



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

October 6, 2014

*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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## **Returning to Local Control in 2015, Can We Stay the Course or Will We Fall Behind?**

Our community is very clear; we want to have local control of our schools. The current School Board has moved us to regaining Operations. We are also very close to regaining Finance. How the board moves forward depends upon your vote on November 4 as part of the general election.

In 2015, the Paterson Board of Education faces many key issues including increased new testing known as PAARC, expanding charter schools and school funding challenges. Members must be prepared to represent you in Trenton both at the State Board of Education and the State Legislature. They must also manage Operations, which includes the code of conduct, bullying and harassment, safety, transportation, health services, and services for special education, among other issues.

Our Board of Education members must carry out their duties faithfully within the law. Each time they don't, Paterson takes a step backwards. The Board could be stripped of Operations and go back to square one. In order to receive local control, our board members must report their finances, participate in training, follow the standards for ethical behavior, adopt policies that improve student achievement and work diligently with the State Superintendent in a respectful manner.

Much of that work is done behind the scenes in committees. In the committees, board members meet with key staff members. They learn about the policies and challenges in much more detail that we see in televised meetings. Unfortunately, our board members have very uneven records of participation. Please see page 5 for more detail.

Additionally, the School Board members we elect must work collaboratively with our State Superintendent Dr. Donnie Evans and the current members of the Board: Crystal Cleaves, Jonathan Hodges, Christopher Irving, Errol Kerr, Manny Martinez, Flavio Rivera, Kenneth Simmons and Corey Teague .

**Candidates for 3 three year terms include incumbents: Crystal Cleaves and Dr. Jonathan Hodges; as well as: Khader "Ken" Abuassab, Koyes Ahmed, Emanuel Capers, Nelly Celi, Lilisa Mimms, and Taj Uddin.** There is one candidate for a two year term, Flavio Rivera, who is running unopposed.

Vote on November 4 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 School Board Candidates 2014

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 [2015-2017]. Choose 3.

**Khader “Ken” Abuassab, 964 Main Street,** Work phone: 973-742-7200. Email: [Kaacivico@aol.com](mailto:Kaacivico@aol.com).



Employment: Public Relation Arab American Civic Organization; Commissioner Historic Preservation in Paterson; Committee Member on Attorney General Community Leader; Member on Interfaith State Council for State of New Jersey; Member on New Jersey Disaster Recovery Council. Length of residence in Paterson: 30 years. Education: William Paterson University. Family: Married, father of 5 all attended Paterson Public Schools. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Running Arabic Cultural Saturday school and on committees to improve students achievement. Civic Involvement: Number of Board meeting attended in the last six months: 5 (five). Three major issues: (1) To return back local control to Paterson. (2) Engagement for International Baccalaureate for high schools then to middle and elementary schools. (3)

Right position for qualified people.

**Koyes Ahmed, 22-24 Paterson Avenue.** Phone: Email: [kahmed4boe@gmail.com](mailto:kahmed4boe@gmail.com). Employment: Leidos



Corporation (Work from home as a Software Test Engineer). Length of residence in Paterson: 15 years. Education: Ramapo College of New Jersey, B.A. in Accounting 2011. Family: Six brothers, three sisters and parents. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Worked closely with Commissioner Teague in assisting teachers and parents. Supplemental Instructor for NJEOF program at Ramapo College of New Jersey, Personal Math tutor and Member of NJ Muslim student association, Brother of Zulu Zeta of Psi Sigma Phi Multicultural Fraternity, Inc. Ramapo College, Relay for Life of Ramapo College of New Jersey. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: 10. Three major issues: (1) Improve our school safety. (2) Provide quality of educational and re-gain local control. I am very passionate about seeing all of the students succeed in

Paterson's school system. However, the system is currently broken. We need leaders who are willing to challenge the powers that be and need to work as a community and as team in order to bring a successful future for our children. (3) In addition, we need to hold the State accountable for the miseducation of our children during the last 20+ years of state takeover. It's time for Paterson to control its own school system and its academic destiny. We cannot allow outside forces to dictate to us anymore. In order for that to happen we will need strong leadership in the community and also on the board of education. I represent the kind of leadership that is needed.

**Emanuel Capers, 155 Sherwood Avenue.** Cell Phone: 973-572-5223. Email: [teamecapers@gmail.com](mailto:teamecapers@gmail.com).



Employment: Founder of the 4<sup>th</sup> and Inches Foundation. Length of residence in Paterson: 25 plus years. Family: Father Rev. Gregory Capers, Mother Lourdes Capers, Sister Danielle Capers, Brother Gregory Capers, children Leah Capers 6 yrs. Old and Zyira Capers 9 yrs. old. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Was a part of Back to School Drives, Sponsored Essay Writing for the past six years, Started a Garden Club in JFK High School. Number of Board meeting attended in the last six months: 4 (four). Three major issues: (1) School Budgets. (2) School Safety. (3) Having a presents [sic] in the schools as a school board member.

