

— THE DISTRICT — CHRONICLE

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

MAY 2025

NINE SENIORS EARN DEGREES FROM PCCC



Nine seniors from Paterson Public Schools – Semih Battal, Adrian Bertucci, Melissa Lugo, Miguel Martinez, Tauna Shay Mclean (not pictured), Elianny Polanco, Cielo Rivera, Marian Santos and Sally Zakria – reached a remarkable milestone on Wednesday, May 21, 2025 when they earned their Associate degrees from Passaic County Community College (PCCC) a full month before receiving their high school diplomas.

These students are part of the district's Early College Program, an initiative designed to open doors, raise expectations, and redefine what is possible for public school students in Paterson.

"By the time they graduate from high school, these nine students will have already earned a college degree—an extraordinary accomplishment that sets them apart," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Laurie W. Newell. "The Early College Program reflects our firm commitment to expanding access to meaningful, high-impact learning opportunities. When students are given the resources and encouragement they need, they don't just meet expectations, they exceed them."

Launched in the 2023–2024 school year, the pilot program was created through a partnership between Paterson Public Schools and PCCC. It allowed a cohort of eleven high school students to complete their junior and senior years entirely on the college's campus while simultaneously working toward an Associate degree.

The Early College program is a part of Paterson Public Schools' Department of Accelerated Programs. Overseen by Deputy Director of Accelerated and Innovative Programs Rita Routé, the department recognizes that there are students who require differentiated programs and services beyond the core curriculum because of their exceptional abilities in a particular area. The department's goal is to provide a variety of learning opportunities, designed to meet the needs and challenges of these learners in various dedicated program settings.

SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

Greetings Paterson Public Schools Community,

I would like to begin this month's message by expressing my heartfelt appreciation for our district's teachers and principals. While I have shared my gratitude in person and through personal notes, I want to take this moment to celebrate these professionals publicly – those who are deeply committed to enriching the lives of our students.

The teachers and principals of Paterson Public Schools guide our students through every stage of their academic journeys – from kindergarten, to eighth grade promotion, and ultimately, to high school graduation. This year, nine outstanding seniors are not only graduating from high school, but doing so with Associate degrees in hand, thanks to their hard work and the opportunities made possible through our Early College Program with Passaic County Community College. That is no small accomplishment - and it is a reflection of the dedication and support our educators provide every day.

I could not let this month's newsletter be released without highlighting National Principal's Day on May 1st and Teacher Appreciation Week, observed from May 5th through the 9th. These recognitions lead us into the month of June when we will celebrate our high school graduates at historic Hinchliffe Stadium on Monday, June 23rd. The day will begin at 9 am with the commencement ceremonies for International High School and John F. Kennedy High School, followed at 12:30 pm by Eastside High School, P-TECH High School, Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts, STARS/T.I.E.S. Academy, and STEAM High School. We encourage everyone to tune in and join us in celebrating this proud moment for our students, their families, and the entire Paterson community. Please visit our website at www.paterson.k12.nj.us for details and updates.

Paterson Public Schools strives to create a learning environment that instills confidence in every student. This, once again, starts with our teachers and principals whose leadership and positive influence is evident when looking at the successes of our students during the month of May. Whether it be John F. Kennedy High School students teaching financial literacy lessons to dozens of our elementary school students as part of Paterson Public Schools' first High School Heroes cohort, or our JROTC program at Eastside High School, once again performing at an elite level in the state of New Jersey and earning special recognition from the United States Army, our students are stepping up in new ways and serving as exemplary role models for the upcoming generation of Paterson students.

These inspiring stories and features that highlight the amazing accomplishments of Paterson Public Schools' students and teachers can be found in this edition of The District Chronicler. I hope you enjoy reading about them as much as I did.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laurie W. Newell



Paterson Public Schools Central Office staff gathered for a group photo on Alumni Swag Day. Staff members represented their alma maters as part of College and Career Month, a district-wide initiative where schools planned impactful activities, lessons and events to inspire students to think about their futures.

PPS DEBUTS RESURFACED TENNIS COURTS



Paterson Public Schools' Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rodney A. Henderson and Board of Education Commissioner Hector L. Nieves, Jr. partnered with Paterson Mayor Andre Sayeh, as well as Paterson City and community leaders on May 5th for a ribbon cutting ceremony that unveiled resurfaced tennis courts at School 25.

