

*The Paterson Education Fund (PEF) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to stimulate community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all Paterson children achieve high standards.*

### Our Goals

- To build our community's civic capacity to support monitor and advocate education reform.*
- To educate and enable community leadership to understand and act on changing educational needs.*
- To provide a forum for the community to effectively participate in the decision making processes concerning education*



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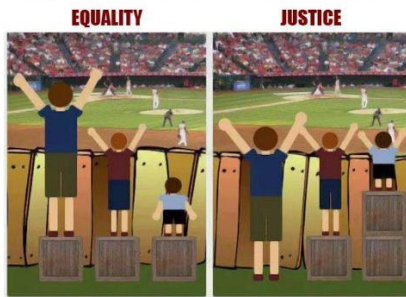
*[www.paterson-education.org](http://www.paterson-education.org)*

## An Educated Voter's Guide to Paterson's School Board Elections:

### What Lies Ahead? Reform or Deform?

We are coming to a crossroads in Paterson. Will we have strong public schools for everyone, public governed and publicly funded with transparency? Or will Paterson devolve into two tier system with special needs students and English Language Learners [ELL] in the public schools and other students in charters?

#### EQUALITY DOESN'T MEAN JUSTICE



Unless the State of NJ, through Department of Education, changes the rules on the way the charter schools recruit students, Paterson Public Schools will shoulder an increasing percentage of special needs and English Language Learners who are much more expensive to educate.

Currently the Paterson Public Schools enroll 27,000 students with 13% with special needs and 17% English Language Learners.

Our existing charter schools have a much different balance.

Paterson Community Charter School:

8% special needs and under 1% ELL

Paterson Charter School for Science and Technology:

7.2% special needs and 2.6% ELL

John P. Holland Charter School:

16% special needs and under 1% ELL

The two newly proposed charters have a similar profile in their other existing network schools. See page 4 for more details.

How does Paterson share the task of educating all its students equitably? The Paterson Board of Education must wrestle with the dilemma presented by our current charter policy and lead a way forward for all Paterson's children.

Data from <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc11/alpha.php?lt=C;st=T>

**Vote on April 16 th as if our children's futures depend on it, because they do!**

# Paterson School Board Candidates 2013

The following information was provided by the seven candidates. Where there is no information, the candidate did not respond. PEF has not verified the information but publishes it as a public service. Address questions directly to the candidates.

## Candidates for a 3 year term [2013-2016]. Choose 3.

**Nelly Celi**, 67 Montclair Avenue, Work phone: 973-881-9400. Email: [nelly4paterson@gmail.com](mailto:nelly4paterson@gmail.com)



Employment: Girl Scouts of Northern New Jersey, Membership Development and Community Manager. Length of residence in Paterson: 30 years. Education: William Paterson University. Family: Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: New Roberto Clemente Community group, School 6 use of schools for afterschool programs and summer programs. Civic Involvement: Juvenile Community Conference, Habitat for Humanity. Number of Board meeting attended in the last six months: 3 (three). Three major issues: My concerns are with children reading at at 6<sup>th</sup> grade level in High School, the emphasizes on standardized testing can lead to a teach to test only while setting aside other valuable subject matter being neglected. We need more community involvement for only as a community working together to assure that children read and understand the material and classrooms have all essential resources for teachers and students to be successful will we begin to see a positive change.

**William A. Connolly**, 195 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Phone: 973-684-7240. [Candidate did not submit a photo.]

Employment: Retired Senior Bridge Engineer. Education: Graduate, Eastside High School, Certificate, Rutgers University, Certificate, Passaic County Community College. Family: Single. Community Activities: Paterson Taxpayers Association, St. Stephens Church, Active Parishioner. Number of Board meeting attended in the last six months: I watch all Board of Education meetings on Cable Television. Three major issues: Educational Accountability and Community and Parent Involvement. (2) Financial Accountability and Sound Management of Adopted Public Policies. (3) School Safety for Students, Staff, Parents and Community within School Buildings and around School Grounds.