**Nelly Celi**, 19 E. 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Cell: 973-737-9760. Email: [nelly4paterson@gmail.com](mailto:nelly4paterson@gmail.com). Length of residence in



Paterson: 7 years. Education: William Paterson University – Majored in Psychology, BS. Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Served on the Parent Action Teams for schools: New Roberto Clemente, School 20, School 15, School 13 and School 6. Civic Involvements: Board Member for the Library/Museum; Board Member of Paterson Habitat for Humanity; Board member of the Enrichment Center for Women, Children and Families; Commissioner for the Paterson Planning Board, served as a member of the Juvenile Conference Committee. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: 3. (3). Three major issues: (1) Teaching to test is a concern to me, because the children are mainly being prepared to pass the standardized testing. Although this is important it should not be our main focus. Children should be taught to be creative and think outside the box. (2) Special Needs children and families. All their needs should be

addressed and the families and the children need to be given all the resources they need to be successful. (3) Reading at grade level. We must assure that all children are reading at grade level and that reading comprehension is also at grade level. Reading is fundamental for a child to be successful and become a contributing member of society.

**Chrystal Cleaves**, 812 East 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Cell: 973-207-4876. Email: [chrystal4paterson@gmail.com](mailto:chrystal4paterson@gmail.com).



Employment: Semi-Retired. Length of residence in Paterson: Lifelong. Education: Paterson Public School, Paterson Catholic Regional H.S./B.S. Business Administration from Voorhees College, Denmark, SC. Family: Theresa and the late Laymon Cleaves (parents). Rhonda Cleaves Thompson, Penny Cleaves Dumas and Laymon (siblings). Ivy Cleaves-Clarke (daughter), Kenadie & Khodie (granddaughters), Chandelle J. Clarke (son-in-law). Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: School Board Member (3years), School board Vice-President (currently); Committee's currently serving on: curriculum; Legal, facilities. Human Resources, Government Joint Education; Parent/community and School Naming; ONTRACK tutorial program held at public school #6; Ivy Reading AKAdemy held at Paterson Urban School for Leadership;

Leadership for Lads reading program for males 3<sup>rd</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Emerging Young Leaders program for 6<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade females held at Public school #26. Civic Involvements: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Pi Xi Omega Chapter- Passaic County-Past President); Team HOPE member; Democratic County Committee (5<sup>th</sup> Ward leader). Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: All of them. Three major issues: (1) Facilities: Our facilities continue to be outdated and overlooked by the powers that be. A negative environment produces negative results. It doesn't matter how stringent the curriculum if the classrooms are not equipped to handle the demands. (2) Communication: I would like to see more round-table discussions with our students input. We need to bring them to the table and implement some of their ideas as to how, and what they would like their school district to look like. (3) Student Achievement: Our children have what it takes to be great academic achievers. Preparing our students through the use of differentiated instruction and assessing their performance, can address their individual needs of learning. We need to provide afterschool programs that are accountable and can show results.

**Jonathan Hodges**, 32 Overlook Avenue. Home Phone: 973-333-5182. Employment: ER physician, Semi-



retired, (11yrs) St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center. Length of residence in Paterson: 27 years. Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Guest lecturer, Community member of school Management Team; long Range Facilities committee; School Board member (12 years); School Board President twice; chair of the urban Boards of the NJ School Board Association (NJ SBA) (x2); Master Board member (NJSBA); Appointed member of the NJ SBA Statewide taskforce on Student Achievement; Closing the Achievement Gap; Editor of the initial School Board Newsletter (The Graduate). Civic Involvements: YMCA of Paterson (Current President); Former Board member of St. Paul's CDC and PEF;

**Hodges, continued.** Former member of the Editorial board of the Herald News; Former Herald News' Cityscape's Blogger; Former Columnist for the Urban News; Current Columnist for the Passaic County Pulse; Creator and Producer of the Urban Blackboard TV program; Democratic County Committeeman (current) Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: Almost all of them. Three major issues: (1) Accelerating Academic Improvement: The premiere concern for this district is the improvement of student academic performance. We have to create a system that supports the students reaching their academic potentials. More rigor and close adherence to the new Common Core standard needs to be implemented. (2) Upgrading Facilities: The district has to complete a new Long Range Facilities plan that will delineate the district's facilities needs and assessment of how and where those needs should be addressed. The plan needs to be innovative and comprehensive, and not bound by what the SDA is prepared to do. Approaches may need to be employed that extend beyond the bounds of what is currently deemed permissible. (3) Achieving Local Control: We have a responsibility to conduct ourselves in a manner that will demonstrate that we are compliant with the dictates of QSAC requirements that would qualify us to receive local control.

**Lilisa Mimms**, 245 East 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Cell Phone: 973-902-1957. Email: [lilisamimms@aol.com](mailto:lilisamimms@aol.com).