The refurbished courts offer a new and improved space for all Paterson Public School students that are eager to learn and practice the game of tennis. Additionally, brand new fencing surrounding the courts was installed to help protect the surface and keep players safe.

PPS LAUNCHES FIRST JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT HS HEROES COHORT

The Departments of Secondary Education and Accelerated and Innovative Programs recently launched Paterson Public School's first Junior Achievement High School Heroes cohort. This exciting initiative is the result of a new partnership with Junior Achievement, a nationally recognized non-profit organization dedicated to preparing students for future success through leadership development and real-world learning experiences.

On April 29, John F. Kennedy High School students in the program stepped into leadership roles by teaching financial literacy lessons to students in grades K–4 at Schools 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18, and 26. The experience was incredibly rewarding for both the elementary students and our high school heroes, who had the unique opportunity to give back to their community while building their own skills in communication, leadership, and civic engagement.

"Thank you to the team at John F. Kennedy High School for their incredible efforts in launching Paterson Public Schools' first Junior Achievement High School Heroes cohort," said Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services and Special Programs Joanna Tsimpedes. "It's truly inspiring to see such a meaningful initiative come to life through the teams' dedication and collaboration with Junior Achievement."



As the program continues to grow, Business and Education Pathway leaders at John F. Kennedy High School remain committed to inspiring students to be leaders, mentors, and changemakers in their communities. They'll also look to expanding the JA High School Heroes initiative and creating even more impactful learning opportunities in the future.

YES PROGRAM HOSTS FIRST-EVER FIELD DAY



On May 28th, the Youth Equity Stewardship (YES) Program hosted its first-ever field day team-building event at Bauerle Field for students in grades 6 through 12.

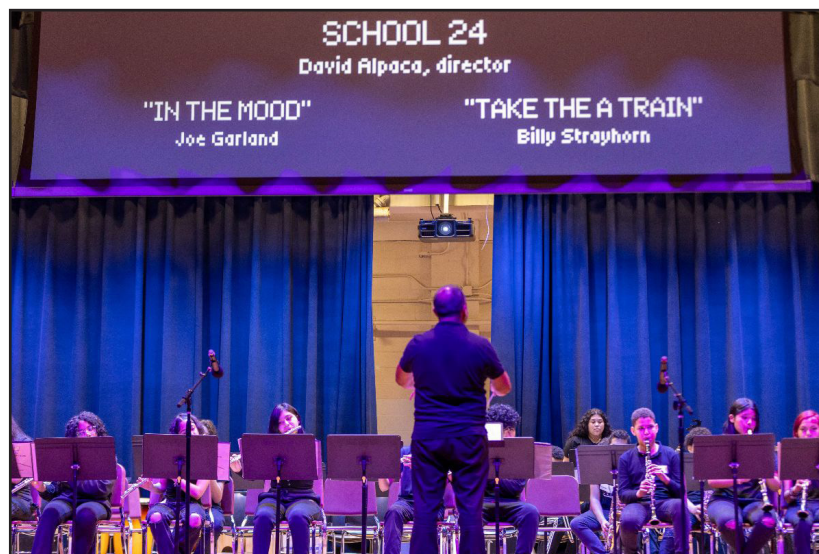
The YES Program engages students in art-based experiences and age-appropriate discussions while working to develop skills and learn strategies to impact their school community through equity stewardship, personal journeys, and community action.

The group, which features students from nine different schools, typically meets five times during the academic year in the gym at School 16. However, the fourth event this school year was a special one.

“The students requested a team-building, outdoor activity because when the cohort meets they’re working on their final projects inside,” said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Cicely Warren. “That’s why today is the first YES field day.”

This was their request, so we have some team-building, competitive exercises, movement centered activities for them.”

The day of activities allowed students to bond through team-building activities such as group yoga, line dancing, and competitive races. The following schools participated in the YES program: School 4, School 10, School 16, School 24, School 28, Joseph A. Taub School, Eastside High School, John F. Kennedy High School, and International High School. YES Program students will present their end-of-year projects on June 11.



SCHOOL 24, RPHS TEAM UP WITH PATERSON MUSIC PROJECT

Paterson Music Project collaborated with Paterson Public Schools to combine the second annual Day of Jazz with an All-City event. This year, students from the Paterson Music Project, School 24, and Rosa L. Parks High School joined for an all-day rehearsal to prepare music for the culminating concert. The concert featured jazz standards as well as video game music from the well-known Mario franchise. The event closed with live Mario Kart gameplay with two audience members accompanied by music from the video game soundtrack made up of all participating instrumentalists.

