



THE PULSE

The Heartbeat of the District.

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

APRIL 16, 2026 | VOL. 31

NINE STUDENTS NAMED PASSAIC COUNTY UNSUNG HEROES



Nine exceptional Paterson Public Schools students were among those honored at the Fourth Annual Passaic County Unsung Heroes ceremony, held on Wednesday, March 25 at West Milford High School.

Co-sponsored by the Passaic County Education Association and the Passaic County School Boards Association, the ceremony recognized students who have made a lasting impact through their unique contributions to their schools and communities. Their efforts, often overlooked by traditional student recognition programs, play a vital role in helping our schools and communities thrive.

“I’d like to congratulate our nine outstanding students who were named Passaic County Unsung Heroes,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Laurie W. Newell. “The dedication and humility of these scholars have made the entire district very proud. Thank you for your leadership and for representing our school community with excellence.”

The nine Passaic County Unsung Heroes from Paterson Public Schools are: Ya’Mira Goodwin, Alonzo “Tambua” Moody Academy; Starlene Santana, Eastside High School; Katiana Escobar, International High School; Akram Ahmed, John F. Kennedy High School; Emmanuel De La Cruz Cruz, Newcomers High School; Derek Escobar, Paterson P-Tech; Lorainy Gonzalez, Rosa L. Parks School of Fine & Performing Arts; Mariana Gonzalez Curiel, Paterson STEAM High School; Jorge Perales, STARS Academy/T.I.E.S. Program.

To read the press release, please visit our [website](#).

Greetings Paterson Public Schools Community,

As we observe National Volunteer Month this April, we take a moment to honor the dedicated individuals who donate their time and talents to enrich our schools and uplift our city. Volunteering is the heartbeat of a strong community and we are fortunate to see the profound impact of service in our district every day.



At Paterson Public Schools, we believe that it is never too early to begin learning the importance of volunteering. When our students engage in service – whether it’s volunteering at a blood drive or older students mentoring younger peers – they are learning that they have the power to create positive change. By introducing volunteerism and civic duty early in a child’s educational journey, we help them develop empathy, leadership skills, and a deep sense of belonging.

I encourage our students to find a cause that sparks their passion. There is no gesture too small and no age too young to start making a difference. Together, we continue to build a brighter, more service-oriented future for all of Paterson.

Celebrating Earth Day at Paterson Public Schools

Next week, our district will celebrate Earth Day, a time to appreciate the incredible natural beauty of our state and the vast, wonder-filled world we all share. Earth Day is a wonderful opportunity for our students to step outside, observe the environment, and reflect on the importance of the natural resources we rely on every day.

By encouraging our scholars to respect and care for their surroundings, we help them grow into mindful citizens who value the community in which they live. Whether it’s visiting Paterson Great Falls National Park or participating in a community clean-up, we encourage everyone to take time next week to appreciate our surroundings and take action even in small ways. Let us continue to work together to keep our community, and our planet, a beautiful place to live and learn.

Sincerely,

Laurie W. Newell, PhD
Superintendent of Schools



VPS CONVENE TO ALIGN ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND TESTING READINESS

Paterson Public Schools' vice principals convened at Central Office on March 30 for their monthly meeting, focused on school safety and testing readiness. The session included professional learning, a review of safety and security protocols, and updates on upcoming NJSLA testing.

Across two sessions, vice principals reflected on targeted interventions in collaboration with K-8 leaders using the LinkIt! platform, while high school leaders focused on strategies to support ninth-grade success. Following a briefing on NJSLA testing protocols from the Office of Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation, participants also heard from Director of Safety and Emergency Preparedness Dalton Price, who shared key security reminders to help ensure schools remain safe and prepared.



STUDENT-BUILT RACE CAR HITS THE NY AUTO SHOW FLOOR

Students from Paterson Public Schools' YES Program visited the New York Auto Show last week to see their hard work on display for thousands of visitors as their restored 1974 Ford Capri race car was featured at the Rides + Rigs Expo (R2XPO). The exhibition, which was held at the Javits Center in New York City from April 3 to 12, marked a major milestone for the YES Program and its innovative hands-on learning initiatives.

