

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Aida E. Rosario  
[aerosario@paterson.k12.nj.us](mailto:aerosario@paterson.k12.nj.us)

### **Paterson Public Schools Cuts the Ribbon for María Magda O’Keefe School**

*María Magda O’Keefe dedicated her life to public service and impacted countless lives*

Paterson, NJ (September 15, 2025) – Paterson Public Schools celebrated the newly-named María Magda O’Keefe School (formerly School 24) on the morning of Monday, September 15th, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony that was attended by district leadership, Board of Education Commissioners, elected officials and dignitaries, and friends and family of María Magda O’Keefe.

“Today, School 24 becomes María Magda O’Keefe School to honor the legacy of a woman whose life and career touched the lives of so many in this beautiful city,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Laurie W. Newell. “To name this school after María Magda O’Keefe is to remind every child who attends this school that excellence is built through perseverance, education, ethics, integrity and service to others.”

María Magda O’Keefe was a trailblazer who served as a guiding light, not only for the Hispanic community, but for every citizen in her beloved city of Paterson. The ribbon-cutting ceremony marked a felicitous beginning to the district’s month-long celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

The Deputy Mayor of Paterson from 1974-82, María 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. María Magda O’Keefe was later elected President of the Paterson City Council in 1988.

The Paterson Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the renaming during its regular meeting in May. The renaming is fitting for María Magda O’Keefe’s profound legacy, which will serve as an inspiration for all of the young learners that enter the school on 19th Avenue.

“When students walk through these doors, they will learn about María Magda O’Keefe’s life not just as history, but as a blueprint for their own future. María Magda O’Keefe’s legacy will be their lesson,” said Board of Education President Eddie González. “Today, let us all commit to carrying on her work. Let us not leave this to others. Let us stand on her shoulders and continue to fight and advocate for our youth, for our families, and for every community that calls Paterson home.”

“I’d like to express my heartfelt thanks for the extraordinary honor of renaming School 24 in honor of my mother, María Magda O’Keefe,” said Debbie Martínez, the daughter of María Magda O’Keefe. “This deeply meaningful tribute has touched me and my family in a way that is difficult to put into words. As a proud graduate from this school, this renaming holds special significance for me personally. To know that the place which played such an important role in my own life and education, never did I imagine that one day it would bear my mother’s name.”

María 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, María Magda O’Keefe served as a commissioner on the Paterson Board of Social Services and the 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, María Magda O’Keefe chaired the Paterson Great Falls Committee and the Paterson Puerto Rican Parade committee in 1976.

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](http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us)

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