



# School Board Election Day is November 3, 2015

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

October 2015

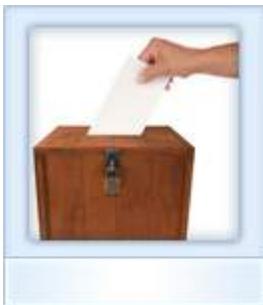
*The Paterson Education Fund (PEF) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to stimulate community action for change so that the Paterson Public Schools ensure that all Paterson children achieve high standards.*

### *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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## **Is Local Control Finally on the Horizon?**

Paterson is closer to local control than we have been since the State took over the district in 1991. What began as a 5 year takeover is now 23 years and counting... but there is a glimmer of hope. In June 2014, the Commissioner of Education returned Operations to the control of the Paterson Board of Education (BOE). The Commissioner said that he hoped this would set the stage for the return of additional areas. More than a year later and we're still holding on to that hope.

So what's next? Finance, Instruction and Program, Personnel and Governance are all still State controlled through the State District Superintendent. In fact, the Commissioner still holds veto power over Operations. So where's the hope? Paterson has to show consistent improvement over time on the NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC). We must also demonstrate capacity to sustain that improvement. When we meet this benchmark, local control may be returned at the Commissioner's discretion.

We need more than hope to move us to the next level. The BOE members must demonstrate substantial and sustained progress. They must also put policies in place to maintain the progress. Paterson continues to face many challenges, most of which are related to the underfunding of the School Funding Reform Act. Our BOE members must understand what these issues are and be willing to fight for our children. They must represent this community's voice to the rest of New Jersey. They must believe that our children can thrive when given the right opportunities and resources and be willing to be a champion for that belief.

Keep these things in mind as you read through this Voters Guide. Who will work with the currently seated Board and Dr. Evans to return our schools to local control? Who will put policies in place that lead to sustained improvements? Who will stand and fight for our children?

**Candidates for 3 three year terms include incumbents Errol Kerr and Corey Teague as well as Jesus R. Castro, Nakima Redmon, Oshin Castillo and Kevin Michael Henry.**

# Paterson School Board Candidates 2015

The following information was provided by the 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 [2016-2019]. Choose 3.**

**Oshin Castillo - No information.**

**Jesus R. Castro**, 242 Sussex Street. **Phone:** 973-460-5686 **Email:** **Employment:** Chairman of a local



advocacy group located in the City of Paterson. **Length of residence in Paterson:** Lifelong. **Education:** Kennedy High school, Passaic County Community College, Kean University. **Family:** Married with 3 children. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Concerned as a parent for my own children and the overall educational quality they receive as well as all the children of this district that attend our schools. Advocate for parents in need of guidance on special education rights. **Civic and Community Involvement:** Past member of the Statewide Education Organizing Committee (SEOC), past member of the Paterson Education Organizing Committee (PEOC), appointed by City of Paterson Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres to the Paterson Free public Library & Museum Board, appointed by NJ Governor James E. McGreevey to the New Jersey Blue Ribbon Child Welfare Panel, appointed by NJ Governor John S.

Corzine to the State Mental Health Planning Council, past member of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Task Force (SBYS), past member of the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council, past member of the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC), past member of the New Jersey Olmstead Advisory Committee, past member of the Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System Committee (CEAS), past member of the Continuum of Care for the Homeless (COC), past member of the Youth Services Commission (JJC). **Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months:** Many. **Three major issues:** (1) Increasing Basic Academic Skills: Graduation rates are on the rise within the district yet our kids are not prepared for college level courses at the community college. More must be done to address district graduation requirements. (2) District Spending: Our district needs to prioritize when it comes to spending. We must send a strong message that we want educators not administrators. (3) Parental Support: We must continue as a district to engage parents not just within the schools but at home. Encouraging growth of resources like adult education or remedial is key in helping our children and families achieve higher learning.

