



GRADUATING EVERY PATERSON CHILD!

Restorative Practices Changed Demile's Outlook!



Demile Townes says he recommends peace circles for every student because a lot of problems can be solved by using them!

Demile is a senior at School of Information and Technology at Eastside and a player on the Eastside football team. Recently the team participated in a **Restorative Practices** peace circle, to talk with students from another team about a football game that ended in a fight. He said he was glad for this opportunity to do something instead of just leaving things where they ended that night. This was his first circle experience although he had heard

about the process from his grandmother. (PEF's own Linda Reid!) Demile reported that the peace circle helped them resolve the problem and the students from both schools found out that they actually have a lot in common.

Restorative Practices is a powerful approach to discipline that focuses on building relationships and repairing harm by engaging all stakeholders in dialogue. It requires a paradigm shift to believe change is necessary and possible. We're seeing this shift happen as Paterson Public Schools begin to modify the culture of out-of-school suspensions to one of repairing harm and restoring positive relationships to help our students be successful. In the peace circles, students (the victims and the accused) come to solutions that minimize suspensions. The strategy is 80% about relationship building and 20% repairing harm.

After advocating for implementation for several years, we're pleased to report that there are now 90 Restorative Practice "circle keepers" implementing the

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strategy in 12 schools! We've seen this restorative process help students understand the wide net their actions cast. It allows students to accept responsibility, deal with issues, and move

forward productively instead of continuing to repeat the cycle of misbehavior with punitive response from administration. Restorative practices seek to fix the problem, impose fair punishment, foster understanding, and adjust student behavior. Students learn to speak from the heart (your truth), listen from the heart (hear others) and trust what you say (no need to rehearse).

Demile expects to be playing football at the college level next year. He hasn't chosen a college or a major yet but we're sure he'll take his positive outlook and restorative practices with him!



EHS Peace Room – Courtesy of Paterson Public Schools

A Message from our Executive Director

Over this past school year, PEF participated in several district-led efforts to increase efficiencies and student outcomes as the district moves closer to full local control. These included budget focus groups, strategic planning, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) district planning, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying policy, an Anti-Vaping Taskforce, continued efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism and support for opening the new P-TECH at Panther Academy.

Our work also took us to some unexpected places with wonderful results. One such opportunity was to co-lead the Mayor's Education, Recreation and Youth Transition Team. It's good to see that several of the team's recommendations are being considered and implemented.

At the state level, we served on the Governor's school funding advisory team and informed NJ's ESSA policy as members on the Stakeholder Engagement Group and the Title 1 Committee of Practitioners. Our Board of Directors made a bold decision to join with statewide partners in a successful lawsuit to remove the PARCC exam, a major barrier to education for Paterson children.

We worked with our national partners to further educational equity through advocacy for increased funding for The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title 1, and hosted a bus tour to highlight the differences between a well-resourced school and an under-resourced school. (Watch for our report on the bus tour soon!)

Now, we're shifting our campaign for improved outcomes for Paterson kids into high gear. Be sure to check out our program highlights about Paterson Reads, Restorative Practices and Sustainable Community Schools



in this newsletter. Probably our most far-reaching work is that GUFU presented their work in Stockholm, Sweden, earlier this year! Yes, Sweden! We want to open up a world of opportunities for our children! Please call us if you want any additional information about any of this work or for opportunities to get involved.

You, our PEF family, have made all this work possible. I can't thank you enough for your support. Your gifts of time, expertise, wisdom, people power and money are priceless. Thank you for investing in our work and creating more opportunities for Paterson kids!



The *Paterson Reads* partners created a new Community Solutions Action Plan to get every child reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. The partners have agreed to link programs more effectively and to use data to inform priorities, planning and evaluating efforts. Over the next

two years, the program focus will be to expand best practices that accelerate the language, literacy, and reading progress of Paterson's youngest children.

Kids learn to read from birth through grade 3 then after that, they must read to learn. If they're not reading on grade level, they risk falling behind. We've selected best strategies to help all Paterson children read at grade level by the end of the third grade.



We encourage you to post social media pictures of kids reading or you reading to kids with the hashtag #PatersonReads!

Together We Read!



PEF's **50 Book Club** has been extended to the preschools and more than 2,200 students read 50 books or more this year! Seventy volunteers helped us celebrate their achievement!

Creating Opportunities for College and Career



61 John F. Kennedy and Eastside high school students received facilitator training and led **College Track** workshops for 604 of their peers. This work is building a college-going culture in Paterson and district data shows that more PPS graduates are enrolled in 2 and 4-year colleges than ever before.

JFK students continue to research and write the college guide. We are so thankful that Gannet continues to print the guides. 10,000 copies are distributed to school students every year.

