



THE PULSE

The Heartbeat of the District.

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 

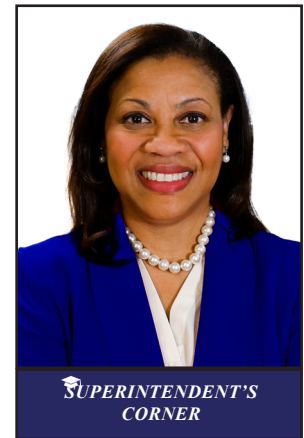
JUNE 25, 2026 | VOL. 41

CELEBRATING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS: 2025-2026 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

Greetings Paterson Public Schools Community,

As we close another remarkable school year, I am filled with gratitude and pride as I reflect on all that we have accomplished together. Throughout the year, we celebrated outstanding achievements in academics, athletics, the arts, leadership, and service. More importantly, we continued to make meaningful progress toward our shared mission: ensuring that every student in Paterson Public Schools has access to the opportunities, support, and experiences they need to thrive.

These student outcomes and district successes are best reflected in the key events that defined our school year. To fully appreciate how much we have accomplished, let's look back at some of the defining moments that shaped our journey throughout the past year.



Celebrating and Honoring Our Diversity

Celebrating our district's diversity is a source of continuous pride and a cornerstone of our students' educational journey. Student activities and learning came to life during our districtwide cultural celebrations honoring Hispanic Heritage Month, Muslim American Heritage Month, and Black History Month. From School 27 hosting its first Pretty Brown Girl Empowerment Seminar to the inspiring Bengali cultural showcase at Joseph A. Taub School, students and families came together to celebrate identity, heritage, and community. These experiences remind us that our diversity is not only something we celebrate – it is one of our greatest strengths.

Recognizing Excellence Across Our District

We are proud of our remarkable educators that support student success across the district. This year brought well-deserved recognition to many members of our school community, such as Dr. Kristen Andretta of School 2, who was named a New Jersey Exemplary Educator; Ms. Sonja Capers of School 16, recipient of the McGraw Hill Pathfinder Award; and Ms. Vernita Bostick of Paterson P-Tech, who was nominated for the prestigious Counselor of the County Award. These honors reflect the passion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment that can be found in every corner of our district.

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Competing and Excelling with Pride

Our students represented Paterson Public Schools with determination, sportsmanship, and pride throughout the year. Among this year's highlights: Eastside High School and John F. Kennedy High School both captured New Jersey Cheerleading & Dance Coaches Association State Championships on the same day, a remarkable achievement for our district. The Paterson STEAM High School Unified Flag Football Team earned a state championship, winning the New Jersey Unified High School Flag Football League title. Eastside High School's Mighty Ghost JROTC Battalion also brought home multiple trophies throughout the year, including six first place trophies in their final competition of the season. Additionally, Eastside's Culinary Arts Program secured first place at the inaugural "Dented Pot" Cooking Championship at Passaic County Community College. These accomplishments brought endless pride and excitement to our entire school community.

Creating Experiences That Inspire Learning

This year, our students participated in innovative, engaging, and unforgettable opportunities that sparked curiosity, creativity, and ambition. Many of these experiences have been covered in previous editions of The Pulse, but here's a quick glimpse: classrooms were alive with reading and literacy activities during Read Across America Week; 12 students made a historic communication with the International Space Station; YES program students brought their student-created race car project to life; CNBC hosted an engaging "Financial Foundations" event at John F. Kennedy High School. These experiences, along with countless others, were made possible by dedicated educators and staff members who continuously seek new ways to inspire learning and expand opportunities for our students.

A Year of Outstanding Student Achievement

The accomplishments of our students this year extended far beyond academic achievement. Through scholarship, leadership, service, and perseverance, our students demonstrated the talent, character, and determination that make Paterson Public Schools proud. Throughout the year, they distinguished themselves in meaningful ways, including:

- The district celebrated 198 seniors who earned the New Jersey State Seal of Biliteracy.
- Nine exceptional students were honored as Passaic County Unsung Heroes, which recognizes students who have made a lasting impact through their unique contributions to their schools and communities.
- Two students earned their associate degrees from Passaic County Community College.
- Life-changing Fidelity Scholarships were presented to 12 students.
- Students participating in School 16's YES Ambassador program hosted the school's first student-led parent workshop

These achievements represent more than individual milestones – they reflect the limitless potential of our students and the collective commitment of our educators, families, and community to helping every child succeed.

