



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

September 2020

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.*



*Paterson Education Fund
451 Van Houten Street
Paterson, NJ 07501
973-881-8914 voice
973-881-8059 Fax*

www.paterson-education.org

Our Children Need Your Vote!

It's time to elect our school board representatives again. Last year we were concerned about Paterson's return to local control. We still are, along with a whole new set of variables. The COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown hit us hard! Kids have been learning remotely – or not – since March. Thankfully, our students and educators now have the technology needed to connect virtually. The Paterson School Board has decided to continue virtual learning for now, then assess effectiveness and safety in October, with the possibility of switching to a hybrid model in November.

This is just one of the many important decisions that school board members are responsible for making, all the time. The Board as a whole is responsible for every policy that governs Paterson Public Schools. The Board hires and evaluates the Superintendent. The Board negotiates contracts, oversees the budget, and approves curriculum. This body is also charged with serving as a communications link between the community and the school system and representing the public during contract negotiations. They are still responsible for making sure we meet all the benchmarks for the full return of local control.

It's important to note that no one member of the board has any authority to make decisions for the district. Any individual promise or commitment made by a board member, to any member of the public, is not legally binding. The members must act together, as one body, representing the entire district and not any segment.

Given all the above, who will best represent the public, regardless of special interests? Which of the candidates will recommend and vote for policies that serve the interest of Paterson children? The information in this Educated Voter's Guide is provided as a public service to help you make that choice. We hope that you will use it as an introduction to the candidates and what they have to offer. We also encourage you to find other ways to learn more about the candidates.

PEF's Candidate's Forum will be on Monday, October 5th on Zoom. We will issue registration information on our Facebook page. Our children need your Vote!

Paterson School Board Candidates 2020

The following information was provided by the candidates. PEF has not verified the information but publishes it as a public service. Grammatical corrections have been made only where necessary. Please address questions directly to the candidates.

Candidates for 3-year terms [2021-2023]. Choose 3.

Incumbents: Jonathan Hodges, Joel D. Ramirez, Kenneth L. Simmons as well as Herman E. Irving, III, Dania Martinez, Shanikwa Lemon

Jonathan Hodges, 32 Overlook Avenue. **Home Phone:** 973-333-5182. **Email:** Bluson9@aol.com. **Length**



of Residence in Paterson: 33 years. **Education:** Bachelor of Science, Doctor of Medicine. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Board member (18 years), President 3x, Long Range Facilities Plan member, Chair of numerous board committees, Delegate to NJSBA's Urban Boards committee (chair for 6 yrs.), Representative to NJSBA's Delegate Assembly. **Civic Involvement:** Former member Herald News Editorial Board, Contributing writer of Urban News, Former member of Board of Directors of PEF, Former member of Board of Directors of YMCA, Former member of Board of Directors St. Paul's CDC, Member of Board of Adjustment. **Number of Board Meetings Attended in the**

Last Six Months: All of them. **Three major issues:** (1) Our primary responsibility is to help improve student performance demonstrated by among other things, graduation rates, state test results. We must improve the implementation of our reported strong revised curriculum. This involves strengthening teacher training and student skills. Also need to implement programs cut by budget shortfalls. (2) The district has suffered considerably by longstanding budget shortfalls that have essentially hollowed out our educational system. Losing \$280 million during Christie administration and having to make cuts to close a \$63,000,000 budget shortfall have hurt our ability to make significant improvements. So, pushing to obtain a budget that provides a thorough and efficient funding is a major challenge. (3) We must address the fact that we still have the worse facilities in the state. We need to get old schools refurbished or rebuilt so that we can provide modern facilities in which to teach our children, provide new programs and help to decrease class size.

Herman E. Irving, III, 47-57 Camden Street, Apt 318. **Cell:** 862-232-4442. **Email:**



hermanissilkcity@gmail.com. **Employment:** Paterson Fire Department, Firefighter/EMT. **Length of Residence in Paterson:** 37 years. **Education:** Blessed Sacrament, Rosa Parks High School, William Paterson University. **Family:** Father Herman E. Irving (deceased), mother, Hannah Jocelyn Irving, brothers Vian & Christopher Irving, sister Farrah Irving, daughters Saniah & Scarlet. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Substitute teacher 2010-2017. **Civic Involvements:** Bronze Heat member and officer, Assisted Coach Silk City Sharks. **Number of Board Meetings Attended in the Last Six Months:** 0. **Three major issues:** (1) Health and Wellness of our students and teachers. (2)

Recreational Activities. (3) Academic Enrichment programs.