Employment: Senior Pastor and Founder of New Beginnings Christian Outreach Ministries. Length of residence in Paterson: 44 years. Education: PS#21, Paterson Catholic Regional H.S., Eastside H.S., B. S. in marketing; Masters in Religious Education; Doctorate in Ministry. Family: Single mother of 4 children; all have attended and one currently attending PPS. Past and Current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Host yearly Women's conference; Advocate for Children and Parents (10 years+); Public School No. 21; Adopted School of Education & Training at Kennedy H.S.; Parent Linkage; School Based- Mentoring & Workshop training for UMOJA club; College Tour Sponsor; Community Service Awards; Holiday Baskets and Toy Drives;

You are Worth More than Scholarships. Civic Involvements: Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: 1 (one). Three major issues: (1) Family and Community Engagement, initiate community forums to foster partnerships with businesses, places of worship and local establishments. Bridge the gap between teachers and families to allow for effective models of communication. (2) Information- Be a voice for our children and parents to ensure that we are academically challenged to compete on global levels. Identify breakdowns in instructional time learning versus standardized testing to lower retention rates. (3) Transformational Leadership- Inspire and influence a healthy school culture by ensuring our schools are orderly, caring, purposeful and professional. Be a conduit for concerns and interests of students and parents to allow for a quality public education.

**Taj Uddin**, 58 Sherman Avenue. Home Phone : 973-720-1582. Work phone: 973-742-7200. Cell Phone:



862-251-1867. Email: [tuddin088@gmail.com](mailto:tuddin088@gmail.com). Employment: Manager of Silk City Discount Store. Civic Involvement: Register Democrat of Passaic County, Organizer secretary of Jalalabad Association of America.

**Candidate for a two year term [2015-2016]. Vote for one [1].**

**Flavio Rivera:** No information was provided by the candidate.

## Paterson Board of Education Members 2013-2014 Attendance

Attendance record for workshop meetings, special meetings and regular meetings, May 2013 – August 2014

Data on attendance and [lateness] is taken from official Board of Education minutes at

<http://www.paterson.k.12.nj.us/board/meeting-minutes-13-141.html>

Term ends 2014	Work shop - 12	Special 15	Regular 13	Term ends 2016	Work Shop- 12	Special 15	Regular 13
<b>Chrystal Cleaves</b>	<b>12-[0]</b>	<b>15-[0]</b>	<b>12-[2]</b>	<b>Christopher Irving</b>	<b>10-[0]</b>	<b>15- [0]</b>	<b>11- [0]</b>
<b>Wendy Guzman</b>	<b>7- [3]</b>	<b>6- [4]</b>	<b>7- [4]</b>	<b>Kenneth Simmons</b>	<b>5 [1]</b>	<b>10- [1]</b>	<b>9- [0]</b>
<b>Jonathan Hodges</b>	<b>11- [1]</b>	<b>15- [3]</b>	<b>10 -[1]</b>	<b>Lateness: [ x]: number indicates the number of lateness's for each category of meetings.</b>  <b>Members who are late can delay having a quorum to conduct business.</b>			
<b>Flavio Riveria</b>	<b>1-[0]</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1- [0]</b>				
Term ends 2015							
<b>Errol Kerr</b>	<b>6- [3]</b>	<b>13- [2]</b>	<b>11-[4]</b>				
<b>Manuel Martinez</b>	<b>6- [0]</b>	<b>14- [2]</b>	<b>12- [0]</b>				
<b>Corey Teague</b>	<b>7- [3]</b>	<b>9- [1]</b>	<b>9- [0]</b>				

## 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 that we see in televised meetings. 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 (11)</b>	<b>Comm. Martinez (9)</b>	<b>Comm. Cleaves (4)</b>	<b>Comm. Irving (5)</b>	<b>Comm. Kerr (3)</b>
<b>Fiscal (8)</b>	<b>Comm. Kerr (6)</b>	<b>Comm. Teague (5)</b>	<b>Comm. Hodges (6)</b>	<b>Comm. Irving (3)</b>
<b>Legal (4)</b>	<b>Comm. Simmons (3)</b>	<b>Comm. Cleaves (2)</b>	<b>Comm. Guzman (1)</b>	<b>Comm. Hodges (1)</b>
<b>Facilities (9)</b>	<b>Comm. Irving (5)</b>	<b>Comm. Cleaves (5)</b>	<b>Comm. Mendez (8)</b>	<b>Comm. Teague (1)</b>
<b>Personnel (7)</b>	<b>Comm. Cleaves (7)</b>	<b>Comm. Martinez (4)</b>	<b>Comm. Mendez (1)</b>	<b>Comm. Guzman (0)</b>
<b>Policy (4)</b>	<b>Comm. Simmons (4)</b>	<b>Comm. Guzman (2)</b>	<b>Comm. Teague (0)</b>	<b>Comm. Martinez (1)</b>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do we pay for our schools?

Our budget in 2014-2015 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?

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.

➔ 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.

More information about Public Education policies:



[www.edlawcenter.com](http://www.edlawcenter.com) 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.

## 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 2013-2014



Mr. Christopher C. Irving,  
President



Ms. Chrystal Cleaves,  
Vice President



Ms. Wendy  
Guzman



Dr. Jonathan  
Hodges



Mr. Errol S.  
Kerr



Mr. Manuel  
Martinez, Jr.



Mr. Flavio  
Rivera



Mr. Kenneth  
Simmons



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.



### 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.

**School Board Election Day is November 4, 2014.**



# **Vote**

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

**Because they do!**

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**Brought to you by**



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