

Building a Community of Learners

The Paterson Education Fund (PEF) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to stimulate community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all Paterson children achieve high standards.

Goals

*To build our community's civic capacity to support monitor and advocate education reform.

*To educate and enable community leadership to understand and act on changing educational needs.

*To provide a forum for the community to effectively participate in the decision making processes concerning education

Paterson Education Fund is a member of the Public Education Network (PEN), founded in 1991. The mission of PEN is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality education for *all* children through a national constituency of local education funds and individuals. The Paterson Education Fund is a founding member.

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Public Involvement
Public education
Public benefit

Are You the “First in the Family”?

When PEF's intern, Aileen Rosario, agreed to be interviewed for a book called “First in the Family” she had no idea what would happen to her. As she told her story of going to college to author Kathleen Cushman, Aileen thought of herself as just a regular person. She had no idea that her story, along with that of nine other young people, was so important. She didn't [and doesn't] think of herself as a heroine. And yet, Aileen has become the face of hope for young people in Paterson. Now attending Montclair State University, Aileen is the “First in the Family.”



In order to go to college, Aileen had many challenges: her family had no experience of sending a child to college, her schools didn't see her as college material and she didn't have money saved up to go. But what Aileen had, as Kathleen so eloquently describes, is a deep desire to go to college and a series of adult mentors who gave her support at critical turning points.

PEF staff members, Rosie Grant, Irene Sterling and especially Anna Villalongo, encouraged Aileen to pursue her dreams. They themselves are the first in their families to go to college - as are many PEF board members and community partners.

“It is so important that we share Aileen's story,” says Anna Villalongo. “So many more Paterson children can do what Aileen has done. And they don't know they can. We must help them see themselves as able.”

You can help someone be the first in their family to go to college. Your most important contribution is attention and encouragement. Ask the young people you meet about their dreams. Encourage them to make plans. Remind them that in every family, someone has to be the first.



And if you're the first, tell your story!

A limited number of copies of “First in the Family” by Kathleen Cushman is available from the PEF, call Anna at the PEF office.

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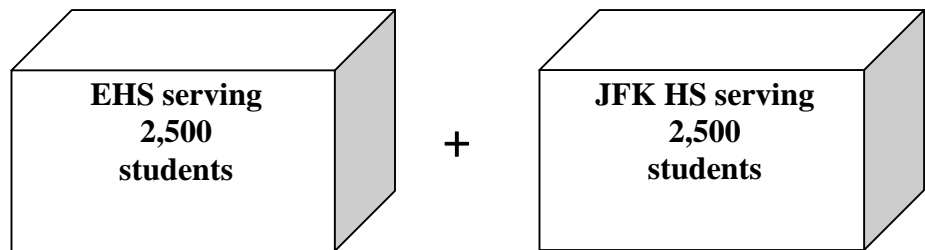
No Matter Where You Live, Your Tax Dollar Works Here

Myth: When the Paterson Public Schools return to local control, city residents will have to pay more in taxes for the schools.

Fact: Current law, called CEIFA, freezes the local Paterson property tax share for the schools and requires the State of NJ to make up the difference according to the Abbott ruling.

If Paterson only had the schools its tax base could afford, Paterson could only manage to fund its comprehensive two high schools: John F. Kennedy and Eastside!

**Paterson property taxes for schools =
\$36,000,000=**



Without support from New Jersey's taxpayers, Paterson would have to close all the other schools including Rosa Parks High School, all the academies and elementary schools and all the pre-school programs.



**Your tax dollar makes Paterson children's education possible.
Thanks!**

Let Them Write the Guide: "You CAN Get There from Here, A Guide to College Opportunities for Paterson Students" by Paterson students

According to the 2000 US Census, only 8% of Paterson residents have four or more years of college. This means that few of our children have college experience in their families. How do we help them set their sights on "the college track?"

As no one is more convincing to teenagers than their peers, PEF asked the JFK Communications Academy students to prepare a college guide. Under the leadership of Stan Karp and Lories Nye-Slockbower, students used a guide prepared by New Visions for Public Schools in NYC as their model. However, they featured real Paterson students to make the case for aspiring to college. "You CAN Get There from Here, A Guide to College Opportunities for Paterson Students" features more than 25 Paterson students to tell the story of planning and attending college.

Students speak about their concerns.



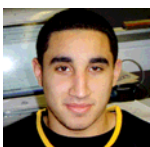
"I have a lot of fears if getting into the college I want," writes Joanela Diaz. "I'm not the best student in my school and I am also aware that I don't have the money to pay for all of my tuition."

Never fear.



The guide helps students and their parents understand financial aid and tells many stories of success. "When thinking about college, you must ignore the cost part," advises Arlette Guerrero, Eastside High school graduate and student at Syracuse University. "Believe it or not, there's money out there and it's available to you and me." But first you have to set your goal: go to college.

What if you think college isn't for you?

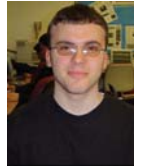


College isn't the only post-secondary pathway. Tarrick Ahmad explores the work of technical schools. "Both technical schools and colleges can prepare you for your future," he points out."

"But be sure you check out the details so you get where you want to go."

Is the military an option for you?

Lewis Qirjako interviewed two JFK graduates who Army experiences brought them to different conclusions. Engy Habashy says, "I feel like I've found a place where I'm needed and where where I make a difference." Anglin Boswell counters, "It's just not what I expected. Financially I'm fine, but I wouldn't recommend joining only for the college aid."



Are there college programs for students with disabilities?

Kristen Gosby writes about the Horizons Program at Morris County Community College, "As a student with special needs, I need extra academic and personnel support to be successful. The Horizons program provides the type of assistance I need to be successful." The guide also describes the Bergen County Community College Center for Collegiate Deaf Education.



What impact does the guide have?

"It's too soon to tell what the ultimate impact of the guide will be," says Irene Sterling, PEF's Executive Director. "But we know that everyone who has seen it is excited by the students' voices. Everybody knows somebody in the guide."

Best Outcome?

Stan Karp shares that the number of Communications Academy students attending four year colleges doubled as a result of their working on the guide.



Copies of the guide are available from PEF, call Anna. Special thanks to the Herald News for their support of this project. PEF has contracted with the Communications Academy to provide another edition for 2006 and a video edition.