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Strengthening Partnerships with Families

I am especially proud of the progress we have made in deepening our partnership with families and strengthening engagement across our school community. We know that when schools and families work together, students are better supported and positioned for success. Guided by this belief, the district completed four school-parent attendance workshops, resulting in a 25% increase in parent participation. We also hosted a series of forums and roundtable discussions focused on the future of our schools and key district planning initiatives. These conversations reflected our commitment to transparency, open communication, and meaningful collaboration as we continue working to provide safe, equitable, and high-quality learning environments for every student.

As we move forward, we remain committed to ensuring that every family has a voice, every partnership is valued, and every decision is guided by what is best for our students.

Thank you to our phenomenal families and students for making these successes possible. I also want to thank our Board of Education commissioners, cabinet members, administrators, teachers, staff members, and community partners for their hard work and support throughout the year. I look forward to welcoming our students and staff back in the fall as we continue building on this year's successes and creating even greater opportunities for every child we serve.

Sincerely,

Laurie W. Newell, PhD
Superintendent of Schools



EASTSIDE CELEBRATES STYLE AND CULTURE DURING FASHION SHOWCASE

Eastside High School transformed into a vibrant runway on June 18 as students, staff, and guests gathered to celebrate creativity, culture, and self-expression during the school's highly anticipated Fashion Show.

The exciting event, organized by Ms. Kecia Holmes and Ms. Denise Brown under the direction of Mr. Mathias, featured an impressive display of fashion that highlighted a variety of styles and cultural influences. From elegant contemporary looks to nostalgic retro fashion and rich cultural attire, the show captivated the audience from beginning to end.

The program opened with Fashion Set #1: All White Clothing, where student models confidently showcased stunning all-white ensembles that brought sophistication and elegance to the runway. The coordinated looks created a striking visual effect and set the tone for the afternoon's festivities.

Following the opening set, attendees enjoyed a special Met Gala Film Presentation, which explored iconic fashion moments and inspired students to think creatively about fashion as a form of art and personal expression.

The excitement continued with Fashion Set #2: Retro Line, featuring popular styles from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Students and teachers proudly modeled colorful outfits, bold accessories, and classic trends that brought memories of past decades to life. The audience enthusiastically cheered as each era was represented with flair and authenticity.

The final segment, Fashion Set #3: African Line, with authentic African clothing provided by Ms. Ibeh, celebrated the beauty and diversity of African fashion. Vibrant fabrics, traditional patterns, and elegant designs filled the stage, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and artistry represented in the collection.

Adding even more energy to the event was a live performance by Mr. Austin, who entertained the crowd with an engaging rap performance while student models confidently strutted across the stage. His music created a lively atmosphere that kept the audience engaged and excited throughout the show.

The atmosphere inside the venue was festive and uplifting, with students, staff, families, and community members celebrating the creativity, confidence, and cultural pride displayed by the participants. Applause and cheers echoed throughout the event as models showcased their hard work and dedication.

The Fashion Week Fashion Show was a tremendous success and served as a wonderful example of Eastside High School's commitment to celebrating diversity, talent, and student achievement. Special recognition goes to Ms. Holmes and Ms. Brown, under the direction of Mr. Mathias, for their vision, leadership, and dedication in creating an unforgettable experience for the entire Eastside community.



STARS ACADEMY GETS ARTSY!

Under the direction of the Principal Dr. Nellista Bess and art teacher Mrs. Stojakovic, STARS Academy, a Paterson public high school serving students with exceptionalness, had a creative year.

Students were invited to brainstorm ideas and voted for Minecraft as this year's yearbook theme. STARS graphic design students learned how to create the yearbook, had fun adding cubecraft details, and some student made artwork. Other graphic design projects included creating an art timeline poster, a graphic design timeline book, art and design basics, a personal monogram or logo, tessellation art in the style of M.C. Escher, a restaurant menu, a business price list, and much more.

Staff also organized arts and crafts activities so students could learn about Muslim Heritage Month celebration via the arts.

Art field trips spearheaded by Dr. Jaymie Stein, with the assistance of Mrs. Stojakovic, included visiting Hudson Yards with the High Line and art galleries. Students were thrilled by seeing life-sized sculptures, including the giant "Dinosaur" pigeon. Another field trip was to Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ, a 42-acre sculpture park, arboretum, and museum featuring over 300 sculptures. A final art field trip was to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where students were awed and inspired by art through the ages.

