

— THE DISTRICT — CHRONICLER

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

April 2025

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

April marked Autism Awareness Month, and Paterson Public Schools proudly joined communities around the world in celebrating and supporting individuals with autism. The district began the month with a flag raising ceremony in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd, led by the Division of Special Education and Services.

Throughout the month, the Special Education and Services Division, along with schools across the district, organized a range of events aimed at increasing understanding and promoting acceptance of people with autism. From classroom activities to school-wide initiatives, students and staff worked together to create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

The month's signature event was the Autism Awareness Walk on April 28th, held at the Bauerle Field House, where students, staff, and families gathered for a fun-filled day of unity and awareness.

"Autism Awareness Month is more than just a time of recognition—it's a call to action," said Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Coy. "We are committed to ensuring that every student is seen, heard, and supported in ways that honor their unique strengths and abilities."



SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

Bring Your Child to Work, Celebrating the Work Behind the Scenes

As we continue to foster a community that values both education and work-life balance, I am excited to share that Paterson Public Schools hosted its first-ever *Bring Your Child to Work Day* under my tenure on Thursday, April 24th. This event provided an incredible opportunity for the children of our district employees to engage with and experience the professional workplace environment.

It was a day of learning, exploration, and fun as children visited various departments and schools across the district, gaining insights into the important work that their parents and guardians do every day. The day was designed to inspire curiosity, build connections, and help the next generation understand the roles that contribute to the success of our schools and our community.

I want to take a moment to thank all our staff for ensuring a safe, inclusive, and productive environment for all the children who participated. I hope that this experience was memorable for our families and helped spark new ideas and dreams for the future.

Looking forward to many more meaningful events that bring our community closer together!

Celebrating the Work Behind the Scenes

As we continue our journey to strengthen Paterson Public Schools, I want to take a moment to highlight some of the important work happening across the district. These efforts, driven by our leadership team, are critical to our ongoing strategic planning and dedication to improving the educational experience for all our students.

In April, we hosted several community forums focused on our middle school model and strategic planning initiatives. These forums provided valuable opportunities for parents, students, and community members to share their feedback. The insights we gathered will help guide us as we continue to refine and improve our approach to middle school education and our district's strategic plan. We appreciate the collaboration and ideas shared by everyone who participated, as they help shape the future of our schools.

We also held our monthly Principals Meeting to discuss key topics as we prepare for the upcoming academic year. Our school leaders came together to engage in meaningful conversations about planning for growth and ensure that we continue to offer our students the best support and opportunities. These discussions are essential as we align our efforts to build on our successes and set a strong foundation for the year ahead.

The work being done across our district is a testament to the dedication of our team and the ongoing support of our community. Together, we are creating a Paterson Public Schools experience where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,
Dr. Laurie W. Newell

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING PERFORMANCE: FRANKENSTEIN BAND

At the April 2nd Board of Education meeting, we were treated to a wonderful performance by the Frankenstein Band, a collaboration of talented musicians from our very own Paterson Public Schools. The band was founded by Jason Quevedo, a music teacher at School 16, and includes Matthew Cavallo, a music teacher from School 1, along with drummer Blanca Navarette from Rosa Parks High School and singer Cecily Nunez from School 16.

You can watch the band's incredible performance by clicking [here](#).

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY AT CITY HALL



On April 22nd, Superintendent Dr. Laurie W. Newell and Board of Education Commissioner Della McCall joined city leaders, students, and community members at Paterson City Hall for an Earth Day celebration hosted by Mayor Andre Sayegh. The event honored the importance of environmental stewardship and highlighted the city's efforts to promote sustainability and climate awareness. Paterson Public Schools remains committed to cultivating a sense of environmental responsibility in students and supporting citywide efforts that build a greener, healthier future for all.



PRESCHOOL AWARENESS DAY!



On Thursday, April 24th, Paterson Public Schools hosted a Preschool Awareness Day at Paterson City Hall. The event offered families the opportunity to learn more about the district's free preschool program, meet local preschool providers, and receive on-site registration information. Led by Assistant Superintendent Joanna Tsimpedes and the Department of Early Childhood Education, this community-centered initiative aimed to expand access and awareness about the high-quality early learning opportunities available to Paterson's youngest learners. It was a successful and engaging event that brought families and educators together in support of early childhood education.

