



## FIRST WALK MARKS LAST DAY

### DISTRICT SCHOOLS END AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH WITH THE FIRST PPS AUTISM WALK

More than 300 students and staff members gathered at Bauerle Field on the last day of Autism Awareness Month for the district's first Autism Walk.

All of the district's programs that serve students on the spectrum participated in the event. Following the walk around the track, a variety of games and activities were held on the field. The Paterson Fire Department was also on hand to demonstrate some of the firefighters' equipment. And there were plenty of hamburgers and hot dogs for everyone.

In the Opening Ceremony, Superintendent Eileen Shafer thanked Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Coy and her team for putting the exciting day together.

"They did not miss a beat," Shafer said. "We have one of the best autism programs in the state of New Jersey. We are committed to making sure that we provide a good education for our children who are autistic. The teachers who teach these students are the most caring and the most compassionate people."

The students as well as the staff members were clearly having fun on the attractions like the "Vertical Rush" inflatable slide, the bouncy houses, and the train ride. There were even a few rounds of a good old-fashioned tug of war as well as lots of music and dancing.

Behind all of the festivities was the underlying effort to continue the awareness of autism long after Autism Awareness Month ended.

"We may be different, but that makes us special," STARS Academy student Kalayah Evans said to a reporter from News 12 New Jersey.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see News 12 New Jersey's coverage of the Autism Walk.



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**Walking The Walk:** Students and staff members from all of the district's program that serve students with autism participated in the district's first Autism Walk. *Photo by Dan Juan*

### Inside!

More photos from The Autism Walk.

# NEW SCHOOL 20 AUDITORIUM OPENS WITH HIGH-ENERGY FANFARE

## NEW FACILITY OPENS WITH “A DAY OF CELEBRATION”

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.



Dr. Moses McKenzie, Jr., Principal of 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.

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.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a video of highlights of the School 20 auditorium grand opening.

# IHS SENIOR ACCEPTED TO GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

## MAYA MOHOSIN INTENDS TO MAJOR IN GOVERNMENT

University,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. “This brings tremendous pride to the district and the entire Paterson Community. I want to thank her principal, Dr. Catherine Forfia-Dion, and the vice principals, teachers, and all of the school’s staff for their help and support of Maya as she pursued her aspiration to attend Georgetown.”

“Maya has been an outstanding student and a very active member of the International High School community, and I give her my warmest congratulations on her acceptance to Georgetown University,” said Forfia-Dion. “This has been a goal of hers for a long time, and all of us at International High School and so glad to see her accomplish it. We look forward to her future success in all of her endeavors.

“Ever since my sophomore year of high school, I knew that Georgetown University was the right school for me,” said Mohosin. “From the civic-minded students to the world-renowned professors, Georgetown offered me an opportunity to further my education in politics and government.”

Mohosin, who is president of her school’s Student Government Association as well as IHS’ Chinese Club, intends to major in government at the elite university located in the nation’s capital. She also has interested in Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, which counts many heads of state among its alumni including former President Bill Clinton, and she looks forward to the chance to work as a Capitol Hill intern.

Other extracurricular activities Mohosin has been involved in while in high school include serving as treasurer of First Robotics Competition Team 6860, working as an intern at the 4Cs of Passaic County, where she helped low-income families obtain financial assistance, and volunteering at the Paterson Public Library. She is also a member of the National Honors Society and the N.J. Community Development Corporation’s Paterson Youth Council.

Mohosin credited much of her college acceptance to the support she received from her parents, who immigrated to Paterson from the Moulvibazar District in Bangladesh.

“They encouraged me to pursue the unimaginable despite all limitations,” she said. “They had to put their dreams and ambitions on the backburner in order to financially support themselves and their families. [They] did not attend a college or university, but they have always wanted for my siblings and me to receive a great education, which is why they came to America.”

Mohosin also said that her experiences as an International Baccalaureate (IB) student have prepared her well for college.