Student artists participated in several art competitions and exhibitions. Jayvien Bell's ornament depicting the Paterson Great Falls was chosen to represent STARS Academy in the 2025 Drumthwacket Holiday Ornament competition celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the United States. This event was sponsored by First Lady Tammy Murphy. Jayvien's artwork was displayed on a holiday tree inside the Governor's mansion in Princeton, NJ.

Participating in the CITYarts Pieces for Peace project, Several STARS artists created works in response to the question: "What does peace look like to me?" Representing STARS Academy was Caleb R., M.R., Jayvien B., Emmanuel M., Jorge P., Christian C., Diego V., Layla R., Selina S., John C., Talisha Q., and Alma B.

Additionally, Diego Villar De Leon's artwork, "Still Life with Fish", was chosen to represent STARS at the 2026 9th District Congressional Art Competition and Exhibition. The mixed media work was displayed at the Clifton Arts Center.

Another exciting event attended by students, staff, and administration was the Annual Paterson Public Schools Student Art Exhibition at the Paterson Museum. T.I.E.S. student Sienna Jumpp displayed her hand-knitted "Yarn Dolls & Friends", while Dalia "Lia" Carreras displayed a mixed media painting on paper she named "The Love Flower", which is extra special since she was named after a flower. Yet again, Jayvien Bell represented with a beautifully detailed "Still Life with Bear."

To top off an artsy school year, several student artworks were chosen for the 2026 New Jersey Bus Safety Poster Contest, Division 4. Sebastian Zuniga won 3rd Place with his "Safe Rides, Everyday Heroes" poster. Dalia Carreras won 2nd Place in the annual contest. 1st Place went to T.I.E.S. student Christian Villafan. To honor the artists, each received an award at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe Township on June 3. Christian Villafan was also honored to win 2nd Place in the 2025 National Bus Safety Poster Contest, Division 4.

The STARS Academy, T.I.E.S., and Paterson community are very proud of our talented students. Congratulations to all of our artists!



GHOSTCON II BRINGS CREATIVITY, COMICS, & COMMUNITY TO EASTSIDE

Eastside High School transformed its gymnasium into a vibrant celebration of art, imagination, and pop culture on June 22 as students and staff gathered for the highly anticipated Eastside GhostCon II, organized by Mr. Sledge.

The event brought together students from across the school to enjoy an exciting day filled with creativity, entertainment, and hands-on activities. The atmosphere was energetic as a live music by DJ Specter provided music throughout the event, creating a festive environment that kept students engaged and excited.

One of the highlights of the program was an impressive display of student artwork showcasing a variety of artistic styles and techniques. The exhibit, presented by Ms. Gupta and Mr. Bini, featured the talents of Eastside's young artists and demonstrated the creativity and dedication of students in the visual arts program. Visitors had the opportunity to view artwork ranging from traditional pieces to contemporary designs, celebrating the diverse artistic voices within the school community.

Adding a unique and interactive element to the event, EH Graphics Works transformed students and teachers into comic book-style superheroes. Participants enjoyed seeing themselves reimagined as larger-than-life characters, complete with heroic poses and imaginative designs. The activity proved to be a favorite among attendees and provided memorable keepsakes for many students and staff members.

Students also had the chance to participate in superhero-themed card games that encouraged friendly competition and collaboration. Throughout the gymnasium, groups of students gathered to play, socialize, and share their enthusiasm for comics, superheroes, and gaming culture.

Another special feature of Eastside GhostCon II was a collection of comic books created through a partnership between the Paterson Police Department and Mr. Sledge. The comics offered engaging stories while promoting positive messages and community connections. Students eagerly explored the publications, gaining insight into both the creative process and the importance of community partnerships.

Eastside GhostCon II successfully combined art, entertainment, literacy, and community engagement into a memorable experience for all who attended. Thanks to the leadership of Mr. Sledge, the contributions of Ms. Gupta, Mr. Bini, EH Graphics Works, the Paterson Police Department, and the many students and staff who participated, the event was a tremendous success.

The program highlighted Eastside High School's commitment to fostering creativity, celebrating student talent, and providing enriching experiences that inspire learning beyond the classroom.



