Jeffrey Sanchez - inspired by Iron Man and MOTH!

Jeffrey learned about PEF’s MOTH program when Lead Teacher Mario Benitez visited his 6th grade class at School 2 to recruit new members.

Since he was already interested in science and galaxies, it caught his attention right away. When asked what sparked the interest he said, “I had seen Iron Man!”

Six years later, Jeffrey is now in his senior year of high school. He believes he has been enriched by his participation in the William Paterson University Astronomy lectures, stargazing on the football field and the hiking trips. When asked what was his best experience, his response was, “The Solar Eclipse, of course!” Jeffrey was excited to travel with the group to St. Louis, MO, to experience Totality. The preparation leading up to the trip was intense given the NAACP travel alert. PEF and the mentors took every possible precaution to ensure their safety. The actual experience, however, was one that Jeffrey and the other young men will remember for a lifetime. Besides the solar eclipse, the human experience was also rewarding for him. He found the people of MO to be warm, welcoming folks. Thankfully, he didn’t experience any of the negative interactions he had read about or seen in the media.

Jeffrey shared that he was very shy and didn’t like to talk to anyone when he first joined MOTH. Now, he considers himself a good communicator and will talk to anyone about his experiences and dreams.

College was always on the horizon for this young man, but he didn’t know where he would go. Thanks to the Iron Man influence, he knew he was interested in the technology field. MOTH helped him sharpen his focus on programming and software development. He has already been accepted to the University of Advancing Technology in AZ. He is worried that the tuition and fees, being very high, may not be affordable even having been awarded a scholarship. Not to be deterred, he’s also applying to several NJ universities.

Jeffrey is learning coding on his own time to get a head start on college lectures. He says the online courses are free if you don’t need a certificate and $49 if you do. He’s already looking forward to coming back as a mentor after college.

We are so proud of Jeffrey! To paraphrase Dr. Seuss, “Oh the places he will go!”
A Message from our Executive Director

PEF is Staying Focused on Improving Student Outcomes Through Unprecedented Change!

Paterson Public Schools has a new Interim Superintendent and is in the midst of a search for a new permanent leader. The return of local control is a real possibility in the short term and will necessitate a period of transition and reorganization. Throughout all these changes, PEF will remain focused on ensuring that the community’s voice is heard and respected and that students’ needs are being met. Over the past few months, we conducted focus groups with adults and students to establish a community vision and values for Paterson’s return to local control and the Superintendent Search process. (The Superintendent Search Community Engagement Report is on our website.)

Paterson community’s vision for our public schools is a Paterson Public Schools system that offers our children a high quality education from pre-K through 12th grade, in an environment that is safe and conducive to 21st Century learning. This should include curricula that prepare all of our students for the global workforce and schools that equally meet the needs of our gifted, regular education and special education populations. We envision District schools that have the resources to be competitive and offer the same opportunities as charter schools and suburban schools along with teachers and administrators that honor and embrace our diversity. Finally, and emphatically, we want control of the schools to be returned to the local community.

PEF wholeheartedly endorses this vision! Our board, staff and volunteers are working diligently to advocate for policies and programs that support this vision. Our work with The College Track, our STEAM programs and Paterson Reads are all evidence of how Paterson kids can soar when they have the right supports and resources. We want this for all our kids! With your help, we can continue to focus on strategies and advocacy to ensure that Paterson continues along the trajectory of improving student outcomes!

Focus on Early Literacy

Paterson Reads continues to engage the community in ensuring that every Paterson child reads on grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

The city-wide plan aligns community resources to improve summer learning, increase early learning and improve attendance by reducing chronic absenteeism. This year, 9,500 students participated in Paterson Reads activities. We’re happy to announce a new city-wide congregational literacy initiative and a barber shop “Fade to Books” collaboration with Paterson Library. We’re also working with Paterson Public Schools Department of Parent and Community Engagement to place books in laundromats. Ten churches have also received Free Library Exchange bookcases!

Our 50 Book Club encourages elementary students to read 50 books of their choice for pleasure. School Library Media Specialists, teachers and Paterson Free Public Library staff help children select age-appropriate books and keep track of how many books the students read. 1,450 students received certificates of achievement, stickers, bookmarks and free books at this year’s celebration. As we celebrate the kids, we also celebrate the 45 volunteers, Paterson Library staff, PPS teachers and administrators and Clifford the Big Red Dog for helping to make the celebration a success.
Creating a College Going Culture

Our College Track workshops expanded this year and now include all the academies at Eastside and John F. Kennedy. PEF trained 52 student facilitators and they lead their peers in workshops for college preparation, planning, access and retention. We also facilitated workshops at several elementary schools.

It’s never too early to start thinking about college! The majority of our students will be the first in their families to attend college. Let’s help them get there!

JFK’s Communications students did the research, wrote the articles and published our 13th Edition Paterson College Guide featuring interviews with successful alumni as well as admission and cost information for all NJ colleges and universities. Gannett Newspaper graciously printed 10,000 copies for our middle and high school students! Are you affiliated with any of these colleges? The kids love to hear from Paterson alumni. Give us a call and we’ll make the arrangements.

Totality! 10 members of our MOTH group traveled to Jefferson City, Missouri, to experience two minutes and thirty seconds of totality of the Great American Solar Eclipse. By all accounts, the year of preparation was well worth it!

PEF supports three STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) enrichment programs for teens. Girls United for the Earth (GUFÉ) for high school girls, Matter Observed Through Hombres (MOTH) for high school boys and Summer STEAM for 5th through 8th grade students.

