

For Immediate Release

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School No. 24 to be Renamed in Honor of Maria Magda O’Keefe

Native of Puerto Rico dedicated her life to public service and impacted countless lives in Paterson

Paterson, NJ (May 16, 2025) – Paterson Public Schools’ School No. 24 will be renamed in honor of Maria Magda O’Keefe, a trailblazer who served as a guiding light for many in her beloved adopted city of Paterson. The Paterson Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the renaming at its regular meeting Wednesday evening.

“Maria Magda O’Keefe was a pioneer,” said Board of Education Commissioner Eddie González. “She broke the glass ceilings for many others to follow. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for her. She did a lot for families that came from other countries to the great city of Paterson, looking for a place to call home. I’m so proud to finally have a school named after her. I am so grateful for my fellow commissioners in supporting this resolution renaming School No. 24 to Maria Magda O’Keefe School.”

The Deputy Mayor of Paterson from 1974-82, Magda O’Keefe was the first Hispanic elected to office in Paterson when she became a city council member in 1984. She was also one of only a small number of Hispanics that held an elected office in the state of New Jersey at that time. Magda O’Keefe was later elected President of the Paterson City Council in 1988.

“Maria Magda O’Keefe embodied the spirit of service, leadership, and cultural pride that defines the best of Paterson,” said Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Superintendent of Schools. “Renaming School No. 24 in her honor ensures that generations of students will know her story and be inspired by her example. She proved that one person can truly shape a community—and her impact will continue to grow through the children who walk those halls each day.”

Magda O’Keefe’s lasting legacy can be found in the Centro Hispano de Servicios Múltiples (Hispanic Multi-Purpose Service Center), an organization that she founded in 1976. The center, located at 911 East 23rd Street in Paterson, has provided social, educational and recreational services to thousands of city residents spanning nearly 50 years. Over her years of dedicated service, Magda O’Keefe served as a commissioner on the Paterson Board of Social Services and Board of Health. She was also on the board of St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center and was active in the organization “Women in Government,” the Paterson Chamber of Commerce, the Columbia University Panel of Health, the Boy Scouts of America Board of Directors. Additionally, Magda O’Keefe chaired the Paterson Great Falls Committee and the Paterson Puerto Rican Parade committee in 1976.

The Board's School Renaming Committee recommended the name change at its meeting on April 30. The Board formally approved the renaming at its May 14 meeting. The change will go into effect in September 2025.

For more information about Paterson Public Schools visit our [website](#).

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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