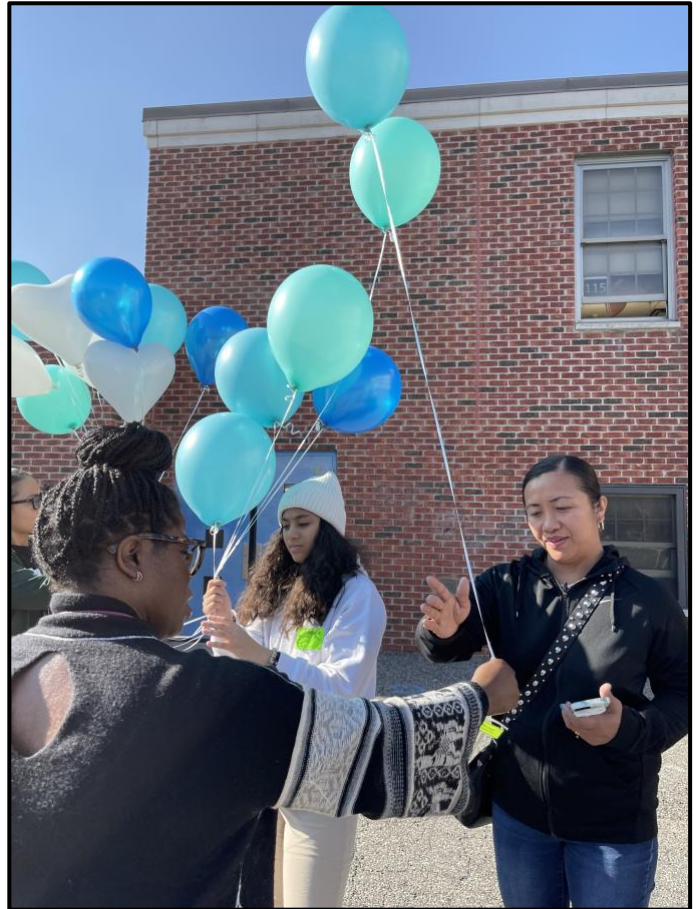
The students lined up in the hallway to exit the building in front of a bulletin board with the heading, “The Warmth of a Memory.” It displayed paper cut-outs of sweaters the students had colored and written upon about their deceased loved ones. “My favorite memory of my dad is when he was tickling me and when he took me to his job. I love you dad,” Ryan Cropper had written on the sweater he colored brown and black.

Based on Estrella’s participation in the New York Life’s Grief Sensitive Schools Initiative and Read Aloud Program, the foundation provided two \$500 grants to School 21. The grants will be used for student activities and professional development that will raise awareness about children who are grieving.

“I want to thank everyone who made addressing children who are grieving the loss of loved ones a priority in their schools,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “I commend Ms. Bernard-Parker and Ms. Estrella for collaborating, as well as Principal Riviello for supporting this initiative and instituting it at School 21. These have been particularly hard times for all of us, but most especially for our children. Anyone who helps a child cope with the enormous loss of a loved one is truly doing God’s work, and I so greatly appreciate our educators who have chosen to do this work.”

Other schools that have planned activities to observe Child/Teen Grief Awareness Month are Public School No. 15, Public School No. 16, the Alexander Hamilton Academy, Alonzo “Tambua” Moody Academy, the Dr. Hani Awadallah School, and John F. Kennedy High School.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a video of School 21’s balloon launch.



Maria Cropper accepts a balloon with her deceased husband’s name tied to it from teacher Erica Bernard-Parker. Her son, Ryan, is in Bernard-Parker’s class. Photo by Paul Brubaker



Lilian Estrella reads to second-graders in Ms. Bernard-Parker’s class. Photo by Paul Brubaker

PPS HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE ON TRACK FOR PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

District officials reported to the Board of Education this month 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 the November 2nd 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.

KENNEDY BOYS SOCCER KNIGHTS WIN ALL-BIG NORTH CONFERENCE LEAGUE HONORS

Eight members of the 2022 Passaic County Champion Kennedy Boys Soccer Knights have won Big North Conference League honors.

Named to the All-Big North Conference League First Team are Javier Sanchez, goalkeeper; Johann Sanchez, defender; Criss Escoto, midfielder; and Luis Portillo, forward. Named to the All-Big North Conference League Second Team are Joseph Aguilar, defender; William Castillo, midfielder; and Christopher Chavarria, forward. Defender Juan Pablo Villena Mejia received an honorable mention. All of the student-athletes are seniors.

