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**PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS AWARDED \$498,735 GRANT TO HELP
PARAPROFESSIONALS BECOME CERTIFIED TEACHERS**

Grant funding will support paraprofessionals in becoming certified teachers.

Paterson, NJ (December 10, 2024) - Paterson Public Schools is taking significant steps to address teacher shortages in high-need subject areas with the support of a \$498,735 grant. The funding will help district paraprofessionals become certified teachers, enabling them to fill critical vacancies and strengthen classrooms across the district.

This grant provides a comprehensive package of financial and professional support, including: test preparation and exam fees (Praxis and language proficiency), certification and university application fees (partnering with Montclair State University), tuition for required coursework, professional development opportunities, 50-hour preservice course fees, and classroom supplies.

The program focuses on certifying paraprofessionals in critical need teaching areas, including special education, bilingual education, math, and the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, and physical science). This initiative is part of the district's broader efforts to ensure that every student in Paterson receives a high-quality education, even as schools nationwide face challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers in certain subject areas.

Superintendent Dr. Laurie W. Newell emphasized the transformative potential of the program, "This grant is an incredible opportunity to uplift our dedicated paraprofessionals who have already shown their commitment to Paterson Public Schools. By supporting their career advancement, we are strengthening our classrooms and ensuring that our students have access to highly qualified educators in areas where they are needed most."

This initiative will be led by the district's recruitment team, who will guide selected paraprofessionals through the certification process and into teaching roles. This effort not only addresses the longstanding teacher shortages but also invests in individuals who are already making a difference in the lives of Paterson's students.

Assistant Superintendent Luis Rojas highlighted the long-term benefits of the program, "Our paraprofessionals have deep connections with our students and community. This grant not only



invests in their professional growth but also ensures continuity of care and excellence for our students. This is a win for everyone in Paterson Public Schools.”

The district has been proactive in implementing creative solutions to fill teacher vacancies, such as recruiting local talent and creating pathways for professional growth. These efforts underscore Paterson Public Schools’ commitment to providing a world-class education for its more than 26,000 students.

Paterson Public Schools is eager to collaborate with paraprofessionals who have demonstrated their dedication to the Paterson community. With this grant, they will be equipped to take on greater roles in shaping the future of education and positively impacting students’ lives.

About Paterson Public Schools

Paterson Public Schools serves over 26,000 students from pre-K to 12th grade in New Jersey’s third-largest city. About 70.6% of the student population is Hispanic, 16.3% are Black, 6.5% are Asian, and 5.0% are Caucasian. Recognizing its proud traditions, diverse community, and strong partnerships, the mission of Paterson Public Schools is to provide an academically rigorous, safe, and nurturing educational environment that meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of all students. The district is committed to preparing students for post-secondary education and careers. Despite the Paterson community being classified as low-income, many of its students achieve high academic success. A growing number of elementary school students are reading at or above grade level, and more high school students are earning college credits through Advanced Placement exams and enrolling in college-level courses before graduation. Paterson Public Schools is distinguished as one of only 17 school districts in New Jersey to offer the competitive International Baccalaureate program and is among just four districts with a P-TECH high school. In collaboration with IBM and Passaic County Community College, the P-TECH program allows students to graduate with an associate degree in applied science and valuable tech sector experience. For more information, visit www.paterson.k12.nj.us

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