THANK YOU TEACHERS!

Teacher Appreciation Week
May 5-9

EASTSIDE ADVISOR WINS AATSP PROGRAM SUPPORT AWARD



Mrs. Marbel Tamayo, a Spanish teacher at Eastside High School and advisor for the school's National Spanish Honor Society chapter, received the 2025 Program Support Award from the American Association of Teacher of Spanish & Portuguese (AATSP), the organization announced earlier this month.

The award recognizes educators who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to promoting Spanish language learning and Hispanic culture. Mrs. Tamayo received a plaque and a reward check for \$250, which will go towards Eastside High School's NSHS account.

At the NSHS Spring Conference on May 3rd, Eastside High received four awards: Chapter of the Year, Activity of the Year, NJ Student Poster of the Year, and the National Spanish Exam Award.

HELPING HANDS HYGIENE CLOSET OPENS AT SCHOOL 27

School 27 has announced the opening of Ms. Haney's Helping Hands Hygiene Closet, a new student resource aimed at supporting health, dignity, and academic readiness. The initiative ensure all students have access to essential items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine care products and more. School 27 is accepting new supplies and funds to restock the closet through the year. Those who wish to support can contact Tanya Haney at thaney@paterson.k12.nj.us.



JFK STUDENTS GO "EAST" TO MITSUWA MARKETPLACE

On May 2nd, Ms. Lym, Mr. Burgos, and Ms. Leigh took students from both current and former classes of John F. Kennedy High School's Foundations of Art course on an educational field trip to Mitsuwa Marketplace in Edgewater, New Jersey. Mitsuwa Marketplace is the only Japanese supermarket and food court in the state. The students enjoyed authentic Japanese cuisine from a variety of food stalls. They also had the chance to explore a Japanese marketplace and examine Japanese product design in several stores associated with the marketplace, which is managed by a Japanese company.



MOCK TRIAL TEAM PLACES SECOND IN COUNTY COMPETITION

P-TECH High School students showed off their legal savvy at the 2025 Passaic County Mock Trial Competition on May 16th, taking second place among a strong field of teams from across the county.

Hosted by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, the competition challenged students to take on the roles of attorneys and witnesses in a fictional court case.

The team spent weeks preparing opening statements, crafting arguments, and practicing courtroom procedure. Their hard work paid off in the courtroom, where they impressed judges with their confidence, teamwork, and ability to think on their feet.

"This experience not only sharpened the student's public speaking and critical thinking skills, but it also gave them a real taste of what it's like to work in the legal field," said P-TECH High School Principal Dr. Charla Holder. "Congratulations to the students and staff who helped make this success possible."



ROSA PARKS HIGH SCHOOL UNVEILS RENOVATED THEATER



Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts held a ribbon cutting ceremony to unveil its newly renovated, state-of-the-art theater in front of a packed house of esteemed guests on May 8.

The ribbon cutting was followed by a Spring vocal concert put on by the school's talented pupils that celebrated the renovated performance space. The event celebrated not just the physical transformation of the space, but the enduring spirit of the school's artistic legacy.

Superintendent Dr. Laurie W. Newell, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rodney A. Henderson, and Principal Nicolette A. Thompson were surrounded by students, cabinet members, city leaders, and community members and they led the official cutting of the ribbon. The moment marked a new chapter for the school's performance program and a bright future for generations of student artists.

EASTSIDE JROTC PRESENTED WITH SYMBOLIC FLAG



The decorated Eastside High School JROTC was presented a prestigious item by Chief Warrant Officer II Mauricio Vega on May 14 -- a flag flown in its honor during the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve.

CWII Vega, part of the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was stationed in Iraq and the flag was flown over Iraq and Syria on September 7th, 2024.

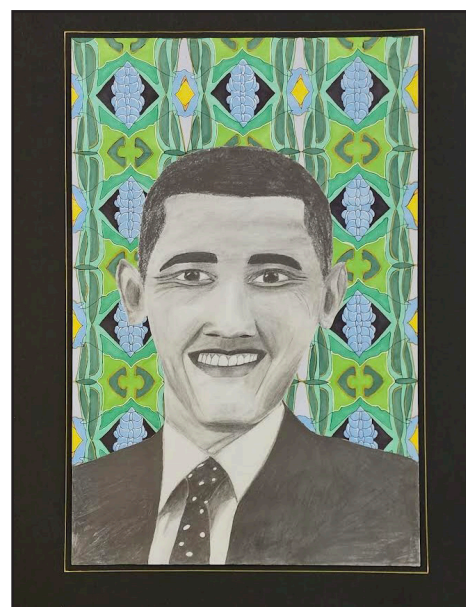
The JROTC program, which holds a title of "honor unit with distinction" from the U.S. Army, is a part of Eastside High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway. Emphasizing leadership development and citizenship, the program includes courses in leadership and training.