“Coming from the IB Program, I have become accustomed to an untraditional method of learning that values creative thinking, public speaking, and extensive research and writing skills,” she said. “This is especially useful for my major and my future career path, as great lawyers must be able to present their cases and use writing and analysis to review cases. Furthermore, Georgetown’s community is filled with students who have completed the IB Diploma Programme, which has allowed me to connect to students from all over the world who share the same rigorous educational background that I do.”

International High School Senior Maya Mohosin has been accepted to Georgetown University. Mohosin is the latest in a series of district students who have been accepted to many of the nation’s elite colleges and universities since 2012.

“I want to congratulate Maya and her parents on this outstanding achievement of being accepted to Georgetown



Maya Mohosin

# NSW STUDENTS WIN NATIONAL MATH COMPETITIONS

## MATH CLUB STUDENTS WIN TRIP TO ORLANDO, FL PLUS \$300 FOR SCHOOL

Four students in the Norman S. Weir School (NSW)'s Math Club, will be traveling to Orlando, Florida – all expenses paid – as winners of the Math Club Grand Prize in MATHCOUNTS' national math competition.

While in Orlando, the club members and their faculty advisor will be watching MATHCOUNTS' national individual competition, which begins on May 13th. NSW also received \$300 from MATHCOUNTS for a celebration at the school.

"The Norman S. Weir School math students should take great pride in their accomplishments," said Superintendent of School Eileen Shafer. "Their success on the national level is a tremendous recognition of their hard work, as well as the dedication of their teachers, administrators, and staff and the support of their parents."

"This achievement is a great example of the excellence our students can achieve," said Principal Giglio. "Our middle school math teachers Angela Larkin, Laura West, and Justin Manu inspire our students and do everything they can to help them reach their potential. Congratulations to our NSW mathletes! They truly deserve this very prestigious honor."

Also, NSW students in grades six, seven, and eight made the Renaissance education technology company's National Honor Roll based on their teachers' submissions of student work.

### The members of the NSW Math Club are:

Jacob Capers  
Mariany Valle  
Treyon Johnson  
Emely Paulino  
Amari McKoy  
Troii Jackson  
Jerimiah Stubbs  
Oreoluwa David  
Melissa Paulino  
Yarelis Lopez  
Damhayani Hernandez-Chicas

# SCHOOL 21 STEPPERS TAKE 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE IN AREA COMPETITION

## TEAM QUALIFIES FOR NATIONAL COMPETITION ON MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

Public School No. 21's new Step team placed second in an area competition on April 15th and qualified for a national competition to be held over Memorial Day weekend.

Stepping, or step dancing, is a form of percussive dance. The dancers use their entire bodies to produce complex rhythms and sound through footsteps, spoken word, and hand claps.

"We are so proud of our School 21 students for their performance on Saturday. For a brand new Step team to qualify for a national competition is simply outstanding," said Shafer. "It speaks to each member's sense of personal commitment to doing their best as well as their ability to work together as a team. Congratulations to all of them as well as their coaches, parents, and guardians."

Shafer thanked N.J. Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly, who is also the district's director of recreation, as well as Eastside Athletic Supervisor T.J. Hill, and Teens Step Up, Inc. Executive Director Seye Charles for their efforts in starting School 21's step team.

Wimberly and Hill facilitated the district's partnership with Teen Step Up, Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Dunellen dedicated to providing step instruction to students ages 12 to 19.

School 21's Step team currently has 12 members, all girls who are in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. They practice twice a week after school. On weeks when they have a competition, they practice every day after school.

The team competed against 12 other teams from the tri-state area in Saturday's competition, which was held at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J. The national competition will be held on Saturday, May 27th at Symphony Hall in Newark, N.J.

# 11 PPS STUDENTS ACCEPTED TO PRIVATE PREP'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

PROGRAM HELPS STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Eleven college-bound students were honored at City Hall for being accepted into Private Prep's "Learn To Thrive" Scholarship program, which will provide them with resources, tutoring, and coaching for the college admissions process.

