PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS BILINGUAL PROGRAM ONE OF ONLY 10 DISTRICTS RECOGNIZED AS A MODEL PROGRAM BY NJDOE

District officials, magnet schools honored at NJDOE’s virtual ceremony today

PATERNON – Officials at the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) honored Paterson Public Schools’ bilingual magnet schools as one of only 10 model bilingual programs in the state at today’s Second Language Model Programs Award Ceremony. The ceremony was held virtually.

Today’s ceremony made official the May 29th announcement of Paterson Public Schools being named one of the state’s 2020-2022 New Jersey Second Language Learning Regional Model Programs. The district schools recognized in the honor are Public Schools No. 8, 16 and 21. The NJDOE grants this recognition once every two years.

“We just want to thank everyone. It’s really a great honor for us here in Paterson,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer at the virtual ceremony. “I know our staff have worked extremely hard to get to this point. Our bilingual student numbers continue to go up. We are happy to be able to address all of the student needs and, at the same time, receive this recognition.”

“It has been through the efforts of many staff that we have been able to pave the way for these three schools,” said district Director of Bilingual /ESL/ World Languages Lourdes Garcia. “I’m very grateful that the state has given us this opportunity to be a resource for other districts who seek to improve bilingual education.”

The distinction of being named one of the state’s 10 model bilingual programs was based on three site visits NJDOE officials made at the three schools. Criteria including curriculum, staff, resources, program type and academic data were reviewed by state officials.

Bilingual programs were established at Schools 8 and 21 in 2013, followed by the establishment of a program at School 16 in 2017. These K-8 programs offer native language instruction for all content areas and high intensity ESL instruction. Students are selected for the programs on the basis of English language proficiency, recommendations from teachers and parents, and number of years living in the United States. The program’s goal is to have participating students to perform on or above academic grade level in English and Spanish in order to develop a high level of proficiency in both languages.

Garcia reported that this year, 91 district students have qualified for the state’s Seal of Biliteracy. This distinction, which will be noted on the students’ transcripts and high school diploma, recognizes high school seniors who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in one of more languages in addition to English.
As a state-designated model program, Paterson Public Schools’ bilingual magnet program will serve as a resource center for other school districts in New Jersey. Educators from throughout the state will be able to witness the district’s exemplary second language practices for English language learners. Administrators and teachers will be able to discuss matters of mutual concern and explore the potential for collaboration on curriculum development and professional development initiatives.

In addition to the superintendent and Garcia, the district officials who oversee the bilingual magnet program are Deputy Superintendent of Schools Susana Perón, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Sandra Diodonet, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Cicely Warren, Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services/Special Programs Joanna Tsimpedes.

The district’s bilingual/ESL supervisors, who support the schools’ magnet programs, are Gisela Adorno, Anthony Maestrey, Liza Otto, Ofelia Ramos, and Elba Rosario-Gómez.

The principals are Sham Bacchus at Public School No. 8, JoAnne Riviello at Public School No. 21, and Nancy Tavarez-Correa at Public School No. 16.

Some of the distinctive work that has been done by the district’s bilingual magnet program teachers includes the following:

- In January, three teachers at School 8 – Martha Cruz, Ivette Soto and Anibal Cintron – led a team of bilingual students to win the state finals of Samsung’s national STEM contest, “Solve For Tomorrow.” The contest had more than 2,000 applicants.

- In September, the New Jersey School Boards Association honored School 21 ESL teacher Jason Velante with their “School Leader Award” for his lesson that started with giving his students a writing prompt: Why I Came to America? His students’ immigration stories were soon published and circulated through the Paterson Free Public Library and the Wanaque Library. They have also been exhibited at the Paterson Museum, and they have received a special commendation from the Paterson Board of Education.

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