This spring, a **GUFE (Girls United For the Earth)** team traveled to Stockholm, Sweden! They presented their innovative designs at the American Geophysical Union's Geo-Science & Society conference. The presentation focused on how to synthesize the work of stakeholder



groups to lead societal change to reduce climate change. Besides placing Paterson on a world stage, the presentation opened a life-changing path for young women with an aptitude for science and exceptional determination to make the world a better place for everyone.



Our **MOTH (Matter Observed Through Hypothesis)** young men regularly host environmental hikes as well as stargazing nights for the community whenever conditions are amenable, and the stars align.

Thanks to our Donors and Volunteers!

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**Graduating
 Every Paterson
 Child!**

Our Mission

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.

Sustainable Community Schools

PEF joined the national campaign to have 25,000 Sustainable Community Schools by 2025! Sustainable Community Schools represent an evidence-based school improvement model that offers whole-child education strategies and engages the school community in the process of designing and implementing six key pillars to school success. Paterson has 7 Full Service Community Schools and the district's strategic plan calls for the addition of 2 community schools each year. PEF is advocating for the conversions to be Sustainable Community Schools using the Journey4Justice Six Pillars.

(1) ENGAGING, CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND CHALLENGING CURRICULA

Students must have equitable selection of course offerings in the arts, world languages, mathematics, literacy, culturally relevant and responsive curricula and practices, honors and advanced placement (AP) courses. Central are services for English Language Learners (ELL), special education students and educational needs of parents and community members. The school community is engaged in the visioning and appropriate methods for implementing curricula; such as peer-to-peer and project-based learning. Curricula must be informed and enhanced by community resources.

(2) HIGH QUALITY TEACHING, NOT HIGH STAKES TESTING

Resources are invested into evidence-based teacher supports such as; 1) educators having a voice in professional development that is high quality, relevant and consistent, 2) veteran educators available to mentor newer teachers, 3) equity in the racial demographics of the teaching cadre and 4) trained teacher aides in every class. Tests are used to assess student needs as opposed to punishment.

(3) WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS FOR EVERY CHILD

Health care, eye care, trauma counseling, speech therapists and other social and emotional services that remove obstacles to student success. Wrap-around supports include "opportunities for inspiration" such as drama clubs, debate teams, science clubs, culture clubs; supports must be culturally relevant and responsive.

(4) STUDENT CENTERED SCHOOL CLIMATE

Rooted in positive discipline practices such as restorative justice. Social and emotional learning supports are stressed so students grow while being held accountable for their actions. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced. Student leadership development programs are encouraged so students learn how to effectively problem solve and address issues in their community that impact their ability to be educated.

(5) AUTHENTIC PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Schools are community institutions. Authentic parent and community engagement require a belief system where community is viewed as partners and assets, not aggravations and tools to be manipulated. This approach is rooted in the belief that community wisdom in harmony with academic expertise lead to sustainable school improvement.

(6) INCLUSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

As the instructional leader, the principal of a sustainable community school must not operate the institution as a kingdom but a space for collaborative leadership. They ensure that the SCS Resource Coordinator is part of the leadership team and they actively participate on the SCS Leadership Team. The SCS school leader must consistently provide an inclusive culture for input from the school community.

More Enrichment Opportunities Full STEAM Ahead!

The *Great Falls Summer STEAM Program (GFSS)*, hosted by PEF in partnership with the Paterson Public Schools, continues to engage rising 5th-8th grade students in project-based, inquiry-based, exploratory, place-based, and authentic learning experiences driven by innovation. This year, the program expanded to include 2 sites, each with a unique focus. Learning about Paterson's history while developing a newly found pride for our city was the focus of one site, while diving into the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals was the focus

of the other. Through problem-solving, critical thinking, and logical reasoning, all 95 participants designed, developed, and presented projects that addressed different challenges in the city of Paterson, and the world. These young innovators analyzed the local, national, and global environmental challenges we currently face, and designed solutions that would not only address these challenges but also serve as a tool for communicating solutions and creating awareness in our community. This innovative approach to Science Education will continue as part of the Family STEAM Nights planned for this year, an event that engaged 90-95% of participating students' families last year. Through collaboration with the *Great Falls Teacher's Collaborative (GFTC)* and *A River Story*, a professional development program also hosted by PEF, students and teachers will continue to contribute to our growing world by utilizing the

transferable skills gained from participation in GFSS and GFTC.



Kids Need Arts!

When asked what STEAM is, we often reply STEM with Attitude! It's infusing *Arts* into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. That's great but not enough. It doesn't substitute for high quality Arts and Music education for every child, with opportunities in and out of school. Join our campaign to help make that happen.



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