



PEF News

December 2020

GRADUATING EVERY PATERSON CHILD!

Sofia loves giving kids the same opportunities she received!



Sofia spends her summers mentoring students in the same program that brought her to PEF!

Hello Everyone! My name is Sofia Cangalaya. I am a sixteen-year-old Junior at International High school, participating in the International Baccalaureate program. I am a Hispanic, Latino background student, who migrated to the United States four years ago.

During the summer of 2018, I attended PEF's *Great Falls Summer STEAM*. As a result of my interest in science, I was invited to join *Girls United For the Earth (GUFÉ)*. It has been

two years since I am a member of this group where we have been working as a team. In Summer 2019, I had the opportunity to assist with the *Summer STEAM* as a high school intern. We worked with middle school students providing them with fun summer learning, focused on Environmental Science.

This year we would have provided the same program to the students but, due to the current pandemic, we couldn't meet in person. With the help of The Victor Cruz Foundation, PEF sponsored the "Remote Innovation Project". Under the supervision of the PEF, the Great Falls Teacher Collaborative and *GUFÉ* worked on the Paterson Public Schools' curriculum to create virtual lessons for students, teachers, and parents. I worked on the first through the eighth-grade curriculum. We published the lessons in English and Spanish to serve our diverse community. This project was not only focused on English speakers but English Second Language (ESL) students. Being a Hispanic student who had

the same challenges and struggles as many other students in our community, I welcomed the opportunity to build resources for them. Our focus was to provide online resources and information to teach students in a fun, creative and comfortable way while being proficient with our own time.

Throughout this project, I learned an enormous amount of different skills, from working with peers, college interns and teachers to connecting with my own community. My leadership and confidence skills have increased. I loved the experience of this program and I was truly honored to work with these astounding people. Their help gave us the confidence to put this project together. I hope to use the skills I gained from the program to keep assisting people in my community in the future. One of my biggest goals for the future is to work in the Culinary Arts field connected to our Environment. I want to be a leader of a program where I would be able to introduce new products and innovations in the cuisine. I hope kids with the same background as me could have the same opportunity to improve their skills to reach their goals!

A Message from our Executive Director

2020 has certainly been a challenging year for most if not all of us. The pandemic hit the children of Paterson harder than anyone might have expected. With Paterson Public Schools having been underfunded for more than 10 years, no major investment had been made in personal computers for students. Technology funds had to be invested in computers at schools, so that students could take the required state assessments. As a result, 19,000 Paterson students entered the shutdown with no technology at home. While their peers in other communities could log on for virtual classes, Paterson kids did paper and pen review of previously taught lessons, for 3 months.

However, some amazing things blossomed from this challenge!

People dug deep and came to the rescue! Our generous donors, foundations, local businesses, and individuals from all over, chipped in to help Paterson children. We convened community Arts educators to make sure students still had access to the Arts because we know that Arts provide healing and stress relief. We launched a campaign for technology and provided \$25,000 worth of Chromebooks, and other support to students and families! Bookends Bookstore patrons donated 2,000 books so that our kids could read through the summer! Community members posted videos of themselves reading children's books!

Amid the pandemic, we collaborated with partners to launch *Talking is Teaching; Talk Read Sing*. What better time to help parents with brain development and language acquisition skills than when they're at home for months? Seventy adults were trained as trusted messengers to take messages to 500 parents!



Even as we celebrated these small victories, we received sad news that hit home. We lost several PEF friends this year. We will dearly miss Dr. Gerald Glisson, Brother Gerard Burns, Marcella Mickle Black, Johnnie Lattner, Edward Cotton, Sr. and Linda Shirley Smith. We honor their work for our children and pledge to live into their legacy.

We are determined to emerge from this seriously tragic trauma with hope and resilience. We need your help. Let's work together to make sure that our schools are healing centered environments, nurturing our kids and the adults who serve them while providing high quality education for all!



Join us in celebrating our *Paterson Reads* community partners who continued to implement the Community Solutions Action Plan to ensure that Paterson children are all reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade! Paterson Public Schools was so gracious in

allowing us to distribute books and materials to parents at the food distribution sites!

Collectively, we handed out over 12,000 books, activity kits and information packages to parents. Over this year, we saw Paterson Reads Facebook engagement increase from 300 to more than 14,000! Paterson parents welcomed information on how to help children with remote learning, how to engage in fun learning activities and how to cope



with the stress of the shutdown. Please use **#PatersonReads** to post pictures and videos of adults reading to kids or reading a children's book into a camera!



Our *Talk Read Sing* program has been such fun! 15 volunteers helped us to prepare and hand out tote bags and another 75 were trained as *Trusted Messengers* to help parents of children ages 0-3 with indoor activities. Research has proven that talking, reading, and singing to your child in any language helps with brain and language development. We want to share this with all our parents! It's so natural and so easy! We will give out 500 tote bags loaded with books, prompts and activities this year and another 500 in 2021!