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PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A FUTURE WITHIN REACH: JFK'S INSTANT DECISION DAY OPENS DOORS

The Counseling Department at John F. Kennedy High School recently hosted its annual Instant Decision Day 2025, offering seniors a unique opportunity to connect with college, career, and military representatives—all in one place.

More than ten organizations participated, including colleges, universities, trade schools, and military branches. Students interviewed on the spot, and over 50 received acceptance offers from various institutions.

The atmosphere was filled with energy and hope as students emerged from their interviews excited and optimistic about what lies ahead. Events like these reflect the school's continued efforts to help students take meaningful steps toward their future goals.



PATERSON P-TECH STUDENTS CELEBRATE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTION



Students from Paterson P-TECH High School recently celebrated their induction into the National Honor Society (NHS), recognizing their outstanding academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to service. The event brought together families, staff, and administrators for a truly memorable and inspiring ceremony.

The NHS is a prestigious organization that honors students who exemplify scholarship, leadership, service, character, and citizenship. The newly inducted members now join a proud legacy of excellence and dedication to both school and community.

Congratulations to all the inductees on this well-deserved honor!

P-TECH STUDENTS EXPLORE DNA SCIENCE AT THE REGENERON LEARNING CENTER



Students from Paterson P-TECH had an unforgettable experience at the Regeneron DNA Learning Center, where science truly came to life in the lab. During this exciting field trip, they rolled up their sleeves to participate in real genetic experiments used by scientists every day.

They transformed bacteria by inserting genes, cut and analyzed DNA using gel electrophoresis, and explored their own ancestry through mitochondrial DNA sequencing. One of the highlights was DNA barcoding, where students used genetics to identify different organisms, much like researchers tracking

biodiversity around the globe. This hands-on adventure deepened students’ understanding of genetics and biotechnology, bridging what they learn in the classroom with cutting-edge science in the real world. They did not just learn — they did.

RENAISSANCE ONE STUDENTS SUPPORT WOMEN IN NEED & ENJOY OTHER EVENTS

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

In honor of Women’s History Month, Renaissance One School of Humanities launched a meaningful community service project in support of women receiving services at Straight and Narrow, Inc. Students and staff came together to collect and donate essential items, demonstrating both generosity and a strong commitment to service.

The team at Straight and Narrow expressed heartfelt gratitude for the donations and shared their excitement about passing the items along to the women in their programs. This project stands as a powerful example of how our schools are empowering students to make a difference—right here in the Paterson community.



FUN-FILLED FAMILY EVENT





On Tuesday, April 8th, the Renaissance One School of Humanities PTO hosted a fun-filled family event at Chuck E. Cheese in Paramus. From 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM, students enjoyed an evening of games and activities. A big thank you to our PTO and families for their continued support!

READING WORKSHOP

On Thursday, April 24th, Renaissance One School of Humanities hosted a special reading workshop sponsored by Reading Is Fundamental (RIF). The all-purpose room was transformed into a cozy, library-like setting, where first-grade students and their parents had the chance to choose books and spend quality time reading together. The event saw a fantastic turnout, and it was truly inspiring to witness the students and families so engaged in the joy of reading!



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CELEBRATING "BRING YOUR CHILD TO WORK" DAY, SUPPORTING THE AUTISM WALK

School 13 had a fantastic time celebrating "Bring Your Child to Work" day, with families joining us for a day filled with learning and fun! It was a wonderful opportunity to engage with the community and share the joys of the workplace with our youngest supporters. Additionally, the school proudly participated in the Autism Walk, showing their support and raising awareness for the autism community. Together, we are making a meaningful difference. Thank you to everyone who participated and made this week memorable!



DR. HANI AWADALLAH SCHOOL CELEBRATES STUDENT PERFORMANCE AT RADIO CITY HALL



Dr. Hani Awadallah School is proud to share that our talented student, Camila, recently performed at the Garden of Dreams Talent Show at Radio City Hall, which aired on ABC7 New York on April 8th. It was an exciting opportunity for Camila to showcase her incredible talent on such a prestigious stage.