The Summer STEAM students studied how pollution affects our watershed and devised robotic solutions to address current pollution issues.

The girls are studying environmental impacts on water and its effects on animals. They’re scheduled to take an international service learning trip next year. Where will they go?

The boys continue to study Planetary Science. They are organizing stargazing meetups in Paterson. Watch their Facebook page for the announcements.

For More Information

Visit our website
www.paterson-education.org

For More Information

Like @PatersonMOTH on Facebook for updates
Thanks to our Donors and Volunteers

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Interim Superintendent
Paterson Public Schools

PEF’s mission is to stimulate community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all Paterson children achieve high standards.

Our Goals:
• Build the community’s capacity to support, monitor and advocate for education improvement.
• Educate the community about changing education needs, enabling the community to respond.
• Serve as a vehicle for community participation in decision-making around public education.

Thanks to Jamie Dykes, Alveria Spencer and Don Vanderbeck, Jr. for years of service on our Board of Directors!

Keeping Kids First!

Thanks to Jamie Dykes, Alveria Spencer and Don Vanderbeck, Jr. for years of service on our Board of Directors!

Jamie Dykes served 12 years on the Board including 2 terms as Board Chair

Alveria Spencer was a member of the board from 2011 through 2017

Don Vanderbeck served 12+ years including 1 term as Board Chair!

Our Staff

Rosie Grant
Executive Director

Doris Pagan
Program Director

Linda Reid
Program Manager

Annette Wignall
Database Coordinator
Engaging Our Community in Advocacy

Building on the Community Schools momentum, Paterson’s **Full Service Community Schools** initiative is focused on creating a community hub, providing needed health, mental health, social and emotional support to children and their families at the school in order to remove the non-academic barriers that prevent students from succeeding. PEF’s leadership ensures sustained focus on improving student outcomes, meaningful community participation and good documentation of the process.

Last spring, we participated in the renewal of a district-wide Theory of Change for the initiative.

We also collaborated with statewide partners to share our successes and challenges with policy makers and other districts interested in the community schools strategy.

**What are we advocating for?**

**For our kids!** As the Feds released the State ESSA Guidelines last year, PEF collaborated with PEOC, NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Dignity in Schools Campaign to encourage the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) to use “Climate and Safety” as an accountability indicator for NJ schools. In response to our comments, NJDOE ESSA Team invited us to join the ESSA Stakeholder Engagement Team. We hosted several focus groups to give Paterson parents and community members the opportunity to inform the state’s ESSA plan and understand how it will affect Paterson schools and students. We are currently working with the district to develop the Paterson ESSA Plan.

**Who will be our next Superintendent?** PEF invited several community partners to collaborate in series of focus groups this summer. The conversations provided a forum for parents and community members to express their vision for Paterson Public Schools and Paterson children. That vision (in our Executive Director’s message on page 2) was shared with the Superintendent Search team and the Board of Education to inform the Superintendent Search process. We’re pleased that the community voice and concerns have been incorporated into the search process.

Ask us about our **Arts Education Taskforce** which is working to develop and implement a plan for expanded arts education in Paterson!

Our **#WeChoose** Critical Conversation led the community in demanding the return of local control of Paterson Public Schools; no closing or selling of Paterson Public Schools as long as enrollment is constant or increasing; and a moratorium on charter schools along with a statewide campaign to stop funding charters out of districts’ budgets.

**#PPShowUp!** As a result of our advocacy, Paterson Public Schools launched a campaign to reduce Chronic Absenteeism. PEF is working with a District team to develop and implement district-wide strategies. Search **#PPShowUp** on Facebook.

Congratulations to Jhonathan Garcia, our 2017 Nathan and Dorothy Peller Scholarship recipient! Jhonathan, seen here with his principal, Dr. Karen Johnson and PEF’s Executive Director, graduated from Eastside’s School of Government and Public Administration. At the time of the award, he was still contemplating which of 14 college offers to accept!
A River Story

"How do we share all of these great ideas with more teachers?" Norma Menchon, 2nd grade bilingual teacher at School 2 and Teacher Leader for the River Story program asks this question all the time. For her, it is not enough to learn exciting new ways to explore science concepts with her students, or implement those concepts in her classroom. She is always thinking about how to spread her science fever to other teachers, so that they can have as much fun as she is and inspire future scientists as well.

Ms. Menchon has been a part of the River Story project since its inception as a small pilot. During that year, the group explored the Great Fall Historic District on foot, making observations of natural and man-made changes to the environment. This experience inspired her to take her students outdoors on a field trip....to the sidewalk outside her school. "I realized that many of the things that I wanted to teach them about observing nature could happen anywhere as long as we were outside." Her students drew and wrote about their observations of plants and animals, which they later embellished with colors from the natural pigments provided by dandelions and grass rubbings they collected while outdoors.

"The River Story project has helped me step outside my comfort zone and try new things with my students.

When we develop lessons for our teacher trainings, we try to remember to stay focused on the process, not the final product that students create. This was hard for me at first, but I realized that students (and adults) learn more in science and engineering from trial and error than worrying about getting a perfect result on the first try," she explained. The River Story leadership team is experimenting with new ways of teaching that have been introduced by the Next Generation Science Standards. The team models productive risk taking for the teacher participants, and Ms. Menchon is a great example. She openly shares with teachers how she works to modify the science curriculum to meet the needs of her English Language Learners and shares her successes and her struggles. We are proud to have Norma on our team, and hope to help her find new ways to share her science fever!