Among the requirements for the program are a strong desire to go to a four-year college or university and a minimum unweighted 3.5-grade point average.

"Each of these students has been putting their best efforts into achieving their dreams of attending college. The Private Prep program recognizes that hard work and is designed to bolster their opportunities," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "I congratulate all of them for this achievement and wish them luck as they complete the college admissions process. I want to thank the district's Director of Guidance Tamisha McKoy and everyone at Private Prep for their dedication to our student's needs and dreams"

"Preparing for college entrance exams and navigating the overall college admissions process is complex and confusing for anyone," said Paterson First Lady Farhanna B. Sayegh, the Paterson point-person for the Private Prep program. "Many of our students are the first generation to go through this process, and the cost is prohibitive for most of our families in Paterson. The families in of the surrounding affluent neighborhoods pay thousands to prepare their students for college admission preparation - leaving our students at a disadvantage. When we talk about equity, it's not just about providing any SAT prep or any college admissions service, but by providing elevated resources to reach equal outcomes. This is what this program in Private Prep does for Patersonian families."

Sayegh said that typically, students who are accepted into the Private Prep program are invited, with their parents, to the Paterson Mayor's Office.

"We congratulate them on a wonderful academic career thus far and encourage them to keep up the great work," she said. "We also want our student recipients to fully grasp how important this is."

The Private Prep "Learn to Thrive" Scholarship Program empowers students from backgrounds that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Its goal is to combat the systemic inequities, particularly race-based inequities, of the American education institution by helping our students develop and employ skills that will allow them to create greater opportunities for their futures.

The program provides test prep for the SAT or ACT that includes one-on-one tutoring for up to six months, materials for independent work, proctored practice test and analysis of results. It also provides comprehensive one-on-one college admissions counseling that includes helping the students choose where to apply, write their college essay, and navigate the admissions process.

For more information, <https://privateprep.com/>



Mayor Andre Sayegh with some of the district's students in Private Prep's "Learn To Thrive" program and Private Prep staff.

Photo by Dan Juan

## The 11 "Learn To Thrive" Students

### Paterson STEAM High School

Leonna Morris  
Effie Purisima Ocampo  
Amelia Griffiths

### International High School

Evelyn Hernandez  
Kemya Beltran  
Nairenny Jimenez

### Rosa L. Parks School of the Fine & Performing Arts

Rashel Medina  
Diamond Anderson  
Dayanara Menendez

### Eastside High School

Ab-i-Shai Landle

# PPS STEAM DIRECTOR ADVOCATES FOR CHANGES TO ELA, MATH STANDARDS

SARAH STERLING-LALDEE TESTIFIES AT NJDOE MEETING ON PENDING CHANGES

The district's Director of STEAM Education spoke in support of pending changes to English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards at the N.J. Department of Education hearing this week, saying that the changes would better prepare students for a changing world.

"As we all know, our world continues to change at a pace that far exceeds our comprehension," said Sarah Sterling-Laldee at a hearing held Monday at the Warren County Technical School in Washington, N.J. "While this makes it challenging to provide learning opportunities that anticipate these changes, standards revision like the ones that are currently under review help prepare our children to pivot in a changing world."

[CLICK HERE](#) to read Sterling-Laldee's complete testimony.

Among the changes Sterling-Laldee highlighted was a new data literacy component added to mathematics. She also spoke in favor of adding climate change standards in both math and ELA, which she said will help students make real-world connections across different content areas.

"The learning opportunities proposed in the new standards will prepare our children to engage in new and emerging careers that utilize data science in critical decision-making to support healthy communities and a thriving planet," she said. "Furthermore, including climate change standards in ELA and math, particularly in grades K to 5, create additional opportunities for students to engage in foundational science and civics learning that are critical to their future success in STEM classes and potential STEM careers, and as active citizens."

Implementing strategies to uphold the changes to the new standards won't be easy, Sterling-Laldee said, but Paterson Public Schools educators are up for the challenge.