Shanikwa Lemon, 12-16 Hopper Street. **Nickname, if any:** Ms. Lemon/Nika. **Home:** 973-207-0895.



Work: 973-250-8899. **Cell:** 973-861-9253. **Email:** shanikwa.lemon@gmail.com.

Employment: Owner & Director, Beyond the Books Tutoring & Childcare Lead Teacher, The Learning Experience. **Length of Residence in Paterson:** Born & Raised. **Education:** I attended Public Schools #17 and #12. I graduated from Paterson Pre-Collegiate Teaching Academy in 2006 and earned my BA in Psychology in 2010 from Ramapo College of New Jersey. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Through my business, I offer free math tutoring services with "Math Connections". I also started a book club called "Brown Faces" which connects children to books that represent characters that look and share the same life experiences as the readers. The program also encourages children to grow their home

libraries and promotes families reading and reflecting together. **Civic Involvement:** I have worked with Girl Scouts of Northern New Jersey, specifically with the Celebrate Girls summer camp. I partner and volunteer with numerous non-profit organizations throughout the city. I work closely with Starlet Academy, a pre-school/after school program on North Main Street in Paterson. I am a member of Muture Sisters which is an organization that serves the homeless population in Paterson. I lead community clean ups and partner with a Newark, NJ organization called The Bridge, to distribute food monthly to those in need here in Paterson. **Number of Board Meetings Attended in the Last Six Months:** 5. **Three major issues:** (1) Due to the pandemic and the need for remote learning, technology and effective online learning systems must be put in place. PPS must urgently catch up with 21st century technology. (2) The curriculum must be revamped to incorporate more project-based (hands-on) learning. The curriculum needs to expose children to African, Hispanic and Middle Eastern cultures, starting with fully integrating the Amistad curriculum. (3) Relationships between parents and teachers must develop with support and understanding. More social-emotional components/resources must be available to address the whole child and all needs of the students, especially with the amount of trauma our children face daily. (4) Stronger early childhood education practices to make sure our children get a good educational foundation such as phonics for reading development. With older students, creating learning internships and community mentorship programs with business owners and entrepreneurs for hands-on experience.

Dania Martinez, 151 Sheridan Avenue. **Cell:** 973-861-9253. **Email:** dania.martinez@gmail.com.



Employment: Hudson Arts & Science Charter School Social Worker. **Length of Residence in Paterson:** 37 years. **Education:** William Paterson University, Bachelor's Degree in Spanish, Women & Gender Studies, Latin American Studies, Monmouth University, Master of Social Worker. **Family:** Daughter, Aaliyan Tupete, Son, Nicholas Cebalos. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Behavioral Assistant, Case Management for Human Trafficking Victims and at Risk Youth, Paterson Project Graduation 2020, Food Pantry donations during Covid-19 Pandemic, Special Education during Covid-19 Informational Session via

Zoom Parent Advocate with students in special education. **Civic Involvement:** Owner of HERstory, leading by Empowerment. **Number of Board Meetings Attended in the Last Six Months:** 5. **Three major issues:** The major issues I would like to address are social and emotional wellness, harassment and bullying, and parent transparency. Social and emotional wellness of our children is crucial for their learning in the classroom and development. Providing our children with resources and techniques that will address any concerns of mental instability and social disparities will make for happier children. With this, bullying within our schools will decrease and educating our parents about the importance of mental health and how they can be a part of their child's development will create a healthy balance. Parental support and education are crucial in addressing these major issues.

Joel D. Ramirez, Cell: 973-557-5442. Email: jdramirez1@verizon.net. **Employment:** Higher Education.