"All of these players and the entire Kennedy Boys Soccer Team gave the Paterson community a season we will never forget," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. "May you all be proud of what you have accomplished and carry that pride with you in all of your endeavors wherever you go."

Shafer gave special thanks to Athletic Supervisor Scott Durham, Head Coach Richard Solis, Assistant Coach Alfredo Serrano, and Assistant Coach Jordan Serrano for all that they have done to bring out the best in our student-athletes.

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WE WALK BECAUSE SHE WALKED

TWO SCHOOLS COMMEMORATE RUBY BRIDGES' COURAGE



Ruby Bridges, age 6, flanked by U.S. Marshalls on the steps of the William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans on Nov. 14, 1960. *Photo is public domain*



A School 20 student shows her coloring of a picture of Ruby Bridges. *Photo by Daniel Juan*

remember how long the road to freedom and equality is. All of us need to be reminded that the progress we have made has been because of people like Ruby Bridges, and the work that lies ahead of us to ensure full equality among all people in America will not be accomplished without remembering the lessons that were taught to us by a little girl in Louisiana so many years ago.

Efforts to hold today's walks began with Roz Thompson, a longtime Patersonian and a senior public affairs specialist at AAA Northeast in Wayne. AAA partners with school districts, including Paterson Public Schools, in establishing student safety patrols that help school and public safety officials keep staff and students safe as they walk to and from school. The idea to hold a Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day originated with a group of fifth-grade safety patrol members in California in 2018. Since then, Thompson and her team in Wayne have been working to have Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day in Paterson.

"We are proud, and AAA is proud to spearhead these events today with Paterson Public Schools," said Thompson. "It took our ancestors to stand up then, and it will take all of us to continue to take a stand against racism. Racism is ugly. It should never, ever be in our schools or anywhere else in the world."

Hundreds of Paterson Public Schools elementary school students took to the streets on November 14th to commemorate the historic bravery of a six-year-old girl named Ruby Bridges who 62 years ago walked to a federally desegregated public school in Louisiana in the face of fierce racism.

Walks around two city blocks were held – one at Public School No. 20 and another at the Young Men's Leadership Academy (YMLA) – in which students, some of them the same age as Ruby Bridges when she made history, carried signs and chanted, "We walk because she walked."

"Today, many of our children and young adolescents learned just how much a child can accomplish," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "Through their commemoration of Ruby Bridges' courage, everyone who marched today has helped all of us



At left, YMLA students walking the streets near their school in Paterson. At right, School 20 students, some of them the same age as Ruby Bridges when she made history, pause during their walk. *Photos by Daniel Juan*

Thompson worked with School 20 Principal Dr. Moses McKenzie and YMLA Principal Marc Medley to plan today's events, which were preceded by classroom lessons about Ruby Bridges as well as the de jure segregation of public schools in the United States through the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.

"Our students are aware today that because she walked 62 years ago, they are able to walk to school and we have integrated schools today," said McKenzie. "Today is a day of celebration. It's a day of awareness and it's a day that we will never forget."

"You are never too young to make a difference, and you are never too young to stand against injustice," said Medley. "These are among the most important lessons that Ruby Bridges taught us, and that is why the students, staff, and the entire YMLA community proudly walks today in honor of her."

[CLICK HERE](#) to see News 12 New Jersey's coverage of the Ruby Bridges Walk To School Day.

TWO PPS COACHES NAMED AS FINALISTS FOR COACH OF THE YEAR



Michelle Lyde

Kennedy Boys Volleyball Coach Michelle Lyde and Eastside Girls Basketball Coach Brandon Pilgrim were honored as finalists by the Passaic County Coaches Association for the organization's Coach of the Year award.



Brandon Pilgrim

TWO PPS FOOTBALL PLAYERS WIN SFC'S YOUNG MAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

EASTSIDE'S ELIJAH CARROLL & KENNEDY'S ADRIAN "AJ" MOUZONE HONORED FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE



At left, Kennedy Head Football Coach Ronald Jackson and Adrian "AJ" Mouzone. At right, Eastside Head Football Coach Magazine, Elijah Carroll, and Athletic Supervisor T.J. Hill. *Photos courtesy of staff.*

Two prominent Paterson Public Schools football players have shown that the gridiron is not the only place they do a lot of good. The Super Football Conference has awarded the Eastside Football Ghosts' Elijah Carroll and the Kennedy Football Knights' Adrian "AJ" Mouzone the 2022 Steve DiGregorio Young Man of the Year Award which recognizes the players' dedication to service in school and in their community as well as their athletic abilities.