"In Paterson, we are enthusiastically poised to embark on this work as it helps meet our goal to support learners who can best care for themselves, their communities, and their planet," she said.

Sterling-Laldee, an alumna of Paterson Public Schools, has previously worked as a middle school teacher in Paterson as well as Supervisor of Science Education for grades K to 12 for the district as well as for New Brunswick Public Schools.



Sarah Sterling-Laldee, PPS Director of STEAM Education

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# AROUND THE DISTRICT

**And You Thought Only Ghostbusters Got Slimed.** There's not much Norman S. Weir School Principal Grace Giglio won't do to encourage her students to read. Just before Spring Break, Giglio allowed herself to be "slimed" by students. Students had to earn their right to slime by reading and critically reviewing enough books in the school's reading contest. The contest winners were Ann Mathews' first-grade class and Marni Sultanof's sixth-grade class, who read a total of 318 books. Students throughout the school read more than 1000 books and critically reviewed 698 books. *Photos courtesy of staff.*





**School 25 Nets NJEA Sustainability Grant.** Public School No. 25 has been awarded a \$2,000 Sustainable Jersey Grant from the N.J. Education Association. The grant will be used to host the school’s first Green Team Sustainability Fair in May. Fifth-grade teacher and grant writer Sigal Kaplan will coordinate the fair, as she is also the school’s Green Team Lead teacher. Kaplan and District Science Coordinator Maureen Bruins received the grant award at the NJEA’s grant awards event at The College of New Jersey on March 29th. *Photo courtesy of staff.*



**NHS at EHS.** Eastside High School’s chapter of the National Honor Society inducted 29 juniors and seniors at a ceremony held in March. One of the highlights of the event was the inspirational message delivered by Deputy Superintendent Dr. Susana Peron. *Photo courtesy of staff.*



**School 20 Students Level Up.** Students in Public School No. 20's behavioral disabilities program can earn a "Level Up" activity each month. The purpose of these monthly activities is to encourage positive behaviors and goal-setting for our students. The staff within the program collaborate each month to think of activities for those students who earn based on their behavior. During the month of April, a display of toys and treats was put together for students to build their own Easter baskets. School counselor Karyn Stephenson helped make this activity possible as well as the staff within the program who all provided items for students to choose from. Students were also given the opportunity to earn a McDonald's lunch thanks to the principal, Dr. Moses McKenzie, Jr. *Photos courtesy of staff.*



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**An Inclusive Circus at WPU.** Five hundred students from Public Schools No. 5 and 12 visited William Paterson University's Shea Center where they saw, "I'm Possible," a production by the Omnium Circus. The production is famous for being a truly inclusive circus. The show follows Johnny, whose dream is to join the circus. He meets an extraordinary group of multi-abled performers, from a tightrope walker who uses a bongo board on the rope, to contortionists, to jugglers, and more. In the end, Johnny showcases his own incredible talent for balancing. He climbs a ladder and stands atop it with no one holding the sides. He then keeps steady atop a stack of moving cylinders on top of an elevated platform. Professors Dr. Michael Gordon and Dr. Julie Rosenthal arranged for the free tickets to the performance and coordinated logistics with Dr. Betsy Golden, who serves both schools as their Professor in Residence. Dr. Rosenthal's teaching interns assisted with seating and other tasks during the show. School 5 and School 12 students, teachers, and parent chaperones thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and the performers were touched and encouraged by their enthusiastic response to each act. *Photos courtesy of Dr. Golden.*

