

— THE DISTRICT — CHRONICLER

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

December 2024

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Holidays from Superintendent Dr. Newell



[Click on the above image to watch video](#)

Season's Greetings!

As we prepare for the holidays, I want to thank each and every one of you for all you've done to make Paterson Public Schools a stronger community. Whether you're a staff member, student, parent, or stakeholder, you are an essential part of what makes our district so unique.

This is a season of reflection and appreciation. Paterson is a vibrant blend of diverse communities, and our schools reflect that richness. What we share is far greater than what sets us apart, and that shared strength gives us hope for a brighter future.

As you enjoy the break, please take time for yourself, connect with loved ones, and do what brings you joy. Wishing you a happy, restful holiday season, filled with warmth and kindness. Thank you and see you in the New Year.

KEY TO EDUCATION

School 28 Principal Receives Key to City

Nancy Castro, Principal of Paterson Public School 28/Paterson Academy of the Gifted and Talented, received the Key to the City from Mayor Andre Sayegh in recognition of her outstanding leadership and dedication to academic excellence. Under her stewardship, the school has been named the top elementary and middle school in New Jersey by U.S. News & World Report for the second time and earned a National Blue Ribbon School award in 2018.

The honor, presented during Puerto Rican Heritage Month, celebrates Castro's contributions to the Paterson community and her role as an inspiring leader.

"School 28 is the success story it is today because of Mrs. Castro's vision and determination," said Mayor Sayegh.

Congratulations to Mrs. Castro for this well-deserved recognition!"



School 28's Principal Nancy Castro and Vice Principal Victoria Larosilliere.



(L-R) Councilwoman At-Large Maritza Davila, Principal Nancy Castro, Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly, Superintendent Laurie W. Newell, Mayor Andre Sayegh, First Lady Farhanna Sayegh.



School 28's Principal Nancy Castro (center) with family members.

DISTRICT STEAM EXPO

On December 17th, the Office of STEAM Education hosted the 2024-2025 District K-8 STEAM Expo, sponsored by William Paterson University (WPU). The annual expo celebrated the innovative science and math-based projects of 144 elementary students, showcasing the district's commitment to providing interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences that integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). Bringing together students, families and educators, the expo highlighted how STEAM education prepares learners to engage meaningfully as global citizens in an ever-evolving world.

Both Paterson Public Schools' Superintendent Laurie W. Newell and WPU Dean of the College of Education Amy Ginsberg encouraged the students to pursue their interests in STEAM fields during opening remarks. The District's Supervisor of Science Lakisha Kincherlow-Warren congratulated the students, who were each the first-place winners in their grade for their respective school, and thanked them for being part of the expo.

After the welcoming remarks, students were divided into two groups for the project presentation session; one presenting and the other was allowed to travel between projects. Each group had fifteen minutes to present their projects to their peers before switching. After presentations, the students were divided by grade and were taken to age-appropriate activities provided by the university, such as lab and greenhouse tours, 3D printing demonstrations, and coding with Legos.



Dr. Laurie W. Newell (r) and Dr. Amy Ginsberg (center) watch a student demonstrate their STEAM project.



Students interact with a STEAM project. Students were divided into two groups, one presenting and the other visiting, which then later switched.

FOLLOW PPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HR GRANT SUPPORTS TEACHER RECRUITMENT



Paterson Public Schools recently received a \$498,735 grant to help district paraprofessionals become certified teachers. This will help address critical shortages in high-need areas such as special education, bilingual education, math, and science. The grant covers test preparation, tuition, certification fees, professional development, and classroom supplies, ensuring paraprofessionals have the resources to advance their careers. 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.

[To read the press release click here.](#)

FAFSA FAIR HELPS STUDENTS NAVIGATE FINANCIAL AID SERVICES

Over 400 students and parents attended the first ever district wide FAFSA Fair, held at Eastside High School on December 10th to learn more about financial aid services available to students interested in attending college. Now that it is a requirement that all graduating seniors complete a FAFSA form, the Paterson School District worked together with community partners to help parents navigate this intricate process and the district made translation services available for any who needed it.



"As many of you are aware, the state of New Jersey put into a law this year that our graduating students must have completed a FAFSA form," explained Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services/Special Programs, Joanna Tsimpedes at the last board meeting. "As we know, this is a struggle for parents who understand the language and you can imagine the difficulty faced by] parents who don't understand the language."