**Christopher C. Irving**, 113 Dundee Avenue. Cell Phone: 973-348-5002. Home Phone: 973-580-5890.



Email: [chris4paterson@gmail.com](mailto:chris4paterson@gmail.com). Employment: The Ceceilyn Miller Institute for Leadership & Diversity in America, Executive Director & CEO. Length of residence in Paterson: Education: BA- Ramapo College of NJ, MA – William Paterson University. Family: Jocelyn Irving- mom, Farrah Irving- sister, Herman Irving,- brother. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Current Paterson Board of Education Member. Civic Involvement: September 2011 & 2012 – College and Career Forums, June 2011 – Scholarship Saturday, February 2012 & 2013 – Vision and Eye Glass Screening Day. Number of Board meeting attended in the last six months: all. Three major issues: (1) Enhancing the Math and Literacy rates of ALL our children. These two content areas are the cornerstone of the educational process. As a community we need to ensure that all children are about to function at grade level. (2) Ensuring that all of our schools are safe an orderly to ensure learning can occur. (3) Improving the districts commitment to our parents and community to engage all in the process of education

**Alex Mendez**, 266 East 19<sup>th</sup> Street. Email: Alexmendezusa@gmail.com. Employment: President/owner of a transportation company in Secaucus, NJ. Length of residence in Paterson: 13 years.



Education: College graduate, Marketing/Accounting. Family: Married with 3 beautiful children that attend Paterson's Public Schools. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Currently a board member, elected in 2010. I am the commissioner responsible to engage the community and introduce and get the uniform policy passed. Civic Involvements: Through Friends of Alex Mendez I have a yearly: Back to school supplies giveaway, yearly Eastside park cleanup, turkey giveaway, Santa in Paterson – donated toys to over 800 Paterson children 2012, Coats for the needy – January 2013, Gang awareness forums, Seminar how to do business with the district, Paterson cares for NJ for Sand Relief Fund, Free vision exam and eyeglasses event – February 2013. I am also an active member for the following: Eastside Neighborhood Association and 6<sup>th</sup> Ward Neighborhood Association. Number of

Board meetings attended in the last six months: All. Three major issues: Improve our school safety. Improve our school safety. Re-gain local control. Implement a successful plan to enhance academic achievement. Motivate more parental involvement.

**Kenneth L. Simmons**, 8 Linden Road Home Phone: 201-538-6143. Email: ksimmons007@optonline.net.



Employment: Pearson Education, Sr. Systems Engineer/Analyst. Length of residence in Paterson: Education: BA- DeVry University, MA- Candidate Thomas Edison State University. Family: Mone't Kendall – Daughter, Aysha Simmons – Daughter, Chynah Simmons – Daughter, Zhyeir Simmons – Son, Zion Simmons – Son, Zachariah Simmons – Son. Past and current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Current Paterson Board of Education Member. Civic Involvements: April 2011 & 2012 – Boys Leadership Summit, October 2011 & 2012 Valerie M. Dade Girls Leadership Summit, August 2010-2012 Family Movie Nigh, 2010 – Present, Vice Chairmen Paterson MUA. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: many. Three major issues: 1. Increasing academic achievement, while this district has made some strides towards this goal, there is still much work to be done. There are a number of strategies that can be used inside and outside of the classroom

that can be used to instill in our students that helps to make them take ownership of their education. (2) Ensuring that all of our schools are safe an orderly creating an environment and culture that is conducive for learning. (3) Increasing parental engagement.

**Juan K. Sosa**, 413 E.18<sup>th</sup> Street. Work Phone: 973-978-6219. Cell Phone: 973-692-8263. Email: jeksosa@optonline.net or juank4boe@gmail.com. . Employment: Owner, Manager Hatero Landscape Services, LLC. Length of residence in Paterson: 17 years.



Education: graduated from Liceo Gaston F. Deigned in Dominican Republic. Studied Civil Engineering in Universidad Central del Este (UCE) Dominican Republic. Family: Live with the mother of my four children two which are school age. Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Member of the Home School Council at School 21. Advocating for students and parents on school 21. Civic Involvements: currently helping Paterson Residents with property tax appeals. Organize voter's registration drive and citizenship drive. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: 3 (three) and watched three others on TV. Three

major issues: (1) We need better facilities: most of our school buildings are in bad conditions both inside and out. Our children deserve a clean and safe school environment. (2) Low Academic Performance: The school district should offer students more after school programs to both enhance the academic and social skills. (3) Parental Involvement: Increased parent participation in their children's academic growth is essential in a thriving and prosperous school system. Fiscal Accountability is also an important element in obtaining these results. There should be clarity in how the budget is managed and distributed