Length of Residence in Paterson: 32 Years. **Education:** Bachelors of Science - Business Administration Marketing Master of Business Administration. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Current BOE Commissioner. **Civic Involvement:** Former Board Member Paterson Task Force, Former Board Member Paterson Housing Authority, Former Board Member Hispanic Research & Info Center at Newark Public Library, Former Board Member Dominican Parade & Festival of NJ, Former Member PCTI Academy of Finance Advisory Board, Legislative/Confidential Aide to Councilman Al Abdelaziz. **Three major issues:** (1) Parental Empowerment - I seek to continue to advocate that as a

district we develop effective parental empowerment programs. We must do more to reach those families who are struggling to understand our educational system. The board of education needs to make decisions based purely on data and best practices. We must seek to increase parental involvement at board meetings in at the local school level. (2) Infrastructure - Paterson must continue to have strong voices demanding that Trenton provide our children with 21st Century learning spaces. The construction of facilities needed has not kept up with the needs of our student population. (3) Data Driven decision making - As trustees of the Paterson Public School district it is our responsibility to make informed decisions. I believe we are still behind many other districts in utilizing data to make decisions. We must seek to make bold moves in the areas of budget priorities and resource allocations while utilizing data.

Kenneth L. Simmons, Nickname, if any: Coach Kenny. Home: 201-538-6143. Email:



klsimmons007@gmail.com. **Employment:** Educational It, Professional. **Length of Residence in Paterson:** Lifelong. **Education:** BSBA Information Technology MBA Candidate: Data Analytics. **Family:** Father of 5, Grandfather of 2. **Past and Current Involvement in the Paterson Public Schools:** Veteran Board Member Current President 2 x Vice President. **Civic Involvement:** Co-Founder and Vice President of Paterson Cares Inc. Member of Integrity Lodge #51, F&AM PHA, Member of American Lodge 333 IBPOEW (Elks), Long Coach for youth sports (Basketball, Football, Track & Field), Founder of the boys and girls leadership summits, community activist. **Number of Board Meetings Attended in the Last Six Months:** 19. **Three major issues:** While there are many issues that must be tackled, currently the most

critical issues are (1) reopening school buildings safely. (2) making sure we are continuing to close the digital divide and utilizing technology in the most effective and efficient manner. (3) continuing to improve student achievement. Every decision made as we move into local control, should center around student achievement. our focus has to be on producing lifelong learners and global productive citizens.

Look for the school board candidates' section at the bottom of your general election ballot.

**Join us on Monday, October 5, 2020 for our Candidates Zoom Forum.
Registration information will be posted on our Facebook Page**

Visit these websites for more information on Education issues that affect Paterson Public Schools



<http://paterson-education.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/PatersonEducation/>



www.paterson.k12.nj.us The district's official website.



www.state.nj.us/education Contains all the rules governing our schools and our School Progress Reports.



www.edlawcenter.com For information on School Funding, Facilities and other NJ Education policy issues.



<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.



JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE ALLIANCE <https://j4jalliance.com/projects/> Education equity organizing.

What the Board of Education Does

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 district in transition to local control, the Paterson School Board has full voting rights, but the Commissioner of Education maintains veto power. The School Board’s most important role is to hold the school system accountable for educating Paterson children.

Board of Education Members



Mr. Kenneth L. Simmons
President



Mr. Manuel Martinez, Jr.
Vice President



Mr. Vincent
Arrington



Mr. Emmanuel Capers



Ms. Oshin Castillo-Cruz



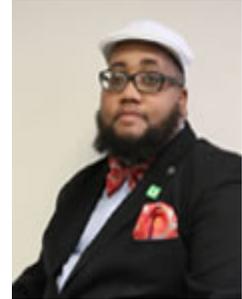
Dr. Jonathan Hodges



Mr. Joel D. Ramirez



Ms. Nakima Redmon



Mr. Corey Teague

The NJ School Board 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 am not disqualified as a voter pursuant to R.S. 19:4-1 nor disqualified due to conviction of a crime or offense listed in N.J. S. 18A:12-1, 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.”

*No individual shall be required to swear or affirm that part of the oaths which states, “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 all students competitive in the market place and able to be good citizens.

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

Our Children Can't Vote but You Can!

School Board Election Day is November 3, 2020



Vote

As if your children's futures depend on it.

Because they do!



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