**WPU's REAL Men Read.** William Paterson University Curriculum Materials Center Librarian Neil Grimes recruited male readers from across the campus each year to participate in the annual "Read, Excel, Achieve, and Lead (REAL) Men Read program. The readers took their passion for reading into Public Schools No. 5 and 12 by reading aloud and sharing stories about themselves, their work, and their love of reading. At School 5, WPU Provost Josh Powers read "What Do You Do With a Problem?" and, in honor of World Poetry Day, "Be Glad Your Nose is On Your Face"). WPU Reference and Outreach Librarian Gary Marks read "Those Darn Squirrels," "The Cat Next Door, and "Two Truths and a Lie: Forces of Nature." At School 12, Dean of the WPU Library Edward Owusu-Ansah read "Little Libraries, Big Heroes" and "The Man Who Loved Libraries." Head Reference Librarian Bill Duffy and his wife Barbara read "The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins," Officer David Warbrick read "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish," and Director of Transfer Programs and Special Sessions Patrick Noonan read "Water Dance and We are Water Protectors." *Photos courtesy of Dr. Golden.*



**A Trip To Princeton.** A group of seventh and eighth-grade girls from Public School No. 12 recently visited Princeton University for a Women in Science conference. Accompanied by middle school science teacher Michelle Albritton, the students enjoyed hands-on activities such as trying on a firefighter's 80-pound turnout gear, viewing a demonstration on fingerprints, and participating in interactive experiments with electricity. They also attended a panel discussion by four women who shared their experiences in pursuing STEAM careers. They also learned about Marie Curie through a digital theater performance. *Photo courtesy of Dr. Golden.*



## PPS, PUBLIC LIBRARY TEAM UP TO GET EVERY STUDENT A LIBRARY CARD



**Cards For Kids:** Paterson Free Public Library Chief Corey Fleming promotes providing PPS students with library cards at a news conference. *Photo by Dan Juan*

To further assist Paterson Public Schools students to accelerate their learning after the pandemic shutdown, the district has teamed up with the Paterson Free Public Library to provide every student in the district with a library card. The library cards will not only allow students to check out books but will also provide them access to the library's online resources that support their academic success.

The library's online resources include a variety of New Jersey databases for research projects, audiobooks, eBooks, magazines, high school entrance practice exams, Learning Express resources, and real-time homework help through Tutor.com.

"We owe it to every child to do everything we can to help them recover from the pandemic's impact on their learning," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer at a news conference held on the first day of National

Library Week. "The library's resources combined with the district's efforts and resources maximize the availability of tutoring to our students, starting them on a course for academic success as they recover from the pandemic shutdown."

The help of parents and guardians is needed to provide the cards for students. That is why the Department of Academic Services has been reaching out to families, asking them to complete a brief Google Form. The information provided will allow the library to issue the cards to the students. The Google Form can be accessed at [tinyurl.com/GetMyLibraryCard](https://tinyurl.com/GetMyLibraryCard).

"This is a great example of what we can achieve when we all work together," Shafer said. "If the district, the library, and parents and guardians all do their part, every student can have a library card and have even more help on their road to academic success."

# THE DISTRICT'S FIRST AUTISM WALK



*Photos by Dan Juan*



# 176 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HONORED AS NJ STARS BY PPS, PCCC

TOP-RANKED STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION FREE



A few of Paterson Public Schools' high school students who were nominated as NJ STARS. *Photo courtesy of staff.*

Officials from Paterson Public Schools and Passaic County Community College (PCCC) held a special nomination ceremony for 176 district high school students on April 25<sup>th</sup>. The students all rank within the top 15 percent of their graduating classes making them eligible to be eligible to attend the community college without paying tuition.

"Because you worked hard in school and gave your best effort to your academics, you have a least one pathway to college that will not require you to go into debt," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer. "And that is a great way to enter the world after high school."

The New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Rewards program, or NJ STARS, provides eligible students with the chance to attend community college tuition-free for five semesters, and up to 18 credits per semester, which makes it possible to earn an associate's degree without paying tuition.

In addition to ranking in the top 15 percent of their graduating class, students and their families must also complete the FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid) form.

"All high school seniors who want to go to college, regardless of their class rank, should

complete the form so they do not miss out on any financial resources to help cover the cost of higher education," Shafer said. "We never want any student to miss out on the chance to go to college because they believe they cannot afford it.