**Alveria T. Spencer, MSW**, 56 Laurel Street. . Work Phone: 973-523-0089. Cell Phone: 862-221-7138.



Email: alvera2@msn.com. Employment: Outreach Worker, Family Intervention Services. Length of residence in Paterson: Lifelong.. Education: Product of the Paterson Public School District, School #20, Eastside High School, Greater Paterson (OIC), Passaic County Community College, associates in Liberal Studies, William Paterson University, Bachelors in Psychology and Minor in Women & Gender Studies, Rutgers University, Masters in Social Work (MSW), Certificate in Violence Against Women & Children (VAEC). Family: Fiancé and a Proud Parent of three children, who also attends Paterson schools. Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Advocate for New Jersey Parent’s Caucus, active parent, participated in Dream Big Reading Program, Facilitate College Track, Guest speaker

for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at Eastside High School, Read to students on Dr. Seuss Birthday, Developed and Implemented Self- Esteem Builder Initiative, Rallied in Trenton and Washington for teachers/parents. Civic Involvements: Member, National Association for Social Workers, Inc., Domestic Violence Response Team for Passaic County Women’s Center, Treasurer, Greater Paterson (OIC), Board of Directors for Northeast New Jersey Legal Services, Inc. Board Member for Paterson Education Fund, Member for Passaic County Juvenile Conference Committee. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: 3 (three). Three major issues: (1) Parental Support – We must embrace the parents who lack the essential skills of reading and writing or for those who have multiply barriers that enable them from participating in their children’s education. Let’s meet parents where they are and provide a comprehensive plan so our children can still succeed. (2) Early prep Education – Exposing our children to reading and writing at an early age ensures that they will be fully equipped to master the skills in reading or writing. This also promotes the importance of having all students read at grade level. (3) Improving Facilities – Our children can’t learn to read or write effectively if their environment is not healthy enough to stimulate growth and classrooms are overcrowded. This also decreases health problems and increases safety for all students.

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## **What Lies Ahead? Proposed Charter Schools**

Two new charter schools proposed for Paterson were on a fast track for approval as they are operators of other charter schools. They await final approval in June 2013.

Proposed: Paterson Arts and Sciences [k-8], to open September 2013 with 360 students k-5. The school will then add one grade per year with a total capacity of 720 students.

Sister Schools:

Bergen Arts and Sciences: special needs 6.2% ELL: 5.4%

Passaic Arts and Sciences: special needs: 3.3% ELL: 7%

Proposed: Collegiate Charter School [k-4], to open September 2014 after a planning year with 212 students k-1 adding one grade each year with a total capacity of 548 students. The charter operator also proposes a second charter to open in 2015.

Sister Schools, all in Brooklyn NY:

Brooklyn Ascend: special needs: 9% ELL: < 1%

Brownsville Ascend: special needs: 10% ELL: < 1%

Bushwick Ascend: special needs: 13% ELL: 7%

Paterson Public Schools comparison

District wide: special needs: 13%

ELL: 17%

## Paterson Board of Education Members 2012-2013 Attendance

Attendance record for workshop meetings, special meetings and regular meetings, May – Jan  
 Data on attendance and [lateness] is taken from official Board of Education minutes at  
<http://www.paterson.k.12.nj.us/board/meeting-minutes-12-13.html>

Term ends 2013	Work shop - 7	Special 5	Regular 7	Term ends 2015	Work shop - 7	Special 5	Regular 7
<b>Christopher Irving</b>	7 –[0]	5 –[0]	6 –[0]	<b>Errol Kerr</b>	7 –[4]	4- [0]	7- [2]
<b>Alex Mendez</b>	4- [2]	5- [1]	7- [2]	<b>Manuel Martinez</b>	7 –[0]	5-[0]	6- [0]
<b>Kenneth Simmons</b>	6- [0]	3- [0]	5 –[1]	<b>Corey Teague</b>	5- [2]	4- [0]	5- [0]
Term ends 2014				<b>Lateness: [ x]: number indicates the number of latenesses for each category of meetings.</b>  <b>Members who are late can delay having a quorum to conduct business.</b>			
<b>Crystal Cleaves</b>	7- [0]	5- [0]	7 –[0]				
<b>Wendy Guzman</b>	5- [5]	4- [2]	7- [1]				
<b>Jonathan Hodges</b>	7- [3]	5 – [0]	7- [1]				

## Some Words About Committee Meetings

Committee meetings are the places where board members get the details of the actions proposed by the Superintendent by meeting with key staff. Attendance is taken from official Board of Education minutes at <http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/board/board-index.html>. Some committee reports did not provide attendance.