Partnering organizations and universities who also assisted at the event were Montclair State University, William Paterson University, Passaic County Community College and Fairleigh Dickinson University, in addition to the Paterson Alliance and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) from the New Jersey Department of Education. This program was organized by the Academic Services Department.

The next FAFSA event is scheduled for January 11th at JFK High School at 9:00 AM.



JFK STUDENT RECOGNIZED AT WINTER 2024 AENJ NJPAC ART EXHIBITION



JFK HS freshman Yasier Ynoa stands with his father in front of his artwork.

Yasier Ynoa (9th grade), a Foundations of Fine Art student at John F. Kennedy High School, received a certificate in recognition of his original abstract landscape drawing, which was chosen for the Winter AENJ Exhibition at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. Yasier developed his marker drawing as part of a class assignment, but put in extra time, effort, and dedication to take it to the next level. Yasier attended an art reception for student artists and their families on Sunday, December 8th at NJPAC.

At the reception, Yasier's father mentioned that he had helped cut the stone and marble for the entrance of NJPAC, so father and son will both forever share special memories of exhibiting their hard work at NJPAC!

Yasier's art teacher, So-Yoon Lym, who submitted his artwork for consideration, also attended the reception to congratulate Yasier and to represent Paterson as an Art Educator of New Jersey (AENJ) member. The Art Educators of New Jersey NJPAC student art exhibition series showcases selected artwork submitted by AENJ art teacher members from the 21 different counties in New Jersey.

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION

Students visit New York City for Special Art Exhibitions

Twenty-six current and former John F. Kennedy High School 'Foundations of Art' students visited the Museum of Art & Design in New York City on Friday, December 13th, escorted by Hermes Almeida, Edwin Hernandez, and So Yoon Lym. Divided into two groups, they were led by Museum Educators on tours of the 'Barbie: A Cultural Icon' and 'Out of the Jewelry Box' exhibitions. Students also created 'art' jewelry using an assortment of materials and supplies provided during a 45-minute workshop. Students also had the opportunity to visit the lobby of the Deutsche Bank Building to see Ferdinand Botero's 'Adam and Eve' sculptures.



TWO PPS SCHOOLS SELECTED AS STATE FINALIST

Norman S. Weir School and School 28/Paterson Academy of the Gifted and Talented have both been selected as State Finalists in the prestigious Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition for 2024-2025! This program is a nationwide competition designed to encourage students in grades 6 through 12 to utilize STEM skills to create solutions for critical issues in their local communities. Thanks to their innovative projects, both schools have been awarded \$2,500 in Samsung technology for their classroom. As a State Finalist, the schools will now compete for a chance to win \$12,000 in technology and become a State Winner.

Congratulations to all who participated and best of luck in the next phase of the competition.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS DISTRIBUTE THANKSGIVING MEALS AT SCHOOL 21

Paterson Councilwoman At-Large and Parent Coordinator for School 21, Dr. Lilisa Mimms organized a Thanksgiving Turkey giveaway for students and their families with the help of several community partners. Partnering organizations that helped with food collection included the Islamic Center of Passaic County, Grandparents Association and Save The Village. For this event, 200 meals were given out to the families by volunteers and the PTO.



A School 21 parent receives a box containing every ingredient needed for preparing a Thanksgiving meal from Superintendent Newell (center) and Dr. Lilisa Mimms (r).



A School 21 parent receives a Thanksgiving meal package from Superintendent Newell (center). Dr. Lilisa Mimms (r) and Board member-elect Hector Nieves.



Volunteers help distribute Thanksgiving meal packages at School 21.

SCHOOL 4 EVENTS

Family Dinner and Paint Night

The Dr. Frank Napier School of Technology/No.4 community gathered for a memorable Family Dinner and Paint Night just before Thanksgiving, where families and staff enjoyed a delicious meal together while participating in painting and crafting activities. The event fostered creativity and connection, leaving everyone with cherished memories and creative paintings.



Report Card Night and Tricky Tray Event

During Report Card Night, the FSCS (Full-Service Community Schools) team hosted their first Tricky Tray event. Thanks to the generosity of the staff, all the gift baskets were donated and filled with exciting prizes such as movie tickets, household appliances, cleaning supplies, games, toys, and beauty care products. Families eagerly participated, and the energy in the room was electric as winners were announced. The joy and enthusiasm was palpable, making it a night to remember.