We invite you to watch her performance by clicking the link below. To jump straight to the performance, fast forward to the 1:26:06 mark for the moment you do not want to miss!

Watch Camila's performance on [Garden of Dreams Talent Show 2025](#).

SCHOOL 6 HOSTS "REAL MEN READ" LITERACY PROGRAM

School 6 had the pleasure of participating in the "REAL Men Read" literacy program this week. Read, Excel, Achieve and Lead (REAL) Men Read is a community-based initiative where male mentors help inspire children to develop a love for reading. WPU Professor Stephen Betts graciously volunteered his time to read to Mrs. Debbie Thomas's kindergarten class.

The children loved his visit, and it was clear that Professor Betts was equally impressed with our school, the wonderful staff, and, of course, our smiling kindergarten students. Special thanks to Mrs. Thomas and Ms. Concepcion for making the event possible.

The event was arranged by Sue Raymond, School 6's William Paterson Professor in Residence.



Special thanks to Professor Betts for making this event so memorable!

JFK STUDENTS SHINE AT 9TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT ART COMPETITION

John F. Kennedy High School's 'Foundations of Art' students, Juniely Uceta Reyes and Marcos Heredia (both 12th grade), along with their families, attended the 9th Congressional District Art Competition Exhibition reception at the Clifton Arts Center on Friday, April 11. During the event, they were honored with certificates from Congresswoman Nellie Pou for their contributions.



The Congressional Art Competition, which was pioneered by the late Congressman Bill Pascrell, takes place annually across the United States. In each district, congress people reach out to high schools to encourage art teachers to submit student artwork for the competition. The first-place winner has their artwork displayed at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., for a year.

The art teachers from both John F. Kennedy High School and STEAM High School also attended the reception and received certificates of recognition from Congresswoman Pou for their involvement in this prestigious national competition.

Although Jo'Angel DeJesus (12th grade) also had his portrait drawing submitted, he was unable to attend the reception due to prior commitments.



SCHOOL 28 RECOGNIZED AS A COMMON SENSE SCHOOL

School 28 has earned recognition as a Common Sense School by Common Sense, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids and families thrive in the digital age.

This honor acknowledges School 28's commitment to preparing students to think critically and use technology responsibly. The school has adopted a whole-community approach to help students learn, create, and engage in the digital world while addressing key challenges such as plagiarism, privacy loss, and cyberbullying. Through this recognition, School 28 is furthering its efforts to build a strong culture of digital citizenship and equip students with the skills they need to navigate and contribute to the online world in a positive way.



EASTSIDE HIGH STUDENT DEBUTS HARMLESS® A BOLD NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

On Wednesday, April 30th, Eastside High School debuted *HARMLESS®*, a groundbreaking graphic novel focused on mental health awareness. Created in collaboration between 11th-grade student and first-time author Michelle Santana and Teacher of Graphic Design, Mr. Brian Sledge, the powerful release not only marked the start of Mental Health Awareness Month but also introduced readers to a new emerging genre in graphic novel storytelling called Cypher-Noir®.

Created by Mr. Sledge, Cypher-Noir® is a raw, street-rooted style of narrative art. Emerging as a platform for expression for today's teens and young adults, Cypher-Noir® draws parallels to the birth of hip-hop in the 1980s.

Harmless® tells the gripping story of a young girl spiraling under the weight of untreated mental illness and the absence of meaningful support. The graphic novel originated from a class lesson in CORE Graphics (a graphic novel creation course founded by Eastside's Mr. Sledge). What started as a 12-page writing assignment transformed into a 34-page visual experience, merging traditional storytelling with modern digital imaging tools like AI and Adobe Photoshop.

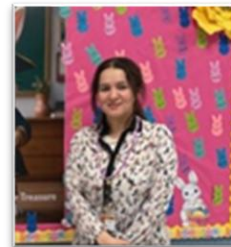
"Michelle crafted a deeply personal and compelling narrative that took me by surprise," said Mr. Sledge. "Our daily collaboration and conversations helped me understand and shape the visual experience of her graphic novel. Her dedication resulted in creating something extraordinary."