The Race Car project allowed students to collaborate with professional design teams and automotive industry experts to restore the vintage vehicle. By using stickers and decals to express their creativity, the students designed a car that perfectly captured this year's R2XPO theme "Celebrating Uniqueness in the Car Community and Culture".



EASTSIDE STUDENTS SHOWCASE TALENT AT SKILLSUSA STATE COMPETITION

Students from Eastside High School's Culinary and Cosmetology Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs recently competed in the Skills USA State competition at Camden County Community College. The contest brought together CTE and vocational programs from across the state to compete in practical, hands-on events that tested students' skills proficiency that will prepare them for future employment in the industry of their chosen profession.

Culinary Arts students were challenged to create specific dishes ranging from restaurant style main courses and desserts, to a randomly chosen military "meal ready to eat" crafted into a chef-level entree. Cosmetology students participated in various events ranging from fantasy hair styling and makeup, braiding and extensions, and nail care. Each event allowed the students to push the boundaries of creativity, transforming their ideas into bold, artistic expressions within the realm of beauty.

The students and team advisors, Chef Pascal Beric and Cosmetologist Nekeia Colcloughly, trained for months to prepare these scholars for the competition. Eastside's administration, teachers, and students of the CTE Programs thank them for their leadership and representing the programs so well. Results of the competition will be compiled by the Skills USA staff and winners will be announced in May.



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SENATOR FRANK R. LAUTENBERG SCHOOL WELCOMES WPU PROGRAM

Senator Frank R. Lautenberg School (SFLS) recently partnered with William Paterson University to bring the Real Men Read program to the school's youngest learners, promoting a love of literacy through positive role models. Volunteers Dr. Stephen Betts and Mr. Damon Weber spent time reading with some of SFLS' kindergarten and first grade students.

This experience was thoughtfully organized by WPU College of Education Professor-in-Residence Susan Raymond. Ms. Thomas, Mrs. Riccobono, Mrs. Turner, and their students enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of read-alouds, discussion, and a few laughs with the guest readers.



SFLS HOLDS FIRST AUTISM AWARENESS FLAG RAISING CEREMONY



The Senator Frank R. Lautenberg School (SFLS) community proudly hosted its inaugural Autism Awareness Month Flag Raising Ceremony, a heartfelt event dedicated to honoring and celebrating the beauty, strength, and uniqueness of its students with autism. SFLS' STAR students were recognized alongside their proud parents, creating a powerful moment of connection, appreciation, and joy.

SFLS was honored to welcome special guests in Assistant Superintendent Nahed Badawy and district supervisors who joined the school community in meaningful celebration. The school's incredible staff and students showed their support by wearing customized Autism Awareness t-shirts, creating a vibrant display of unity across the school.



The event featured a stunning, hand-painted Autism Awareness flag designed by SFLS art teacher Mr. Jerome, adorned with the colorful handprints of the school's STAR students—symbolizing individuality and inclusion. SFLS third grade students also contributed by decorating heart-shaped puzzle pieces, representing love, understanding, and acceptance.

The beautiful ceremony not only raised awareness but also reinforced SFLS' commitment to fostering an inclusive school culture where every student is seen, valued, and celebrated.



A “SWEET” SUCCESS: AHA STUDENTS REACH READING GOAL



Excitement filled the halls this past March as students at Alexander Hamilton Academy reached an impressive milestone: reading a combined total of over 1,000 books. The achievement marked the culmination of a school-wide literacy challenge designed to inspire a love of reading while building strong academic habits.

To celebrate, students were rewarded with a moment they won't soon forget: watching their principal Mr. Braico, gym teacher Mr. Competello, and guidance counselor Mr. Schiller, get pied in the face. The reading initiative, which began on March 1, encouraged students across all grade levels to log the books they read both in school and at home. Teachers reported a noticeable increase in enthusiasm, with many students eager to share stories, recommend books to friends, and track their progress toward the school's goal.

“When we started, we hoped to spark excitement around reading,” said kindergarten teacher Mrs. Denaples. “What we saw was even better! Students were truly motivated and proud of what they accomplished.”