Dress For Success Seminar



Middle school students had the unique opportunity to attend a “Dress For Success” seminar hosted by Principal Smith’s fraternity brothers, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. During the seminar, students learned the importance of presenting themselves with confidence under the motto, “When I look good, I feel good.” They also received a practical lesson on how to properly tie a necktie. Proudly wearing their ties for the remainder of the school day, students embodied the seminar’s message with pride and professionalism.

SCHOOL 24 BAND PERFORMS AT PATERSON TREE LIGHTING

This year’s annual Paterson Tree Lighting Ceremony was extra special, thanks to the talented School 24 Band. The students brought the holiday spirit to life with festive tunes throughout the night, culminating in a captivating final performance that warmed the chilly Thanksgiving weekend. One standout moment was their rendition of “Feliz Navidad,” a heartfelt tribute to the Hispanic community, that had the audience clapping and singing along. Their stunning performance of the Ukrainian classic “Carol of the Bells” showcased impressive musicianship and precision, leaving the crowd in awe. The band concluded the evening with a lively rendition of the holiday favorite “All I Want for Christmas Is You,” which had everyone on their feet.



Parents, community members, and city officials alike applauded the students’ dedication and talent. Their music not only entertained, but also highlighted the power of the arts in bringing people together during the holiday season.

“We’re so proud of our students for sharing their gift of music and making this event memorable for everyone,” said David Alpaca, the band leader at School 24. “It’s moments like these that remind us how special our Paterson community truly is.”

[Click here to watch the performances](#)

YMLA JAZZ ENSEMBLE PERFORMS AT PCCC

The Young Men's Leadership Academy (YMLA) Jazz Ensemble performed on December 6th at the Passaic County Community College (PCCC) campus at Wanaque for the 10th Anniversary Youth Services Conference hosted by the Passaic County Department of Human Services and sponsored by the Passaic County Board of County Commissioners.

According to Principal Marc Medley, the boys have only been playing since the middle of September and none of them had ever played a musical instrument prior to joining the YMLA Jazz Ensemble. The Jazz Ensemble is under the direction of Greg Searvance and Darshell DuBose-Stone.

[Click here to watch the video!](#)



HEADLINES

Our district in the news

Media Highlights

TAPinto Paterson

[Paterson's School 16 Expands Longstanding Food Pantry to Continue Supporting Families in Need](#)

December 3, 2024

NorthJersey.com

[Paterson, with 118 teacher vacancies, tries to help get other employees certified](#)

December 11, 2024

The Bergen Record

[Seven NJ schools among 300 finalists in Samsung STEM competition. See the list](#)

December 11, 2024

TapInto Paterson

[Paterson Officials and Board of Education Reach Agreement on Tennis Court Renovations Amid Tensions](#)

December 12, 2024

TapInto Paterson

[Exiting Longtime Paterson BOE Commissioners Saluted for Dedicated Service](#)

December 13, 2024

Paterson Press

[After mayor's pitch, miffed Paterson school board OKs tennis court project](#)

December 13, 2024

TapInto Paterson

[Paterson Public Schools to Address Teacher Shortages with \\$498K Grant Supporting Paraprofessionals' Path to Certification](#)

December 16, 2024

Important Dates

January 1	New Year's Day – District Closed
January 8	1:00 Student Dismissal/Staff PD
January 20	MLK, Jr. Birthday – District Closed
January 31	2 nd Marking Period Ends



Board of Education Meeting

The January 2nd Board of Education Organization meeting will be held at 90 Delaware Avenue. Those who want to give public comments must do so in person. They should register for the meeting.

Language Interpretation

Online language interpretation is available for all pre-recorded Board meetings in Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, and Turkish. Simply choose the preferred language at pps.eduvision.tv/LiveEvents.

The District Chronicler 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.

Aida E. Rosario, Director of Communications
Kristen Downey, Supervisor of Special Projects and Communications
Daniel Juan, Coordinator of Communications
Jeani Perez, Confidential Communications Assistant

Welcome our new team members!



Kristen Downey serves as the Supervisor of Special Projects and Communications. She will provide support to the department by overseeing projects and actively contributing to the district's efforts to communicate effectively with a culturally diverse population through a variety of social media tools and platforms.



As the Confidential Communications Assistant, Jeani Perez will provide administrative support to the Director of Communications and the department.