Shafer thanked district Director of Guidance Tamisha McKoy and her team for leading the district's efforts to help make sure students are on the right track to their futures after high school, as well as PCCC President Dr. Steven Rose for his continuing partnership with the district.



Paterson Public Schools' Director of Guidance Tamisha McKoy  
*Photo courtesy of staff.*

# STATE ASSEMBLY HONORS EASTSIDE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

“BOTH TEAMS HAD A SUPERIOR SEASON.” – ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY



N.J. State Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly presided over a ceremony honoring the players, coaches, and administrators of the Eastside Mighty Ghosts and Eastside Lady Ghosts Basketball Teams in the State Assembly Chambers on March 30th.

N.J. State Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter joined Wimberly on the Assembly floor to give awards to the head coaches of the Eastside Mighty Ghosts and Eastside Lady Ghosts basketball teams.

Eastside High School's Basketball Program had a banner year with both teams winning Passaic County Championships. It was the second consecutive county championship for the Lady Ghosts. The Mighty Ghosts went on to win the team's first Group IV State Championship since 2015.

“Both teams had a superior season,” said Wimberly, “and we knew that the work that they put in, not only on the court but also in the classroom was worthy of this acknowledgment.”

“As inner-city high schools, we don't get a lot of credit, but to be quite honest our team were students first and foremost in the classroom,” said Boys Head Coach Marquis Webb. “This is a testament to all the work that we put in.”

To which Girls Head Coach Brandon Pilgrim echoed, “Our kids are students on and off the court.”

Superintendent Eileen Shafer stated, “We have great coaches as role models for our student-athletes, and like they said, academics come first, and we've now put Paterson on the map.”

**Top:** The Paterson Eastside Lady Ghosts on the State Assembly floor listening to Assemblyman Wimberly speak. **Center:** Assemblyman Wimberly with Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer and Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter addresses the Paterson Eastside Mighty Ghosts. **Bottom:** The Paterson Eastside Basketball Teams with their coaches and administrators outside of the N.J. State Assembly Chambers. *Photos by Dan Juan.*

# TWO EHS LADY GHOSTS BASKETBALL STANDOUTS COMMIT TO NJ COLLEGES

RON'SHANAЕ AUSTIN HEADING TO CALDWELL, JAYLEEN VALERA TO ESSEX COUNTY CC



**Paterson Pride Shining:** (front row, from left) Jayleen Valera, Brandon Pilgrim, Ron'Shanae Austin; (back row, from left) Julisa Foreman, Anthony Green, Asia Rollins, Desirelle Salas, T.J. Hill, Patricia Austin, Ron Austin, Jr., and Sedrina Austin. *Photo by Dan Juan*

Surrounded by loved ones, teammates, and friends, two Eastside Lady Ghosts Basketball standouts signed letters of intent to play for New Jersey colleges at a special signing ceremony held at Eastside High School on April 20th.

Ron'Shanae Austin, forward and captain of the two-time Passaic County Champion Lady Ghosts, committed to playing for Caldwell University. She will attend the NCAA Division II school on a full scholarship.

Jayleen Valera, who played forward on the 2022 Passaic County championship team, committed to playing for Essex County Community College, also on a full scholarship.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a video of the signing ceremony.

"It feels great to be the first to go to college on my mom's side [of the family] and keep going on my dad's side," said Austin after she signed her letter.

Ron Austin, Jr., her father, who played for Passaic County championship teams at Passaic County Technical Institute, said he was "ecstatic" over his daughter's decision.

"We love the way that she grew up as a person," he said, flanked by his mother, Patricia Austin, and wife, Sedrina Austin. "Academics and basketball came together, and we're just so proud of her."

Valera was equally happy about signing with Essex County.

"Where we come from, a lot of people don't get the opportunities to get a scholarship and play basketball in college," said Valera, who will be the first in her family to attend college on a scholarship. With her was her head coach at Essex County, Anthony Green, and her girlfriend, Julisa Foreman.

