

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Visits Passaic City to Highlight Nearly \$2 Billion Budget Investment for School Infrastructure

08/23/2022

Funding Allocated Will Support High-Quality Education and Learning Environment

PASSAIC CITY – Governor Phil Murphy today visited the Passaic Public School's Dayton Avenue Campus to highlight education investments in his Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023) budget. Over the past five years, the Murphy Administration has been committed to building a top-ranked education system for all New Jersey students with equity at the forefront.

As part of the FY2023 budget agreement, the State allocated \$1.55 billion to support the Schools Development Authority's (SDA) 2022 Strategic Plan to advance more than a dozen school construction projects in SDA districts through FY2026, and an additional \$350 million for facilities projects in regular operating districts. These funds will be appropriated through the Debt Defeasance and Prevention Fund and will not increase the State's debt burden. \$10 million for charter and renaissance school facility improvements and \$75 million for capital maintenance and emergent projects will be funded through the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) and SDA. Combined, these investments represent the most significant investment in school construction in well over a decade.

"The educational success of all New Jersey students is a top priority for my Administration," **said Governor Murphy**. "The necessary investments to SDA and DOE will see that our schools possess the proper infrastructure for our students to thrive in their educational environments. These children are our state's future leaders, and every child deserves a world-class education and school in which to learn and to grow."

The Governor attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Dayton Avenue Educational Campus in Passaic City, one of the largest SDA projects in the state, costing nearly \$241 million. The new 448,000 square-foot campus, which broke ground in 2018, will house four schools educating up to 3,000 students from Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade, including:

- Abraham Lincoln School (Pre-K program) - 28 classrooms, three specialized rooms, and a courtyard play area.
- Mahatma Gandhi Elementary School - 33 general classrooms, five self-contained special education classrooms, three science labs, media center, music room, and gym.
- Ellen Ochoa Gifted and Talented Academy (Magnet School program) - 28 general classrooms, three self-contained special educational classrooms, three science labs, art room, dance studio, vocal music room, media center, two Teach to One Learning Areas, and cafeteria.
- Muhammad Ali Middle School - 27 general classrooms, six self-contained special education classrooms, three science labs, four project labs, three Teach to One Learning Areas, gym, cafeteria as well as classrooms dedicated to the arts.

"School-facilities funding is a key element of a comprehensive effort to provide students with a high-quality education in a safe environment that can best nurture academic growth," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "Students in Passaic City, and throughout New Jersey, will benefit from the investments being made in our school buildings."

"The SDA is gratified to play a vital role in creating an environment that fosters the learning and development for our State's future leaders - the students. We take this responsibility very seriously," **said Manuel Da Silva, CEO of New Jersey Schools Development Authority**. "Thanks to the Governor and the State Legislature, the robust funding allocated to the State's school construction program has allowed us to move ahead with projects identified in our 2022 Strategic Plan update. This funding supports the delivery of schools in Passaic and communities throughout the State to address significant capacity and facility deficiencies."

"Today we celebrate our continued commitment to funding education in this state. While we have a long road ahead of us in our collective effort, this year's budget puts us nearly \$2 billion closer to ensuring all of New Jersey's children have access to state-of-the-art classrooms. The Dayton Avenue Campus is going to be life changing for thousands of students in Passaic City," **said Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz**. "This transformative investment in school infrastructure will allow for similar projects all over the state, improving the educational environment for countless students who call New Jersey home."

"This is the type of the strategic investment supported by a resourceful state budget that makes use of resources to upgrade and improve New Jersey's educational infrastructure," **said Senator Paul Sarlo, who has represented the City of Passaic in the Legislature for 20 years**. "We are taking advantage of the opportunity to invest in communities throughout the state. I have worked with determination over two decades to help provide the City of Passaic with state funding to build new schools, including the Dayton Avenue Educational Campus. This is a construction project that will provide long-term benefits for students and educators with facilities that will support educational progress."

"Opening the Dayton Avenue Educational Campus is a historic day for the City of Passaic," **said Assemblyman Gary Schaer**. "This state-of-the-art complex represents transformational changes made to public schools to ensure that every child receives the quality education they deserve. I am incredibly thankful to Governor Murphy, as well as our State and local partners; the Dayton Avenue Educational Campus is an unprecedented investment in Passaic's future."

"Governor Murphy made a commitment to expand educational opportunities in communities like ours to ensure equity in the development of our children," **said Passaic City Mayor Hector Lora**. "Today is a realization of a dream that so many have worked hard for, including Senator Sarlo, Assemblyman Schaer, the Passaic City Board of Education, and other state and local leaders. I am proud to be Mayor of this city and to be able to work with leaders who continue to invest in the future of our children."

"As a child of the downtown area of Passaic City, I can say a school complex in the downtown area is a long time coming. We are so excited to see a 21st century modernized educational campus in this area and we are even more excited for the students who will benefit from all that it will have to offer not only physically, but certainly academically and programmatically," **said Passaic School Superintendent Sandra Montanez-Diodonet**.

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