The *Talk Read Sing* message is on every NJ Transit Paterson bus through the end of the year!

Talking is Teaching: Talk Read Sing is a program of The Clinton Foundation's *Too Small to Fail* initiative and is funded in Paterson by The Nicholson Foundation, The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation and The Turrell Fund.

Thanks to our Donors and Volunteers!

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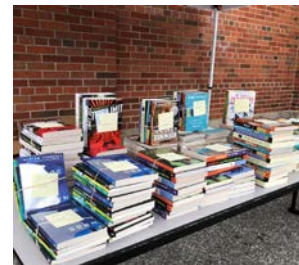
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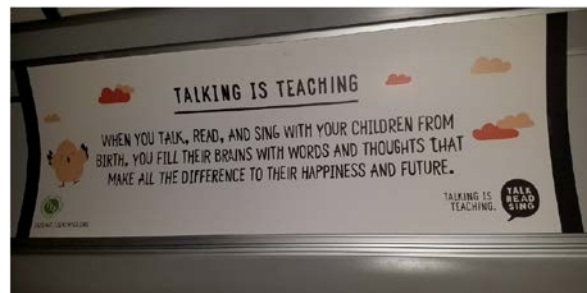
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 We appreciate you!

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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.



Graduating Every Paterson Child!

More Resources to Help Paterson Children Soar!

PEF is the sponsoring partner for a new **Federal 21st Century Community Learning Center** grant for \$2.2 Million over 5 years! This is a collaborative effort with The Paterson Alliance, St. Paul's CDC, New Destiny Family Success Center and Paterson Public Schools.

The grant is providing afterschool tutoring, homework help and enrichment activities to children in 2 **Full Service Community Schools**, Senator Frank Lautenberg School and School 15. The activities are STEAM (Science Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) themed with a focus on active learning. We're off to a great virtual start and look forward to taking it to scale as soon as the school buildings can safely reopen.



Photo credit to David Spungen

Thanks to Congressman Pascrell and Mayor Sayegh and Assemblyman Wimberly for helping us celebrate!

Advocacy for Education Equity

Moving to Hope and Resilience

This pandemic shutdown has been unlike anything we have ever seen before. We first focused on making sure all our children were accounted for and safe, then we moved on to a campaign to make sure they were all connected. Next came the work to provide enrichment, along with resources for social and emotional wellbeing. We advocated for delayed opening of buildings until safety could be ensured. Thankfully, the Schools Board and administration agreed. Now, it's time to move forward and we're focused on hope and resilience. With hope and resilience, success is inevitable!

We worked with the Journey4Justice Coalition to create a set of National Demands for Equity as schools plan to reopen buildings. We also worked as a member of the Our Children/Our Schools Coalition to create demands for NJ's reopening. Here are some of the demands from both collaboratives.

- ***Protect the Most Vulnerable Children*** including students from low-income families (eligible for free or reduced-price meals), English Language Learners, Special Education students and children who may be living in unsafe or disruptive living situations.
- ***Prioritize Social and Emotional Learning*** with recognition that the toll that COVID-19 has taken on families and on teachers and staff.
- ***Ensure that all air conditioning and ventilation units must be fully functional*** and meet CDC guidelines before schools reopen.
- ***Ensure Universal Availability of On-Line Learning*** by treating broadband as a universal service, like other utilities.
- ***Ensure All Children Are Safe*** especially families in which adults must return to work but students are not allowed to return to in-person instruction need options for placement of these students in safe, supervised locations.
- ***Use the Community School model*** as a good way to deliver social and emotional support by creating healing centered environments.
- ***Provide Funding for any school with over 70% free and reduced lunch, to become a sustainable community school***, an evidence-based school improvement model where the local community can apply school resources to address local needs.
- ***Delayed Opening until Zero new COVID-19 positive cases*** in the relevant school district for at least 14 consecutive days before considering reopening schools.
- ***Eliminate school suspensions and expulsions*** with a commitment to restorative justice school culture and student leadership development.

Enrichment Opportunities Through Resilience and Creativity



When many organizations were forced to shut down, PEF and our partners continued to meet, to ensure that Paterson children and families were provided for. Our Arts Task Force members meet every 2 weeks to share ideas and problem solve. Our Paterson Reads Collaborative made sure kids had books and other resources. A Technology ad-hoc group was formed to address connectivity. Paterson Public Schools collaborated in all the above! They also presented their Annual Arts Exhibition in an online platform that could be accessed by the public.

Our **Great Falls Summer STEAM Program (GFSS)** developed a new way to help our students succeed! Four teachers, 4 college interns (PEF program alumni) and 4 **GUFE** (Girls United For the Earth) high school students teamed up for a revamped Summer STEAM. They spent 6 weeks developing innovative experiential lesson plans themed to the PPS curriculum. The lessons are available in English and Spanish and may be used for virtual and in-person learning and have been shared with Paterson teachers. The lessons may be accessed at <https://paterson-education.org/steam/educators/> under the “Remote Learning Innovation Project” link.



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