CULTUREFEST 2026 AT EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Eastside High School proudly hosted a vibrant “Culturefest” on June 17 that showcased the rich diversity of its students, staff, and community. The event brought together representatives from many different cultures, highlighting the traditions, talents, and heritage that make Eastside such a special place.

Throughout the program, students and staff shared their cultures through a variety of performances, including songs, poetry recitations, traditional dances, and instrumental music. The audience was treated to an inspiring display of creativity, pride, and cultural expression as performers celebrated the unique backgrounds that contribute to Eastside’s diverse community. The event was organized through the dedication and hard work of Mr. Mathias, Ms. Sosa, Mr. Sledge, and many other Eastside staff members who worked tirelessly to make the celebration a success.

A special highlight of the program was a featured performance by Eastside High School’s newly formed school band, conducted by music teacher Ms. Sedycias. The band impressed the audience with their musical talent and demonstrated the exciting growth of the school’s music program. In addition, the Folk Center of Northern New Jersey provided a memorable free performance entitled “Rhythm of Culture.” Audience members enjoyed the energetic sounds of steel pan drums, learning about the cultural significance and history of this unique musical tradition.

The “Culturefest” served as a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing diversity, building understanding, and honoring the many cultures represented within the Eastside High School community. It was an afternoon filled with learning, appreciation, and pride that will be remembered for years to come.



STEAM STUDENTS CELEBRATED FOR EARNING RUTGERS COLLEGE CREDITS

Seniors from Paterson STEAM High School enrolled in the Rutgers School of Health Professions college credit program recently attended a recognition ceremony for all seniors that had qualified for their college credit exams from 2023 to 2026. Starting as early as 10th grade, students in the program can earn up to 19 total Rutgers credits that can be applied to their college careers.

Attended by seniors and their families, the ceremony was hosted by the School of Health Professions and took place at the College Avenue Student Center on the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus. 22 STEAM students were presented with certificates of recognition and cords to wear at graduation. Two STEAM students, Blanca Gonzalez and Angely Rivera Caicedo, received academic excellence awards and stoles to wear at graduation based their performances on the college credit exams over the years. The event was capped off with light refreshments, photo opportunities, and time to meet and network with Rutgers faculty and staff. The scholars were also able to mingle with students from other participating high schools.

“We, the staff of Paterson STEAM High School, are incredibly proud of Angely Rivera, Blanca Gonzalez, and the entire cohort of seniors for challenging themselves academically through this opportunity,” said Paterson STEAM High School Dr. Nellista Bess. “This recognition reflects not only their achievements, but also the perseverance, resilience, and commitment that define the Paterson STEAM identity. We also extend our gratitude to Mrs. Meri Todhe, Dr. Tatiana Mikhailovsky, and Mr. Lous Sayad, and Ms. Patrice Patby, whose support and dedication helped make this success possible.”



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EASTSIDE'S PREPARATION FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IMPLEMENTATION

Over the past two years, Eastside High School has made a significant commitment to preparing its staff for the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices. Through ongoing professional development, collaborative learning opportunities, and intentional planning, the school has worked to build the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to create a restorative school culture. As of September 2026, 98% of Eastside High School staff members will be prepared to begin Phase One of implementation, marking an important milestone in the school's journey toward strengthening relationships, increasing student engagement, and fostering a positive learning environment.

The preparation process began with a comprehensive professional development plan designed to introduce staff to the philosophy and principles of restorative practices. Teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff participated in workshops, training sessions, and collaborative discussions focused on understanding how restorative approaches can improve school climate and address conflict in constructive ways. These learning experiences emphasized relationship-building, accountability, empathy, and community as the foundation of restorative work.

Throughout the two-year preparation period, staff members engaged in ongoing learning opportunities that allowed them to deepen their understanding and practice restorative strategies. Professional development sessions were utilized to examine restorative practices and discuss implementation challenges. Staff members also participated in modeling exercises and circle activities to strengthen their confidence in using restorative language and facilitating restorative conversations. A major focus of the professional development effort was ensuring consistency across the school. This collective effort has helped create readiness among nearly all staff members and established a strong foundation for successful implementation.

Phase One, beginning in September 2026 and will continue until December 2026. We will focus on several key goals. First, all classrooms will implement community agreements that establish shared expectations and promote a sense of belonging among students. These agreements will be developed collaboratively and used to foster respectful and supportive learning environments.

