

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DISTRICT ANNOUNCES BOARD OF EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Paterson P-Tech student will serve as lead, Eastside High School student will serve as the alternate

Photos attached: See end of release for IDs.

PATERSON – Paterson Public Schools high school students will have a voice on the Board of Education beginning in August when the board adds a non-voting student member to its ranks.

Yaneliz Mejia, a rising senior at Paterson P-TECH High School, has been chosen as the board's first student representative, and Paris Higgs, a rising senior at Eastside High School's School of Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Tourism, will serve as the alternative student representative. Both Mejia and Higgs will be presented to the board and the public at the board's meeting on August 10th.

"The addition of a student representative to the Board of Education will provide high school students a direct line to the board," said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. "It will also be an additional way for the board commissioners and the administration to keep in touch with our high school students, know what their concerns are, and be more responsive to them. We are very proud of the student representative and the alternate who will be serving throughout the 2022-2023 school year and look forward to working with them."

"There are many people who will offer their thoughts on the job Paterson Public Schools is doing, but the people who matter most are the students," said Board of Education President Kenneth L. Simmons. "I want to congratulate Yaneliz and Paris for taking on the responsibility of representing the voices of their constituents, and I look forward to officially welcoming them to the board in August."

The creation of the board's student-representative position is in keeping with a state mandate. In June, the district put a call out to the high schools' student government organizations for recommended candidates for the positions. Mejia and Higgs were among the students who submitted applications that were reviewed by district officials. The student representative will be responsible for keeping in touch with the student governments at all of the district's high schools and reporting their issues, concerns, and any other communications to the board. They will also bring any board communications back to the high schools' student governments.

Mejia was born in Jersey City and is a rising senior at P-TECH at PANTHER Academy. She is spending her summer as an intern at IBM, where she hopes to work full time in the future, and she has been participating in the Gear Up College Bound program. In addition to serving as class president, Mejia played second base for the Eastside Softball Team. Among the colleges she intends to apply to are Rutgers University and Howard University. During the upcoming school year, Mejia will start taking courses at Passaic County Community College as part of the P-TECH program.

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Higgs is a native of the Bahamas who is a member of the National Honors Society and the captain of the Eastside Girls track team. She also coaches student-athletes ages 8 to 14. Later this summer, Higgs will compete in the shot put and discus events at a competition at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. She aspires to go to medical school and become an anesthesiologist. Among the colleges she intends to apply to are Columbia University and Rutgers University.

Photo 1: Yanelia Mejia

Photo 2: Paris Higgs

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