Both players praised Brandon Pilgrim as their head coach since their freshmen year.



**Paterson Pride Shining:** (front row, from left) Jayleen Valera, Brandon Pilgrim, Ron’Shanae Austin; (back row, from left) Julisa Foreman, Edgard Nieves, David Cozart, Paul VanderWende, Eileen Shafer, Andre McCollum, Patricia Austin, Ron Austin, Jr., and Sedrina Austin. *Photo by Dan Juan*

“He’s really like a second father to all of us really,” said Austin. “He had us down from day one, and we just love him for it.”

Valera simply said, “He made me the player I am today. He helped me grow. He helped me mature. He taught me patience.”

Pilgrim was just as open when he talked about the specialness of the two student-athletes.

“They taught me patience as well. I can’t say anything but I’m proud of them. They put in a lot of hard work,” Pilgrim said. “It just shows that good things do come out of Paterson.”

Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer said the district was “incredibly proud” of the college-bound student-athletes.

“Their hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence have earned them these well-deserved scholarships,” Shafer said. “We wish them the best of luck as they continue their academic and athletic careers at Caldwell University and Essex County Community College. They will always be Lady Ghosts, and we look forward to following their success.”

Also present at the signing ceremony were Assistant Superintendent David Cozart, Eastside Athletic Supervisor T.J. Hill, Eastside Principal of Instruction Andre McCollum, Eastside Principal of Operations Edgard Nieves, International High School Vice Principal Paul VanderWende, and Eastside Lady Ghosts Assistant Coaches Asia Rollins and Desirelle Salas.

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# MEDIA PROS ADVISE STUDENTS MAKING ANTI-BULLYING PSAS

## PANELISTS SHARE EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE WITH STUDENTS

High school students working on anti-bullying PSA videos had a chance to hear from a panel of media professionals about their careers and experiences in the movie and TV production industries.

“We’re all working on a project about harassment, intimidation and bullying. I really wanted to expand your learning for this,” said Director of Climate and Culture Nicole Y. Payne as she

welcomed the students to International High School’s auditorium. “Some of you are interested in this field. It’s always good to hear from other people to hear their perspectives.”

The audience was made up of students from Eastside High School, John F. Kennedy High School, and Rosa L. Parks Schools of the Fine & Performing Arts as well as the Essex County Donald M. Payne School of Technology.

Superintendent Eileen Shafer told the students that the best way to learn is from someone who has already been where they hope to go.

“Be like a sponge today and take up as much good information from these professionals,” Shafer said. “They are all success stories.”

[CLICK HERE](#) to see the video of the panel discussion.

The panelists were prompted by questions asked by three student moderators: Yuralvi Valdez from Eastside High School, and Samuel Pitman and Noelly Gomez Reyes from Rosa Parks High School.

Rahman Ali Bugg, the sole Paterson native on the panel, spoke about his experiences as a media professional for more than 25 years, having worked as a producer and director for a variety of television networks.

Another panelist, Kenneth Gifford, who founded the Newark International Film Festival and Ironbound Studios in Newark, spoke about the importance of seizing the present-day opportunities to be creative and productive rather than waiting for success to start at some point in the future.

Jamal Hall, a former Paterson Public Schools teacher, echoed the sentiment. The filmmaker emphasized that a student with a smartphone is equipped with everything he or she needs to create a quality video, upload it to social media, and perhaps have it seen by industry pros.

Documentary filmmaker Donfred Napoleon, who participated on the panel remotely, talked about the importance of delegating work to team members, especially when other team members may be better at certain aspects of filmmaking than the director.

The anti-bullying videos the students will create are scheduled to be presented to the Paterson Board of Education during a meeting in June. The videos will then be posted to the district website and distributed to all of the district schools.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see WPIX-11’s story on the event.



