

PATERSON PRESS

This program helps Paterson students with special needs make transition to adulthood

3-minute read

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PATERSON — An empty nest is nerve-wracking for any parent, but the anxiety is heightened for those whose children have special needs.

“You’re always worried as the parent of a child with special needs — did you teach them everything they need to learn?” said Vince Arrington, a former Paterson Board of Education member, whose daughter has Asperger’s syndrome.

Arrington was at Paterson’s STARS Academy on Friday as city education officials celebrated a program that helps students with special needs learn everyday life skills and make the transition into adulthood.

“Some of these children won’t learn these skills at home,” Arrington said. “We need the schools to teach them.”

The program is known as TIES, which stands for Transitioning for Independence, Employment, and Success. Under TIES, the district partners with 12 organizations to place students in work sites, including the Eva’s Village social service program, the Paterson Museum, Marshalls and Price Rite Marketplace at the Center City Mall, the Stop & Shop store in Wayne, and Passaic County Community College.

The program began in 2021 and largely serves students with autism and children who are cognitively impaired. District officials last Friday decided to celebrate its success. Some students who have graduated from the TIES Program have been offered jobs by some of the businesses that offer work site experiences.

Tyrone Thompson, one of the 129 students in the program, works as a part-time assistant at the school district's Central Office Building at 90 Delaware Ave., where he does clerical tasks like shredding paper. “We meet all these wonderful co-workers who work here,” Thompson said.

TIES was the brainchild of Cheryl Coy, assistant superintendent of special education, who noticed similar programs in other North Jersey districts, including Newark and Hawthorne.

“I’ve been trying to get this program for five years,” Coy said, noting that the program is the capstone of her long career in education. “I saw a lot of students were going out of the district, and as a parent first — that didn’t sit well with me.”

TIES also provides parents and families with much-needed community resources, including presentations on guardianship, financial, respite and support resources.

Also involved is Circle of Care, an organization that provides care and services for youth and families in Passaic County experiencing emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges.

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