As a lasting part of its legacy, *HARMLESS*® will be included in all Paterson Public Library branches' circulation, as well as under a new heading: *PPS Student Authors*—a dedicated space to celebrate and preserve the emerging creative voices of the city's youth within Paterson Public Schools.

HARMLESS® stands at the intersection of art and advocacy, giving a platform to young voices with something real to say. The release of *HARMLESS*® to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Month is no coincidence. This graphic novel is not only a creative triumph but also a cultural moment, reminding us that healing often begins with the courage to tell our stories.

NEW ROBERTO CLEMENTE SCHOOL CELEBRATES MONIA ABDULSAMAD 2025 NJ DISTINGUISHED CLINICAL INTERN

New Roberto Clemente School is proud to congratulate Monia Abdulsamad, who has been recognized as a 2025 New Jersey Distinguished Clinical Intern. Monia, an ESL teacher, has made a powerful impact on the school community through her dedication to multilingual learners and her deep commitment to student growth and success.



Entering the teaching profession through the alternate route, Monia embraced the challenge of supporting middle school students who are brand-new to English. Though most of her students speak Spanish as their first language—and she does not—Monia has turned this difference into one of her greatest strengths. As a multilingual learner herself, she creates inclusive and engaging lessons that meet her students' individual needs, using visuals, scaffolds, and consistent encouragement to build a classroom where every learner feels supported and empowered.

Monia's success is a testament to the collaborative and supportive culture at New Roberto Clemente. Under the leadership of Principal Mr. Sham Bachus, and with the support of her school team and Professor Tina Kern from William Paterson University, Monia was able to grow her practice in meaningful ways. She worked closely with fellow educators, co-planning and sharing strategies to support students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Professors at William Paterson University praised Monia for her academic excellence and classroom leadership, describing her as reflective, collaborative, and passionate. "She was constantly thinking about how to apply what she learned to support multilingual learners," said Professor Euna Cho.

This prestigious award reflects the passion Monia brings to her work and the powerful impact she has on students and colleagues alike. Congratulations to Monia Abdulsamad for this well-deserved honor!

SAVE THE DATE: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION 2025

This year's high school graduation ceremonies will take place on **Monday, June 23rd**. We look forward to celebrating the achievements of the Class of 2025 with our students, families, and staff. More details will be shared in the coming weeks—stay tuned!

PPS IN THE NEWS

NJ school districts to lose \$85M as Trump walks back COVID relief extensions

March 31, 2025

Paterson parents to protest disputed district switch to middle school model

April 1, 2025

New NJ School Performance Reports Are Out: See How Your District Did

April 3, 2025

Could vacant Board of Education building become homeless shelter in Paterson's downtown?

April 4, 2025

Eight Paterson Students Honored as Unsung Heroes at Passaic County Ceremony

April 11, 2025

Paterson is Picking Up: City Honors Earth Day with Flag-Raising and Downtown Cleanup

April 22, 2025

Paterson schools could lose \$11M in federal aid as Trump cancels extension

April 23, 2025

Paterson Music Project to Host All-City Day of Jazz on Saturday

April 23, 2025

Paterson Board of Education Approves Preschool Enrollment and Budget for 2025-2026 School Year

April 24, 2025

Who's got the best high school mascot in NJ? Cast your vote in national tournament

April 27, 2025

School 15 Students Dig Into Service and Sustainability with New Garden Initiative

April 28, 2025

IMPORTANT CALENDAR REMINDERS

May 1	Report Card Parent Conferences 5:30-7:30pm (JAT, NRC, Grades 9 - 12)
May 9	Progress Reports (Grades PreK - 12)
May 14	1:00 Student Dismissal/Staff PD
May 23	1:00 Students & PEA Staff Dismissal
May 26	Memorial Day – District Closed

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

The **Board of Education Workshop Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, May 7th**, at **90 Delaware Avenue**. Those wishing to provide public comments must do so in person and are required to register for the meeting.

The **Board of Education Regular Meeting** will take place virtually on **Wednesday, May 14th**. Both meetings are scheduled to begin at **6 PM**.

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

The District Chronicler is a publication of the Department of Communications. We welcome your submissions on school and district-related news. Submit stories and photos to **ppscommunications@paterson.k12.nj.us**.

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