



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**American Paradigm Schools Leaders and Philadelphia Councilmember Jim Harrity
Honored with Tesla Science Foundation Spirit Awards**

APS joins educators and community leaders whose work reflects innovation, resilience, and service

PHILADELPHIA, PA; July X, 2026 — [American Paradigm Schools](#) (APS) joined the Tesla Science Foundation, Philadelphia City Councilmember Jim Harrity, and international leaders to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America and the 170th anniversary of the birth of Nikola Tesla at the Philadelphia Ethical Society. The evening included the presentation of Tesla Spirit Awards to the staff, board, and leadership of Memphis Street Academy (MSA), as well as Councilmember Harrity.

The international conference, organized by Nikola Lonchar, President and Founder of the Tesla Science Foundation, brought together scientists, educators, authors, artists, and civic leaders. Presentations spanning science, literature, documentary film, fine arts, and cultural diplomacy were delivered in both Serbian and English, reflecting Tesla's Serbian heritage and his transformative contributions to American innovation and industry.

APS has a longstanding dedication to furthering S.T.E.A.M. education, bringing Nikola Tesla's impact into classrooms through its collaboration with the Tesla Science Foundation. By integrating Tesla-inspired curriculum that connects students to scientific discovery through art, music, and hands-on learning, APS continues to inspire the next generation of innovators.

The event concluded with the presentation of Tesla Spirit Awards. Sandra Farmer, Board Chair of Memphis Street Academy, and Steven Bilski, former CEO of Memphis Street Academy and recently appointed COO of American Paradigm Schools, were recognized alongside MSA's staff and board for their resilience, service, and steadfast commitment to students in the face of adversity—embodying the perseverance, dedication to education, and spirit of innovation that defined Nikola Tesla's legacy.

"The legacy of Memphis Street Academy and the community we built is something to celebrate," said Sandra Farmer, former Board Chair of Memphis Street Academy. "This award honors every scholar and family we served. Like Tesla's legacy, our impact lives on."

Councilmember Harrity also received the award in recognition of his resilience in the spirit of Nikola Tesla and his continued support of education, students, families, and communities throughout Philadelphia. A longtime ally of APS, Councilmember Harrity has been instrumental in championing resources for scholars and families, including serving the Port Richmond community through the MSA Wildcat Pantry.



"Philadelphia has always been a city at the intersection of history and innovation and this conference is a beautiful reflection of that. To be honored alongside the Memphis Street Academy team — leaders who have shown extraordinary resilience through some very difficult times — makes this recognition especially meaningful," said Councilmember Jim Harrity.

APS CEO and Director of Education of the Tesla Science Foundation Ashley Redfearn and Scott Peterman of SP Advising presented on Tesla's contributions to the Industrial Revolution and the importance of Tesla-inspired learning in today's classrooms.

"Our partnership with the Tesla Science Foundation reflects our belief that world-class education connects students to the biggest ideas in human history, and few ideas are bigger than Tesla's," said Redfearn. "Seeing that partnership celebrated alongside Councilmember Harrity was a powerful reminder of what is possible when schools, community leaders, and organizations work together toward a shared vision."

To learn more about Tesla Clubs in Schools, please visit teslasciencefoundation.org and for more information on APS, visit ap-schools.org.

About American Paradigm Schools

American Paradigm Schools (APS) is a nonprofit charter management organization that supports and serves three charter schools in North and Northeast Philadelphia. These schools are: First Philadelphia Preparatory Charter School; Lindley Academy Charter School and Tacony Academy Charter School. For more information, visit www.ap-schools.org.

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