

For Immediate Release

Contact: Aida E. Rosario
aerosario@paterson.k12.nj.us

Paterson Public Schools' YES Program Brings Student-Created Race Car Project to Life

Students had the unique opportunity to create and promote a 1974 Ford Capri replica race car

Paterson, NJ (January 13, 2026) – Paterson Public Schools' Youth Empowered Stewardship (YES) Program gathered at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex on January 7 to showcase a student-created 1974 Ford Capri replica race car, bringing months of hands-on experience to life.

Through the Race Car project, YES Program students explored engineering, history, marketing, art, and American popular culture while collaboratively designing and promoting the replica race car with a professional design team and automotive industry professionals.

“This race car showcases the impressive creativity and innovation of our YES Program students,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Laurie W. Newell. “Guided by their experiences in the classroom, these young learners created a true work of art – one that the Paterson Public Schools community is immensely proud of.”

Dr. Newell addressed the eager young learners as they viewed the finished race car in the hallway at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex. Led by Dr. David Byer-Tyre, an instructor from the non-profit organization Mentor Newark, students learned how to design and present a build sheet for a project, create a visual deck with images and graphics, and write a narrative that articulated both their role in the project and its broader significance.

“Ultimately, the goal of this race car was to build a work of art that allowed the students to integrate their voice and education into it,” said Dr. Byer-Tyre. “Thank you to Paterson Public Schools and the YES Program for the opportunity to learn from your students. This car allowed us to see our young people’s genius.”

Under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Dr. Cicely Warren and Assistant Superintendent Dr. David Cozart, the YES Program engages students in art-based experiences and age-appropriate discussions, designed to build skills and promote community impact through empowerment stewardship, personal journeys, and community action. Currently in its fifth year, the YES Program has had 15 district schools participate in its partnership with WholeSchool Mindfulness, a non-profit that embeds mindfulness practices into the entire school ecosystem to improve mental health, focus, and well-being.

“YES has become a vehicle to promote student engagement and attendance, while teaching students how to be responsible stewards and advocates for their peers,” said Dr. Warren. “When

Dr. Byer-Tyre proposed the Race Car project, it presented a unique opportunity for students to leverage their talents and enhance their YES work. I was amazed with the results.”

This year’s YES cohort includes students from nine schools across the district, and meets six times throughout the academic year. Participating schools include: Dr. Frank Napier, Jr. School of Science & Technology, School No. 10, School No. 12, School No. 16, Maria Magda O’Keefe School, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex, Joseph A. Taub School, Eastside High School, and International High School.

For more information visit our website at www.paterson.k12.nj.us

About Paterson Public Schools

Paterson Public Schools serves over 22,000 students from pre-K to 12th grade in New Jersey’s third-largest city. About 71% of the student population is Hispanic, 16% are Black, 6% 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

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