JFK FRESHMAN HAS ART DISPLAYED AT NJPAC

Johandry Duran Alberto, a ninth grader in the 'Foundations of Fine Art' classes at John F. Kennedy High School, has his portrait drawing of former President Barack Obama displayed at the Victoria Theater Gallery at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark where it will be showcased until October 2025.

His artwork was chosen from submissions by members of the Art Educators of New Jersey (AENJ) for this prestigious student exhibition. A spot in the fourth installment of the exhibition which Duran Alberto's piece was selected for is especially coveted as it will be highlighted throughout the Summer and into the Fall for thousands of NJPAC visitors.

Duran Alberto skillfully merged two assignments from his art teacher, Ms. Lym, to create his distinctive piece. He combined his Black History Month portrait drawing assignment with his square repeat project, drawing inspiration from Kehinde Wiley's presidential portrait of Barack Obama, resulting in an original creation.



ROSA PARKS HS SHINES AT MUSIC IN THE PARKS COMPETITION

Students of Rosa L. Parks School of Fine & Performing Arts earned three first-place trophies at the competitive Music in the Parks Competition at Six Flags on May 9th.

RPHS students were entered in three categories and achieved the top prize in all three:

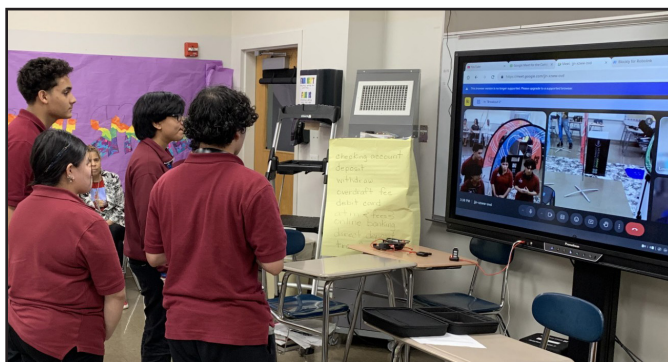
- Concert Band – 1st Place
- Concert Choir – 1st Place
- Vocal Soloist: Raymeir Williamson – 1st Place

The event brought together student participants from 12 schools throughout New York, New Jersey, and Maryland. The students were led by Instrumental Music instructor Mr. William Newrock, Vocal Music Director Mrs. Lauren Sander-Wells, and Teacher Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts Ms. Bettina Peets.



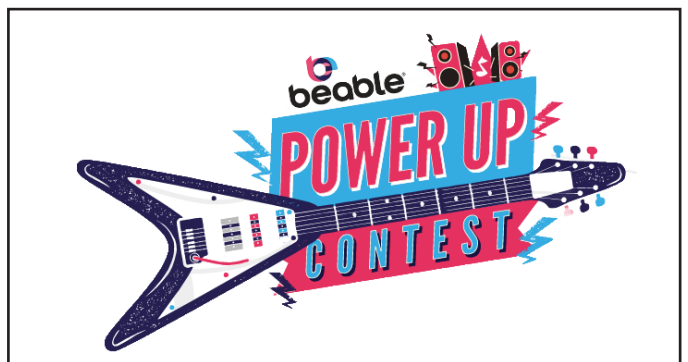
P-TECH STUDENTS SOAR IN NATIONAL DRONE COMPETITION

P-TECH High School students proudly competed in the Live Remote Skills Invitational Tournament, a national aerial drone competition hosted by the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation. In their first-ever experience with drones, both P-TECH student teams achieved top 10 national rankings. As part of the competition, students programmed and piloted drones through an obstacle course, testing their teamwork, technical skills, and creativity.



INTERNATIONAL HS STUDENT TAKES FIRST IN MONTHLY BEABLE CONTEST

Virgilia Guzman Mendoza, an 11th grade student at International High School, took first place in the April round of Beable's Spring Power Up Contest. Guzman Mendoza competed against thousands of students around the world in the monthly contest. The contest is designed to motivate students to do their best work in Beable, with special attention being given to those who successfully level up their Lexile levels through Power-Up Challenges. The more quality work students complete in Beable, the higher they climb on the product leaderboard.