Carroll, the Eastside's wide receiver, had contributed to his community by tutoring members of the Eastside Football program and volunteering as a mentor to youth who are at risk at Youth Consolation Services. He is also a member of The Omega Teens, a mentoring program run by the Lambda Upsilon Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Meanwhile, Mouzone, a wide receiver for Kennedy, has participated in many community activities including Ceasefire's Community Clean-Up Walk, the 1000 Man March, the Faith in the Fourth Clean-Up, participating in Paterson Charter School of Science and Technology's JROTC program and volunteering in the 2022 Paterson mayoral election.

"I commend both of these fine young men for being as committed to doing everything they can off the field as they are on the field," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "Their receiving the Young Man of the Year Award should serve to remind us that we can all make a difference in the communities we live in, whether it is a school, a neighborhood, or an entire city."

Shafer expressed her thanks to the coaches and athletics staff who nominated Carroll and Mouzone for the awards; at Eastside, Athletic Supervisor T.J. Hill and Head Football Coach James Magazine; at Kennedy Athletic Supervisor Scott Durham and Head Football Coach Ron Jackson.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

School 12 Second Graders Get Health Lessons. At Public School No. 12, Maryann Marren's second-graders learned the fundamentals of staying healthy from five Seton Hall University graduate students studying to be physician assistants. One of whom was Marren's daughter, Shannon. The others were Madison Evans, Bianca Forcucci, Megan Holt, and Lauren Turco. The students learned about healthy eating through concepts like "eating the rainbow" and controlling portion sizes. They also learned about the importance of getting a good night's sleep and plenty of exercise.



Joining In the Healing. Superintendent Shafer was glad to help the Paterson Healing Collective distribute food at Public Schools No. 10 and 28 for their Pre-Thanksgiving Hot Meals & Groceries Giveaway. PHC distributed 300 meals and food bags in one day on November 17. *Photo by Shavar Gerald*

Celebrating The Day By Keeping The Beat. Students at Public School No. 5 learned about Native American rhythms from a guest speaker/drummer in honor of Indigenous People's Day. *Photo courtesy of staff.*





...And The Honors Go To. Two district administrators and one student-athlete were honored by Omega Psi Phi's Lambda Upsilon Chapter at its Achievement Week Breakfast on Nov. 17th. Public School No. 13 **Principal Nicole Booker-Toney** was honored for supporting of the Taco Tuesday program (which distributed 1,000 meals to students), for facilitating the distribution of fully-stocked bookbags to students, and the Omega Teens mentorship program. Public School No. 20 **Principal Dr. Moses McKenzie, Jr.** was honored for growing the Omega Teens program and supporting of the Eastside Football Ghosts. **Eastside Football Player Preston Brown, Jr.** was honored for his work in the community and with the Paterson Recreation Department.

PTO Leaders Unite For Training.

Districtwide Community Outreach & Special Projects Coordinator Bridget Arrick leads a training session at the Family & Community Engagement Department's biannual Parent-Teacher Organization Leadership Training at the Central Office last Saturday. The events bring parent leaders from around PPS school to improve their skills as PTO leaders. *Photo courtesy of staff.*



Timeless Athletes. Benjie Wimberly, N.J. State Assemblyman and Director of Recreation was among those inducted into the Old Timers' Athletic Association of Greater Paterson's Sports Hall of Fame. Wimberly was inducted on the basis of his excellence in football. Also honored was Amod Field, Principal of Operations at the Joseph A. Taub School, for his excellence in multiple sports. *Photo courtesy of staff.*

School 28 Prepares Thanksgiving Baskets For Families.

To mark November as the season of giving, students and staff at Public School No. 28 have collected food to create nice Thanksgiving Day meals for some special families. Collectively, they created baskets for 42 families who were randomly selected this week, the week of Thanksgiving. The baskets include many side dishes, vegetables, muffins, and even dessert. “We look forward to the smiles and joy the baskets may bring,” said Principal Nancy Castro.