The celebration took place in front of cheering classmates, as the three staff members bravely stepped forward to honor their promise. Laughter erupted as each pie landed, marking not just a fun reward, but a symbol of the students' hard work and dedication.

School staff emphasized that beyond the humor, the real victory was the growth in literacy and confidence among students. Many children surpassed their individual goals, and some even discovered new favorite genres and authors along the way.

“This was about more than just hitting a number. It was about building lifelong readers and having a little fun while doing it,” said second grade teacher Mrs. Scavone.

With the success of this challenge, the school is already considering future reading initiatives to keep the momentum going. If this event is any indication, students will be more than ready to rise to the occasion, especially if another pie-filled celebration is on the line!



NEW ROBERTO CLEMENTE SCHOOL HOSTS ANNUAL BOOK FAIR DIGEST

At New Roberto Clemente School, a love for reading comes to life in impressive fashion through the Annual Book Fair Digest – an event that has quickly become a cherished tradition among students and staff alike.

Led by reading specialist Silvia Gallagher, this year’s Book Fair Digest brought together an impressive 80 students who eagerly took on the challenge of transforming their reading experiences into engaging presentations. Each student selected a book based on personal interest while being thoughtfully guided by their reading level through the district’s Beable platform.

Once their books were completed, students let their creativity shine by designing vibrant tri-fold board presentations – turning simple white boards into eye-catching displays filled with summaries, themes, and personal reflections. But the event went beyond visuals; it emphasized communication, confidence, and a true understanding of literature.

“This is amazing,” exclaimed third-place winner Caleb Gonzalez-Garcia, as his peers cheered him on. For many students, the experience was as much about personal growth as it was about reading. “At first I was nervous, but because I read my book and knew everything about it, the questions were easy to answer,” shared second-place winner Sheyla Reynoso Liranzo.

The event aligns closely with NRC’s mission to make reading both fun and interactive. “We should be celebrating literature and student’s reading gains year-round. The Annual Book Fair Digest is one way we can celebrate our students,” said Mrs. Gallagher, who has proudly led this initiative for the past 10 years.

First-place winner Brihanna Taveras Hernandez summed up the excitement best: “I’ve never participated in anything like this before!”

A distinguished panel of judges – including Assistant Superintendent Nahed Badawy, Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services/Special Programs Joanna Tsimpedes, Associate Chief Academic Officer Nicole Brown, Supervisors Veronica Moran, Kimberly Reider, Wanda Royster, and Jessica Feliciano – had the difficult task of selecting the winners. They evaluated students on presentation skills, eye contact, depth of content, and overall creativity.

The continued success of the Book Fair Digest is a testament to the leadership of Principal Sham Bacchus, whose commitment to fostering a strong literacy culture ensures that students have access to high-quality books and meaningful learning experiences. His unwavering support not only empowers teachers to innovate but also inspires students to take pride in their learning and see themselves as confident readers and presenters.

With participation growing to 80 students this year, the future of the Book Fair Digest is brighter than ever. At New Roberto Clemente, reading is not just a skill – it’s a celebration.



NEW ROBERTO CLEMENTE BASKETBALL TEAM FINDS VICTORY IN RESILIENCE

New Roberto Clemente School's boys basketball team came away with the Paterson Public Schools Taub Doby League NIT Championship for 2026. The victory marked NRC's third NIT title in five years. What began as a slow, frustrating basketball season could have easily broken the team's spirit. But instead of giving up, the team chose a different path. They came together.

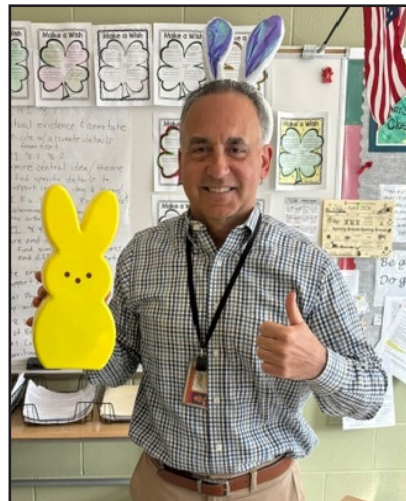
Little by little, their hard work began to show. What once looked like a season of disappointment became a story of resilience, determination, and togetherness. They proved that setbacks do not define a team, response does. This comeback was about more than basketball. It was about character. It was about students learning to push through adversity, hold each other accountable, and rising as one. Their journey is a reminder that when a team works diligently both on and off the court, great things can happen.