STUDENTS REPRESENT RPHS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts senior Karen Huitzil and sophomore Chris Perez represented their school at the Distributive Education Clubs of America's (DECA) International Career and Development Conference in Orlando from April 25th to 30th.

Perez was invited to the conference after taking first place in his marketing category at the New Jersey DECA state competition while Huitzil was the recipient of a \$1,500 New Jersey DECA scholarship. DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe.

RPHS Special Education teacher Dr. Reggie Hall is the school's DECA chapter advisor and Social Studies teacher Ms. Laura Fitzgerald served as the group's chaperone to Orlando.

SCHOOL 24 ASSEMBLE HEARTFELT ARABIC HERITAGE SHOW

School 24 proudly hosted its Arabic Heritage Show on April 30th as the students produced an evening filled with cultural pride, artistic expression, and unforgettable performances that brought the beauty of the Arab world to life.

One of the evening's highlights was the Debka dance, a lively and spirited folk tradition from the Levant. The dancers impressed with their coordinated steps and high energy, evoking a strong sense of unity and tradition that had the audience clapping along with enthusiasm.

The school chorus moved listeners with their performance of "Sih'r Khalaq," a piece that blended the expressive power of choral singing with the lyrical richness of Arabic musical tradition. Their harmonies filled the room with emotion and cultural reverence.

Adding to the evening's dynamic range, the school band performed "Arabian Dance" by Béla Bartók, offering a classical interpretation inspired by Middle Eastern musical motifs. The students played with poise and passion, transporting the audience through layers of rhythm and melody.

Closing the show with flair and elegance was the Egyptian Belly Dance performance. The dancers, adorned in traditional costumes, brought grace, rhythm, and captivating movement to the stage. Their finale was both empowering and dazzling, leaving a lasting impression and earning a standing ovation.

The success of the evening was made possible by the dedication and collaboration of the school's staff. Their support and passion helped bring this cultural celebration to life.



INNER CITY ENSEMBLE EDUCATES AND CELEBRATES AT SCHOOL 15

The Inner City Ensemble, featuring newcomer School 15 students in third through fifth grades, wowed a large crowd inside School 15's theater on May 21st as the troupe presented its annual Dual Language Arts Program (DLAP) performance.

This year, DLAP students learned about traditional music and dance of Puerto Rico in the Ensemble's first Folklife Residency with a Bomba Master drummer. They learned to play percussion instruments, sing a traditional song, and dance to specific drumming patterns. The students also premiered an original play, "Lo Más Precioso" by Nicholas Rodriguez.

The Inner City Ensemble provides free training and performing opportunities to under-served youth in Paterson while addressing cultural identity, belonging, social justice and reform issues.



KNICKS HOOP BUS PULLS UP TO SCHOOL 24

The New York Knicks Hoop Bus rolled onto the campus of School 24 on May 13th, bringing excitement and positive energy to all of the schools' students. Accompanying the Hoop Bus was former Knicks player, 13-year NBA veteran and Paterson native Tim Thomas. Thomas and the Hoop Bus crew empowered the students in attendance to believe in themselves, be a good teammate, and to persevere.



SCHOOL 21 STUDENTS BRING BROADWAY TO PATERSON

School 21 students dazzled theater-goers on May 8th as they presented "Urban City Youth's Tony Awards Songs". Under the direction of Mr. Todd Phillippe, the program featured 24 students singing Tony Award-winning songs, such as "Seasons of Love", "It's a Hard Knock Life", and "The Circle of Life". A team of 10 students also assisted in the production and art design for the performance.



SCHOOL 20 PARTICIPATES IN GIRLS ON THE RUN SPRING 5K



16 students from School 20 proudly participated in the Girls on the Run (GOTR) Spring 5K held in Sparta, New Jersey on May 10th.

The uplifting event, hosted at White Deer Plaza, brought together nearly 1,000 participants from across the region. For the School 20 team, it marked its fourth year participating in the GOTR program—a milestone filled with pride, accomplishment, and personal growth.

Coached by Judy Ritter, Kwevah Artis-Stone, and Paulina Olivares and meeting twice a week, the students engaged in activities and discussions designed to empower them mentally, emotionally, and physically. The 5K event was the culmination of their journey; an exciting and celebratory race along East Shore Trail, complete with cheer zones and a festive atmosphere.