Number of meetings reported	Chair	Committee members		
<b>Curriculum (7)</b>	<b>Chris Irving (7)</b>	<b>Cleaves (3)</b>	<b>Kerr (2)</b>	<b>Martinez (3)</b>
<b>Fiscal (4)</b>	<b>Errol Kerr (4)</b>	<b>Martinez (0)</b>	<b>Mendez (3)</b>	<b>Teague (3)</b>
<b>Legal (0)</b>	<b>Simmons (0)</b>	<b>Martinez (0)</b>	<b>Hodges (0)</b>	<b>Teague (0)</b>
<b>Facilities (4)</b>	<b>Alex Mendez (4)</b>	<b>Cleaves (4)</b>	<b>Hodges (4)</b>	<b>Teague (0)</b>
<b>Personnel (7)</b>	<b>Crystal Cleaves (6)</b>	<b>Guzman (2)</b>	<b>Martinez (7)</b>	
<b>Policy (5)</b>	<b>Kenneth Simmons (5)</b>	<b>Guzman (2)</b>	<b>Mendez (4)</b>	<b>Teague (3)</b>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do we pay for our schools?

Our budget in 2013-2014 is planned for \$573 million. Paterson’s local tax portion of the school budget, \$38.9 million, is only sufficient to run our small high schools at Eastside and Kennedy. If the State of New Jersey and the federal government took their funds away, Paterson would have to close all its elementary schools, pre-schools and other high school programs.

## **How do we return to local control?**

NJSAC or the NJ Quality Single Accountability System sets out the way that any state operated school district may return to local control. Our current Commissioner with the State Board of Education amended the rules regarding NJSAC to focus on student achievement that include student growth measures as well as test scores.

➔ Paterson does not receive any financial benefit from being state-operated. [It did under the original law, but that was amended more than 16 years ago.] Our support from the State of New Jersey is provided by the School Funding Reform Act of 2008, see [www.edlawcenter.org](http://www.edlawcenter.org) for details.

➔ Paterson will not lose any state aid because we return to local control. Any additional local taxes will have to be approved by Paterson voters.

## **How do I get more information?**

There is lots of information about the Paterson Public Schools on the following websites:



[www.paterson.k12.nj.us](http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us) contains local information.



[www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education) contains all the rules governing our schools and our School Report Cards.



[www.edlawcenter.com](http://www.edlawcenter.com) for information on the School Funding Reform Act of 2008.

## **What can the board of education do?**

Under the Constitution of the State of New Jersey, the State is responsible for providing education for its citizens [the “thorough and efficient system of free, public schools” clause]. The State establishes local school boards and requires them to run the schools under its [the State’s] rules. The powers of the School Board are limited; it operates under a very comprehensive set of regulations known as NJ Administrative Code 6A. As a state-operated district, the Paterson School board is advisory and has no power over personnel. The School Board’s actions can be vetoed by the State Superintendent.

➔ The School Board’s most important role is to hold the school system accountable for educating Paterson children.

# Paterson Board of Education Members 2012-2013



Mr. Christopher C. Irving,  
President

Mr. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President

Ms. Chrystal Cleaves

Ms. Wendy Guzman



Dr. Jonathan  
Hodges

Mr. Errol S.  
Kerr

Mr. Manuel  
Martinez, Jr.

Mr. Alex  
Mendez

Mr. Corey L.  
Teague

## What does the oath of office mean?

Every member of the Board of Education takes the following oath of office:

“I do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey, and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States and in this state, under the authority of the people, so help me God.

I do further solemnly swear that I will impartially and justly perform all the duties of the office of according to the best of my ability. So help me God.”

While school board members are elected by local citizens, they are responsible to the State of New Jersey. Under the New Jersey Constitution, they are responsible for providing a “thorough and efficient” education. Our State Supreme Court has interpreted that to mean an education that makes them competitive in the market place and able to be good citizens.

Paterson  
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An Educated Voter’s Guide to Paterson’s School Board Elections

Questions about this guide may be addressed to Irene Sterling, PEF, 973-881-8914.

**School Board Election Day is April 16, 2013.**



# **Vote**

**As if your children's futures depend on it.**

## **Because they do!**

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Brought to you by **Paterson**  
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