DHA ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY TO "BE A POSITIVE PEEP"

Dr. Hani Awadallah School's student assistance coordinator Ms. Judith Beckmeyer launched a heartwarming initiative at DHA to celebrate positivity and inspire random acts of kindness throughout the spring season.

Teachers were invited to nominate one student from each homeroom who consistently demonstrates kindness, compassion and a positive outlook. In the true spirit of community, staff were also encouraged to recognize and nominate fellow colleagues who go above and beyond to uplift others. A little kindness can go a long way, and at DHA, it's blooming everywhere!



JATS CELEBRATES BENGALI HERITAGE WITH POWERFUL STUDENT SHOWCASE

Joseph A. Taub School proudly hosted its annual Bengali Heritage Celebration, bringing together students, staff, and families for an evening dedicated to honoring the rich culture, traditions, and contributions of the Bengali community. The event highlighted the diversity that defines the Joseph A. Taub community while reinforcing the school's ongoing commitment to inclusion, pride, and academic excellence.

Throughout the celebration, students took center stage with vibrant performances that blended traditional and contemporary elements of Bengali culture. High-energy dance routines such as "Bala Nacho Toh Deki" energized the audience, while expressive performances like "Komola" showcased the depth of student talent and cultural pride. A special highlight of the evening was a beautiful duet performed by Mrs. Soto and Mr. Karim. Each performance reflected months of preparation, collaboration, and dedication from both students and staff.

School leaders emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for student voice and cultural expression. "At Joseph A. Taub School, we believe that when students are given the opportunity to express who they are, they rise to their highest potential," said school principal Dr. Jorge Ventura. Vice Principal Dr. Yelena Gould added: "our Bengali Heritage Celebration reflects our mission to build a school community where every student feels seen, valued, and inspired."

In addition to the performances, students were recognized for their academic achievements and contributions to the celebration. Among those honored was Arman Miah, who received the Taub Excellence Award for his outstanding work in the Bengali art exhibit. His contributions included seven completed canvases and an original poem, demonstrating both artistic talent and a deep connection to cultural identity. "Arman embodies what it means to be a Taub student and represents the very best of our school community," said Vice Principal Mr. Gerardo Joven.

As the celebration concluded, one message remained clear: at Joseph A. Taub School, culture is not only recognized – it is celebrated, honored, and lived every day. Through events like this, the school continues to foster a strong, unified community where students are empowered to lead with pride and purpose.



DR. ALEX ELLIS EMPOWERS FUTURE LEADERS AT MLK

Students at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex welcomed award-winning author, international speaker, and activist Dr. Alex Ellis to their school on March 25 for an impactful session titled "Finding Your Purpose." Under the leadership of Interim Principal Dr. Moses McKenzie and Vice Principal Peter Somoza, 51 young men engaged in a powerful dialogue about their passions, goal-setting, and navigating life's challenges.

Dr. Ellis challenged the students to identify their unique passions and reminded them that true heroes don't wear capes. Heroes are every day people sitting right in our classrooms. The session was interactive, with students offering eye-opening insights and asking thoughtful questions throughout. The event concluded with thunderous applause and a resounding request from the students for Dr. Ellis to return.



TRANSLATED 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR DISTRICT CALENDARS NOW AVAILABLE

Translated versions of Paterson Public Schools' 2026-2027 district calendar are now available to view on the [district website](#). These calendars ensure that our entire diverse community has equitable access to vital information, including key dates and holidays for next school year.



CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH WITH MS. ALICIA COOK

In celebration of National Poetry Month, the Full-Service Community Program at Senator Frank R. Lautenberg School welcomed New Jersey native, poet, and best-selling author Alicia Cook. Known for her work on grief, mental health, and hope, Cook visited with seventh and eighth grade students who have been studying her writing. She shared selected pieces, spoke about her journey as a writer, and engaged students in a thoughtful Q&A. Her visit inspired students to see writing as a powerful outlet for self-expression.



PPS IN THE NEWS

How Paterson, Google and UPenn will team up on AI in schools
NorthJersey.com | April 13, 2026

Paterson Board of Education Honors 9 Students as Passaic County Unsung Heroes
TAPinto Paterson | April 3, 2026

Paterson's School 2 Marks Autism Acceptance Month with Flag-Raising Ceremony
TAPinto Paterson | April 2, 2026

PRESS RELEASES

John F. Kennedy High School to Host CNBC for "Financial Foundations" Event
April 14, 2026

Nine Paterson Public Schools Students Named Passaic County Unsung Heroes
April 13, 2026

STAFF REMINDER

PPS AND FDU PARTNER FOR BILINGUAL TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Ready to make an even bigger impact in the classroom? Fairleigh Dickinson University and Paterson Public Schools are teaming up to help you level up your career!

We're inviting all aspiring educators to a Certification Support Day on April 21 from 4 PM to 7 PM. Come explore our bilingual certification program and discover immediate teaching openings within the district. Please contact HR Staff Recruiter and Certification Specialist Sheilee Chocolatl at schocolatl@paterson.k12.nj.us for any questions related to the event.



**FUTURE BILINGUAL TEACHERS:
START YOUR JOURNEY!**

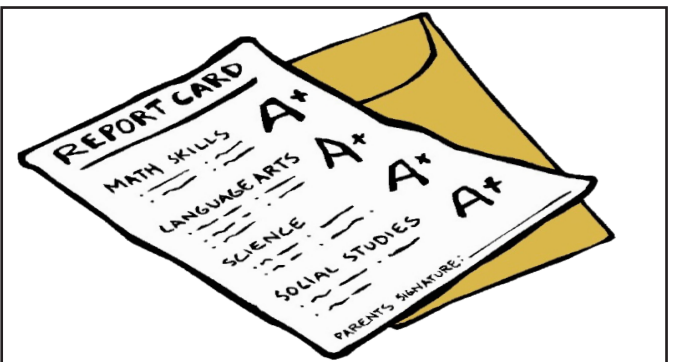
PARENT REMINDER

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR REPORT CARD PARENT CONFERENCES

Families are highly encouraged to attend Report Card Parent Conferences to meet with teachers and ask questions about their young learner's academic performance. Report Card Parent Conferences will take place on the following dates:

April 21, 5:30-7:30 PM: Grades PreK-8

April 23, 5:30-7:30 PM: Grades 9-12, Joseph A. Taub School, Dr. Hani Awadallah School, New Roberto Clemente School



MONTHLY CALENDAR REMINDERS

- April 21. Report Card Parent Conferences
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM (Grades PreK-8)
- April 23 Report Card Parent Conferences
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM (JAT, NRC, DHA, Grades 9-12)
- April 24. 1 PM Student Dismissal/Staff PD

[Full 2025-2026 District Calendar Here](#)

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

A **Board of Education Special Meeting** will be held on Wednesday, April 22nd, at 90 Delaware Ave. Those wishing to provide public comments must do so in person and are required to register for the meeting. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 PM.

A **Board of Education Workshop Meeting** will be held on Wednesday, May 6th, at 90 Delaware Ave. Those wishing to provide public comments must do so in person and are required to register for the meeting. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 PM.

The **Board of Education Regular Meeting** will take place virtually on Wednesday, May 13th. Those wishing to provide public comments are required to register for the meeting. The meeting is 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 Pulse is a publication of the Department of Communications. We welcome your submissions on school and district-related news. **Submit** stories and photos by using our **Newsletter Submissions** form. This form can be found on the Communications Hub at www.paterson.k12.nj.us

Questions? Email us at ppscommunications@paterson.k12.nj.us

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