SWAG ROOM UNVEILED AT ALEXANDER HAMILTON ACADEMY

Paterson Public Schools and Zone6ix partnered to unveil its new SWAG Room at Alexander Hamilton Academy on May 29th. The room features virtual reality consoles, video game consoles, pop-a-shot, an air hockey table, and couches.

SWAG (Students With Academic Goals) Rooms are a reward for students that are in good academic standing and are good classmates. Justin Wimberly, founder of Zone6ix, says that these rooms push students to dream big and to push each other to be the best versions of themselves.

“These rooms give students something to look forward to and it also gives Alexander Hamilton students a place to go to after school,” said Wimberly, who is a graduate of Alexander Hamilton Academy. “These spaces keep getting better and better, and my team and I continue to challenge ourselves when it comes to improving each SWAG Room.”

“This room provides our students with a much needed place to have fun and take a break,” said AHA Principal Cosmo Braico. “The SWAG Room fits in perfectly with our merit point system and it’s a great way to reward deserving students and serve as an incentive to students in need of improvement.”



KINDNESS, ACADEMIC READINESS CELEBRATED AT JATS' PEP RALLY



Joseph A. Taub Middle School held a high-energy, student-centered NJSLA Pep Rally on May 6th to celebrate academic readiness, student kindness, and winners of its NJSLA Poster Contest.

Held in three sessions—one for each grade level—the event highlighted the importance of the upcoming state assessments while showcasing the incredible creativity and talent of JATS students.

The sixth and seventh grade poster contest winners were recognized for their inspiring and artistic submissions:

6th Grade Winners

1st Place: Minions – Camila Escamilla
2nd Place: Rock the Test – Jaymar Estrella
3rd Place: Pop – Mia Gurnari

7th Grade Winners

1st Place: Asia Begum
2nd Place: Maricelis Sanchez Reyes
3rd Place (tie): Afreen Chowdhury, Mariana Echeverry Plaza, and Sahara Coleman

In addition to the awards, Vice Principals Dr. Petula Harden-Brown, Dr. Yelena Gould, and Mr. Gerardo Joven addressed each grade level to emphasize the importance of the NJSLA tests and recognize students selected by JATS staff for their exceptional kindness with the school's Kindness Award. These acknowledgments reinforced both academic focus and positive behavior.



The event concluded with the following stellar student performances: a spoken word piece titled "Built for This" from Yonnell Rivera, a moving a cappella performance of "Birds of a Feather" by Rahima Rahman, a duet from guitarist Denson Johnson and Rosemely Castillo on keyboard and vocals, and a show-stopping routine by the JATS cheer squad.

SCHOOL 28 STUDENTS TO COMPETE IN NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CONTEST

Six students from School 28 will compete for Team New Jersey at the National History Day competition on the campus of the University of Maryland from June 8-12.

The students' entry was presented at the Northern Regional Contest at St. Elizabeth's University on March 16th along with other participants from Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren Counties.

Organized by William Paterson University, New Jersey History Day is an affiliate of National History Day (NHD), an exciting education program that welcomes students into the world of historical research and interpretation. Individually or in a group, students are inspired by an annual theme to create original historical research projects in the form of a performance, exhibit, documentary, website, or paper. These projects are then presented at local, regional, and state competitions, with qualifying entries moving on to culminate in the national contest.

PPS IN THE NEWS

[Paterson Cuts Ribbon on Renovated School 25 Tennis Courts After Delays and Debate](#)

May 5, 2025

[Paterson Second Graders Get New Bikes Through Wish for Wheels Partnership](#)

May 6, 2025

[Paterson school board passes new budget with 4% tax hike, lowest in years](#)

May 8, 2025

[Hoop Bus Paterson Day: Tim Thomas Returns to Uplift His Hometown](#)

May 13, 2025

[Eastside High School JROTC Closes Season with Tri-State Title, Top Finishes at Fort Dix](#)

May 15, 2025

[Paterson names a school for late councilwoman Maria Magda O'Keefe](#)

May 20, 2025

[Nine Paterson Seniors Earn Associate Degrees Ahead of High School Graduation](#)

May 21, 2025

IMPORTANT CALENDAR REMINDERS

June 6	Staff Professional Development Day, Student Dismissal at 1:00 pm
June 13	Fourth Marking Period Ends
June 19	Juneteenth - District Closed
June 23	Last Day for Students
June 23	High School Graduation Day
June 24	Last Day for Staff



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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