**Media Pro Panel** (from left) Rahman Ali Bugg, Kenneth Gifford, and Jamal Hall  
*Photo by Paul Brubaker*

# BOARD APPROVES NEW SUPERINTENDENT, 2023-2024 BUDGET

## DR. LAURIE NEWELL TO TAKE HELM OF THE DISTRICT IN JULY



Dr. Laurie Newell

After a national search, meetings with stakeholder groups, and the presentation of three finalists at a community forum last fall, Board of Education officially made their choice on for the district's next Superintendent of Schools in Dr. Laurie Newell.

Newell has previously worked at Paterson Public Schools from December 2006 to June 2016 as the district's human services director and the chief reform and innovation officer. She has been serving as the superintendent of the Essex Regional Educational Services Commission.

The Board's vote on April 25<sup>th</sup> followed a public hearing on the incoming superintendent's contract.

Following the vote, Superintendent Eileen Shafer wished Newell "all the best" during her tenure as superintendent.

"When I was applying to be Paterson Superintendent of Schools, I believed I had three very important strengths: I was a woman, I was no stranger to Paterson, and I loved our children and wanted the best for them," Shafer said. "Now that the time has come for me to pass the torch to somebody else, I must say that it feels great to know that the person receiving it is a woman who is no stranger to Paterson, loves children, and wants the best for them."

At the same meeting, board commissioners approved a \$780 million spending plan for the 2023-2024 school year. This is the fourth consecutive year that the district has avoided layoffs of staff and cuts to programs.

## EHS TRACK HAS STRONG SHOWING AT PENN RELAYS



Head Coach Eddie Hamilton, center, and his team. *Photo courtesy of staff*

Members of the Eastside High School's Boys and Girls track teams had strong finishes as they competed in the Penn Relays last week.

Winning the Boys 4x400 were Samar Harrison, senior, Jayden McKenzie, junior, Joemar Hiciano, sophomore, and Elijah Carroll, senior.

Winning their section in the Boys 4x100 were Jamar Robinson, sophomore, Jaden McKenzie, junior, Samar Harrison, senior, and Elijah Carroll, senior.

Winning their section in the Girls 4x100 were Tam'ra Smith, junior, Sasha-Kay Bonfield, sophomore, Paris Higgs, senior, Nyasia Pauldo, sophomore.

Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer commended all of the student-athletes.

"It takes stamina and teamwork to achieve the strong results that they did, and we are very proud of the way they represented Eastside High School and Paterson Public Schools," she said.

Shafer thanked Boys Track Team Head Coach Eddie Hamilton and Girls Track Team Head Coach Chamekea Davis for bringing out the best in the student-athletes.

### Important Dates

- May. 9** Teacher Job Fair  
90 Delaware Ave. – 1st-floor café  
Paterson, 4 – 7 p.m.
- May. 10** Board of Education  
Workshop Meeting  
6:00 p.m. – Remote
- May. 12** Early dismissal for students/  
Pro-Development for staff
- May 17** Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
6:00 p.m. – Joseph A. Taub School, 202 Union Blvd., Paterson  
Public hearing for the incoming Superintendent
- May. 26** Early dismissal for students/  
PEA Day for staff
- May. 29** Memorial Day – District Closed



### Board of Education Meetings

The May 10th Board of Education meeting will be held virtually at 6:00 p.m. and live-streamed at [pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents](https://pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents). Those who want to give public comment should register in advance by emailing [public@paterson.k12.nj.us](mailto:public@paterson.k12.nj.us) by 5:00 p.m. on May 10th. Participants are asked to provide their name, address, and phone number from which they will be calling.

The May 17th Board of Education meeting will be held in-person at 6:00 p.m. at the Joseph A. Taub (JAT) Middle School, 202 Union Avenue. It will also be live streamed at [pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents](https://pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents). Those who want to give public comment must do so in person. They should register when they arrive at the JAT School for the meeting.

### Simultaneous Language Interpretation

Online simultaneous language interpretation is available at all Board meetings in Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, and Turkish. Simply choose the preferred language at [pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents](https://pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents).

*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](mailto:ppscommunications@paterson.k12.nj.us).