Second, restorative practices language will be implemented throughout the school. Staff members will consistently use restorative language when building relationships, addressing concerns, and facilitating problem-solving. To reinforce this commitment, restorative practices language will be visibly posted in all classrooms and offices, serving as a daily reminder of the school's values and expectations.

Third, community circles will become a regular part of classroom practice. These circles will provide structured opportunities for students and staff to build relationships, strengthen communication skills, and create meaningful connections within the school community.

Additionally, restorative practices will be integrated into lesson planning to ensure that relationship-centered approaches become embedded in daily instruction rather than functioning as isolated activities. Teachers will intentionally incorporate restorative strategies that encourage collaboration, reflection, and student voice.

Finally, Eastside High School will establish Restorative Practices Professional Learning Communities and a school community calendar to support ongoing implementation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. These structures will provide opportunities for staff to share best practices, monitor progress, and celebrate successes as the school advances its restorative journey.

Through dedicated preparation and a shared commitment to positive change, Eastside High School is well-positioned to successfully launch Phase One of Restorative Justice implementation and continue building a stronger, more connected school community.



SCHOOL 13 HONORS 5TH GRADERS TRANSITIONING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL



Principal Nicole Booker-Toney, staff members, and families came together in the School 13 atrium to celebrate their “5th Grade Send Off: Transitioning to Middle School.” Students were presented recognition awards that honored their exceptional empathy, responsibility, and respect in the school community. These young leaders serve as inspiring role models for their peers. The School 13 community is incredibly proud of these outstanding students and their amazing achievements.

EASTSIDE STUDENT-ATHLETES HONORED AT PASSAIC COUNTY AWARDS

Multiple Eastside High School student-athletes were recently honored at the 53rd Annual Passaic County Coaches Awards dinner, which celebrates the county’s top performers in varsity sports. This year, select Ghosts that participated in basketball, track, volleyball, and cheerleading were recognized for athletic excellence. Additionally, Eastside girls basketball head coach Brandon Pilgrim was named Passaic County Coach of the Year. Congratulations to these talented student-athletes.

Estarlin Crisostomo - Boys Basketball; Benjamin Santos - Boys Track & Field; Jariel Garcia - Boys Basketball; Patricio Alejo Severino - Boys Volleyball; Doneiko Dookie - Student-Athlete; Luis Ramirez - Cheer; Azjae Morrison - Cheer; Alexis Chambers - Girls Basketball and Student-Athlete; Jade Bethea - Girls Basketball



PPS IN THE NEWS

Paterson Schools to Continue After-School, Summer Programs with \$475K Federal Grant

June 22, 2026

Paterson School Board Honors Student Athletes, Scholars, and Career Program Graduates

June 19, 2026

Paterson School Facilities Plan Outlines Five-Year Building Upgrades, Grade Shifts. New STEAM High School

June 19, 2026

PPS SURVEY: STUDENT USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Paterson Public Schools is currently reviewing its policy that governs student use of electronic communication and internet-enabled devices, including cell phones.

We value your perspective and encourage you to share your thoughts by completing this [brief survey](#).



MLK STUDENT SHOWCASES ARTISTIC TALENT WITH SPECIAL PORTRAIT

Paterson Public Schools is home to so many gifted students, and 8th grader Emily B. from the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex is a shining example.

Emily recently drew this creative portrait of Superintendent Dr. Laurie W. Newell. Witnessing our students unleash their artistic talents is truly inspiring. Keep shining, Emily!



MONTHLY CALENDAR REMINDERS

June 26 Last Day for Students
June 26 High School Graduation Day
June 29 Last Day for Staff (9 AM - 12 PM)

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

A **Board of Education Workshop Meeting** will take place virtually on Wednesday, August 12th. Those wishing to provide public comments 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, August 19th. 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.

Paterson Board of Education: President Joel D. Ramirez, Vice President Della McCall, Commissioner Valerie Freeman, Commissioner Alex Mendez, Jr., Commissioner Hector L. Nieves, Jr., Commissioner Mohammed H. Rashid, Commissioner Kenneth Rosado, Commissioner Kenneth L. Simmons, Commissioner Corey L. Teague

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

Aida E. Rosario, MBA | Director of Communications

Jeani Perez | Confidential Communications Assistant

Peter Long | Supervisor of Special Projects and Communications

Aidan Solano | Graphics and Content Coordinator