Photo courtesy of staff.



Just Don't Call Her, "Tom." Central Office staff got a special Thanksgiving greeting Tuesday morning from **Laurel Olson**, Supervisor of PPS Student Support Services. Dressed as a turkey, she handed out messages promoting self-care and positive vibes for the upcoming holiday. *Photo by Paul Brubaker.*



School 1 Holds Food Drive For Eva's Village.

Renaissance One School of Humanities students and staff collected more than 350 food items during November to donate to Eva's Village for Thanksgiving. “We are so proud of the good work Eva's Village does for the needy and often forgotten people in Paterson,” said Technology Instructor Nicole Lovell. Pictured are members of the Student Council who collected and packed items in the food drive. *Photo courtesy of staff.*



YMLA ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO “BE THAT SPARK”

PILOT PROGRAM LAUNCHES TO IMPROVE LITERACY, VOCABULARY, AND SEL SKILLS

Students at the Young Men’s Leadership Academy (YMLA) have been learning how they ignite better reading, vocabulary, and social-emotional skills through a multimedia pilot program that launched at the school this fall.



The *Be That Spark* program is for students in kindergarten through the third grade and it incorporates reading and reading aloud with social-emotional learning lessons that include songs, videos, and take-home assignments. Each student has received a copy of the book, *A Little Spark*, to use in the classroom. It features a character, a mouse named Spark, and has stories that instill values such as the importance of believing in yourself, that everyone should be treated equally, and that friends should look after friends. Students also received an activity book of puzzles, coloring pages, and other engaging activities.

The program comes with lesson plans and a parent’s guide has also been developed to encourage reading at home. It includes QR codes that give families access to the program’s audiobook and original songs to reinforce the lessons.

Chris Parsons, the founder of Zuroam Media which publishes *Be That Spark*, said parents’ participation is critical to its success.

“In order for the program to be effective, parents need to engage,” Parsons said in a recent telephone interview.

The pilot program is being made available to YMLA at no cost to the school or the district.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the Be That Spark website.

SCHOOL 21 BILINGUAL STUDENTS TELL THEIR STORIES OF COMING TO THE U.S.



Teacher Jason Velante works with his fourth-grade students. Photo by Daniel Juan

In observance of the national “I Stand With Immigrants” Day of Action on November 2nd, fourth-graders in Jason Velante’s bilingual class at Public school No. 21 shared their stories of coming to America.

Each student came to the head of the class, took ahold of a microphone, and shared their written narratives of how they came to the United States.

“My Dad came to the United States first,” said Abraham, who is originally from Venezuela, reading his story in Spanish. He went on to say that he and his mother soon followed, coming to this country by way of Colombia.

As a reward for sharing their stories, Abraham and his classmates each received a bag of freshly-popped popcorn, as well as t-shirts and stickers that said, “I Stand With Immigrants.”

Important Dates


Nov. 23	Early Dismissal Thanksgiving Classic Football Game, Eastside hosts Kennedy Bauerle Field, 98 Oak St., Kickoff is at 6 p.m.
Nov. 24 & 25	District Closed Thanksgiving Break
Nov. 30	Board of Education Special Meeting (Remote) 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 6	Board of Education Workshop Meeting (Remote) 6:00 p.m.
Dec. 9	Early dismissal for students. PD for staff.
Dec. 14	Board of Education Regular Meeting (Remote) 6:00 p.m.
Dec. 16	Progress reports due.
Dec. 23	Early Dismissal
Dec. 26 – Jan. 2	District Closed – Holiday Break

Gather Together


for the

98th Annual Thanksgiving Classic

Football Game



The game that Paterson always wins!



Wednesday, Nov. 23rd, 6 p.m.

Bauerle Field, 98 Oak Street, Paterson

See you at the game!

Happy Thanksgiving!

Board of Education Meetings

All Board of Education meetings are live streamed at pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents. Those who want to give public comment should register in advance by emailing public@paterson.k12.nj.us by 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 30th and by 5:00 p.m. on Dec. 7th and Dec. 14th. Participants are asked to provide their name, address, and the phone number from which they will be calling.

PPS Beat is a publication of the PPS Department of Communications. We welcome your submissions on school and district-related news. Submit stories and photos to ppscommunications@paterson.k12.nj.us.