**Kevin Michael Henry (Deacon Mike Henry)**, 145 Presidential Blvd, 13M. **Cell Phone:** 973-503-1110.



**Work Phone:** 862-207-8482 **Email:** [Deaconmikehenry@aol.com](mailto:Deaconmikehenry@aol.com).

**Employment:** Deacon, EverLasting Life Ministry/NJCFCDC, Another Chance Mentor Project. **Length of residence in Paterson:** Lifetime. **Education:** JFK, graduate 1971, Bergen Community College graduated, 2010. **Family:** 2 men age 40 and a recent graduate of JFK. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Another Chance Mentor Project Prison, a prison reentry program keyed to helping and giving another chance to those in need. **Civic and Community Involvement:** **Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months:** 8. **Three major issues:** (1) There is a necessary, immediate need for State control to be returned to City of Paterson. (2) All student should individually have the necessary books for all subjects. (3) All schools should have adequate heat in the winter and air condition in the summer.

**Errol S. Kerr**, 216 East 30<sup>th</sup> Street. **Cell:** 201-757-9966. **Home Phone:** 973-742-7042 **Email:**



[errolesk@aol.com](mailto:errolesk@aol.com). **Employment:** Vice President – Jamaica Organization of New Jersey and member of the NAACP. **Length of residence in Paterson:** 35 years. **Education:** Bachelors of Science in Business Administration. **Family:** Married father of two and grandfather of three wonderful children in the Paterson School System. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** I've been a member of the Paterson Board of Education for the past nine years. In those years I've worked diligently to improve the quality of education in our district. I've partnered with the Paterson Education Fund (PEF) prior to my election to the board in 2006, and also during my tenure on the Board on several initiatives including; workshops and advocacy in Trenton on behalf of our children. **Civic and Community Involvement:** Member of the Love of Jesus Outreach Ministries, NAACP, Jamaica Organization of New Jersey,

Caribbean Empowerment of New Jersey. **Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months:** All.

**Three major issues:** (1) Flat funding of the Board resonates rather strongly with me. The cost associated with instructional staffing alone represent approximately 70% of the district's operating budget. As funding remains flat, that number grows larger every year exposing the district to serious financial disaster if nothing changes. The fact is- if this trend is not reversed, sooner rather than later, our ability to provide some basic required services will be impacted severely. (2) Parental Engagement: research has shown that children perform at a higher level when parents are engaged in their social and education development. Unfortunately, we are not seeing this level of understanding demonstrated by a majority of our parents. This is an area that we must work hard at to find a solution. I'm committed in the struggle to finding a way out of this quagmire. (3) Closing the Achievement Gap: This should be the primary purpose of all who seek to serve in this capacity. We have been experiencing a refreshing rebirth in recent times regarding improved outcomes. However, much more need to be done to get us where we ought to be.

**Nakima Redmon**, 54-4 Colonial Avenue. **Cell:** 973-865-3973. **Home Phone:** 973-595-1073. **Email:**



[Kredmon54@gmail.com](mailto:Kredmon54@gmail.com). **Employment:** **Length of residence in Paterson:** Lifelong resident. **Education:** Bachelor of Arts from the College of New Jersey. **Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months:** 2. **Civic and Community Involvement:** Vice-Chair of Historical Preservation Commission (City of Paterson), Board Secretary for Paterson Task Force for Community Action, Inc., Former Planning Board Commissioner (City of Paterson), Member of National Council of negro Women, NAACP member. **Three major issues:** (1) Improving test scores throughout the school district. (2) Fighting for more funding for school facilities throughout the district. (3) Working with the city to streamline and improve our shared services agreements (i.e.: more recreation/After school programs).

**Corey L. Teague (Commish)**, 65 Prince Street. **Home Phone:** 973-782-4011. **Cell:** 973-767-5980. **Length**



**of residence in Paterson:** Life. **Education:** attended public school #21 and Passaic County Technical Institute, class of '99. **Family:** Married 10 years to Keshanna Teague, 2 kids Kaniyah & Corey 11. **Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** I've been actively involved with education in Paterson since high school. I became even more active in 2010 when special Ed services for my daughter were discontinued due to state cuts. I am currently a member of the board of education. I am also an alternate member of the NJ School Boards Association and a member of the Passaic County School Boards Association. **Civic and Community Involvement:** I am currently a member of the Passaic County Human services Advisory Council. I am also a member of the Paterson Coalition Against Substance Abuse. I am also a past senior fellow of Organizing for Action (OFA). I am currently a county committee member with the PCDC. I am also a community organizer,

**(Teague Continued.)** activist and parent advocate. I've assisted hundreds of parents with various issues from classroom to the home. **Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months:** I've attended 4 of the regular meetings. During the past 6 months my wife has been battling lupus and I abruptly took leave to attend to my household during that time. **Three major issues:** (1) Excessive testing: I have always believed that our children are being over-tested. While some tests are necessary and required, some are just excessive. Testing is not teaching. Let the teachers do what they love to do...TEACH! (2) Facilities: There has been some progress but as a district we are far away from where we should be with our buildings. We must continue to hold the administration accountable until all of our buildings are brought up to date. Our buildings need major repairs. The SDA must continue to be held accountable as well.

