



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Dan Juan
973-914-5519

High School Student Representatives Attend Their First Board Meeting

On Wednesday evening, two more attendees were seated with the Commissioners for their first Paterson Board of Education meeting. Thaddeus Chestnut of Paterson P-TECH serves as the lead, with Destine'e Petit of Rosa L. Parks High School as the alternate. Superintendent of Schools Laurie W. Newell appointed the seniors through a lottery of applicants.

Mr. Chestnut is a senior who is at the top of his class at Paterson P-TECH and is close to receiving his Associate's degree at Passaic County Community College. He is both the Senior Class President and the three-term Student Body President of Paterson P-TECH. Mr. Chestnut is also the Co-op Liaison to IBM, in which position he has led meetings for students to learn about changes happening in the tech field. Clubs of which he is a part of are the Gay-Straight Alliance and The National Honor Society.

Ms. Petit is a vocal major and will be attending the American Musical Dramatic Academy (AMDA) located in Manhattan, NY in the Fall. She is part of her school's National Honors Society and was active in the YES Program.

Superintendent of Schools Laurie W. Newell has appointed the two students to serve as student ambassadors to the Board of Education (BOE), as required by a New Jersey State law signed into effect in January 2022.

Board President Manuel Martinez, Jr. said, "The way that these young folks came in here and presented themselves was indicative of the quality of students that we have throughout our district. They were well spoken, very poised, engaged and we expect a lot of goodness from their work going forward."

Superintendent of Schools Laurie W. Newell said of the representatives, "These two students are excellent examples of the District's efforts to help children achieve their potential. The student representative position is one that requires a high level of responsibility, but allows a unique platform to express the ideas and concerns of students around the district. I know that they will make good use of the opportunity to represent their peers' interests."

Mr. Chestnut said of his having the student representative position, "I feel strongly elated at my potential to do good over at the Paterson Board of Education, for students and parents alike."

Using a quote from her school's vocal teacher, John Chapman, Ms. Petit said, "Your habits are your destiny". She continued, "So whatever you're doing, keep doing it, and always trust your heart".

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Thaddeus Chestnut Jr. is a senior who is at the top of his class at Paterson P-TECH and is close to receiving his Associate's degree at Passaic County Community College. Thaddeus Jr. combines a friendly demeanor with persuasive literary talent. He has maintained high marks all four years while participating in many activities. As Student Body President, he has led students through various fundraisers while delivering a smile, and granting two re-election victories. Known for his ties with IBM as their Co-op Liaison, Thaddeus has led meetings to educate students on the ever-changing tech field and their flourishing spot as students of color. As a liaison, he is committed to creating equitable, safe, and invigorating student spaces. He is the Class President, part of the Gay-Straight Alliance and The National Honor Society. Paterson Public Schools has prepared Thaddeus to work towards achieving his goals as a mechanical engineer and he will continue to make a difference in this world and open doors to a successful and bright future.

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I am Destine'e Petit, and I was born on May 30th, at the Barnett Hospital in Paterson, New Jersey. My parents raised me to excel in school and pursue a profession that would fulfill my desires. My dad is a hard worker with a charming personality, and my mom is a strong-willed but kind hearted person. I feel incredibly fortunate to have them as my parents as they have taught me everything I know today. They are my best friends, and they will always hold a special place in my heart. That is why I strive to make them proud.

Throughout elementary and middle school, I was motivated to succeed academically, and I genuinely enjoyed the learning process. As a result, I received numerous certificates and awards. I consider myself an overachiever, and I have dedicated a lot of effort to get to where I am today, with the determination to continue my journey of growth and accomplishment in the future.

I had the privilege of being accepted into the American Musical Dramatic Academy (AMDA) located in Manhattan, New York, after my audition during my Junior Year. I am grateful to have received a scholarship that will support my education at AMDA. I have always had a passion for singing, dancing, and performing, even from a young age. I enjoy listening to both new and old music, hosting memorable parties, and having a great time with those around me. While I admit to being a bit shy, the spotlight fades away when a great song begins to play. Music helps me break out of my shell and allows me to let go of the need for perfection. It enables me to truly enjoy myself when I perform or listen to music. I believe that the experience I will gain from being a student at AMDA will allow me to gain more valuable knowledge about the music world and entertainment field.

Looking ahead in my future also allows me to be thankful for my past. I am a senior now, and I can't help but think about the person I was when I first started my freshman year. Honestly, I was more of a dreamer, I found myself observing more than actually participating in the fun, and even though I thought that I did, I didn't really have a great understanding of the different areas in the performing arts that the world truly had to offer.

Through staying focused and using constructive criticism to help me get farther in my career I have to give thanks to my vocal teacher, Mr. Chapman. He not only encourages me to excel in my craft but also to be the best version of myself. Everyday attending Mr. Chapman's class I have learned new and exciting things. Attending Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts has further nurtured my aspirations, surrounded by fellow students who strive to exceed expectations and support one another.

As a vocal major, I embrace the role of the triple threat—singing, acting, and dancing—and it has become a significant part of my journey. Each performance provides me with a fresh perspective, inspiring me to continue following my passion. I have come to realize that even when I make mistakes, I never give up, and I owe this resilience to Mr. Chapman. My ultimate goal is to bring joy to others, and I hope that this shines through in all of my performances alongside my fellow vocal majors.

I am forever grateful for everything I have worked for, learned, and achieved in my life. Moreover, I am determined to give back to those who have supported me, both those I already know and those I have yet to meet. My friends, family, vocal family, counselors, teachers, and my lovely principal have always been there to encourage, support, and uplift me, even on the most challenging days. My goal is to never give up and inspire others to recognize that regardless of where they are in life, there is always potential for personal growth and the pursuit of their passions.

Keep your eyes open and look for me on Broadway, TV shows, and movies!