**☑Vote on November 3 as if our children's futures depend on it, because they do! Look for the school board candidates at the bottom of your general election ballot.**

### **Paterson Board of Education Members 2014-2015 Attendance**

Attendance record for workshop meetings, special meetings and regular meetings, January 2014 – August 2015  
Data on attendance is taken from official Board of Education minutes at

[http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/11\\_BOE/14-15.php](http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/11_BOE/14-15.php)

Term ends 2015	Workshop - 6	Special - 12	Regular - 6
<b>Errol Kerr</b>	6	12	6
<b>Manuel Martinez</b>	5	9	5
<b>Corey Teague</b>	3	6	4
Term ends 2016			
<b>Christopher Irving</b>	5	9	5
<b>Kenneth Simmons</b>	2	11	4
<b>Flavio Rivera</b>	3	11	4
Term ends 2017			
<b>Chrystal Cleaves</b>	6	12	6
<b>Jonathan Hodges</b>	6	12	6
<b>Lilisa Mimms</b>	4	11	5

## 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. School board members learn about the policies and challenges facing our schools in much more detail than we see in televised meetings. Attendance is taken from official Board of Education minutes at [http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/11\\_BOE/14-15.php](http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/11_BOE/14-15.php). Some committee reports did not provide attendance.

Committees	Chair - Attendance	Committee Members - Attendance		
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Hodges - 2</b>	<b>Kerr - 2</b>	<b>Martinez - 2</b>	
<b>Fiscal</b>	<b>Kerr - 5</b>	<b>Rivera - 2</b>	<b>Teague - 2</b>	
<b>Legal</b>	<b>Simmons - 1</b>	<b>Irving - 1</b>	<b>Mimms - 1</b>	<b>Teague - Not reported</b>
<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hodges - 1</b>	<b>Cleaves - 1</b>	<b>Irving - Not reported</b>	<b>Rivera - Not reported</b>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Martinez - 4</b>	<b>Cleaves - 4</b>	<b>Mimms - 3</b>	

## Current Board of Education Members



Dr. Jonathan Hodges, President



Mr. Kenneth Simmons,  
Vice President



Ms. Chrystal  
Cleaves



Mr. Christopher C. Irving



Mr. Errol S.  
Kerr



Mr. Manuel  
Martinez, Jr.



Dr. Lilisa  
Mimms



Mr. Flavio  
Rivera



Mr. Corey L.  
Teague

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.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do we pay for our schools?

Our budget in 2015-2016 is planned for \$568 million. Paterson's local tax portion of the school budget is \$39.5 million or 7% of the total. 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?

NJQSAC 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 NJQSAC to focus on student achievement that include student growth measures as well as test scores. Once we meet the scores, local control may be given at the Commissioner's discretion.

➔ 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.

## What does 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.

## What is the Board of Education Oath of Office?

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

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) 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 this State, under the authority of the people. So help me God.

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I possess the qualifications prescribed by law for the office of member of a board of education and that I will faithfully, impartially and justly perform all the duties of that office according to the best of my ability So help me God."

How do I get more information?



<http://paterson-education.org> provides information to help parents, students and community members understand and act on changing educational needs.



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



<https://www.facebook.com/Patersonpeoc?fref=ts> current parent and student action campaigns.



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



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



<http://www.dignityinschools.org> challenges the systemic problem of pushout in our nation's schools and advocates for the human right of every young person to a quality education and to be treated with dignity.



**An Educated Voter's Guide to Paterson's School Board Elections**

Questions about this guide may be addressed to Rosie Grant, PEF, 973-881-8914.

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**Vote**

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

**Because they do!**

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**Brought to you by Paterson Education Fund**

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