Paterson Children Need Your Vote!

Election day is less than 2 weeks away! Have you decided who will get your votes? When you cast your ballot this year, please remember to also select your school board members! The Board of Education ballots are usually on the bottom of the screen if you vote in person or at the bottom or back of the mail-in paper ballot.

This year, we have 4 candidates running for 3 seats. Each voter is allowed to vote for 3 candidates. The 3 with the most votes will then serve on the board from January 2021, through January 2025.

What do you need from your School Board members? Do you know if their expectations for our schools and our children align with yours? The information in this Candidates Guide is a good starting place for getting some answers to these and other questions. All 4 candidates have graciously shared their contact information, their history and involvement in Paterson, and their top 3 education issues.

We recently hosted a Candidates’ Forum to introduce the candidates to the community. You can watch it on our Facebook page. You’ll hear their vision for education in Paterson, along with their views on post pandemic priority focus, school board roles and responsibilities, and expectation for relationships with administration, parents, and community. There are so many other questions we wanted to ask but time did not allow. We’ve posted these questions under the video and encourage you to engage in a dialogue with the candidates.

One key issue that this board will need to address is renewing or terminating the current Superintendent’s contract. This decision must be made by February. Where your candidates stand on district leadership is an important factor in making your decision. District leadership is a primary factor in the future of this district and our children’s education. Who will lead us?

Please make an educated vote. Our children are counting on you!

Vote as if our children’s future depend on it. They do!
Paterson School Board Candidates 2021

The following information was provided by the candidates. PEF has not verified the information but publishes it as a public service. Address questions directly to the candidates.

There are 4 Candidates vying for 3-year terms. Each person can vote for 3.

Oshin Castillo, 239 Trenton Avenue. Cell Phone: 862-264-0641. Email: OshinCastillo27@gmail.com
Employment: Passaic County Board of Social Services. Length of residence in Paterson: 27 years. Education: BA International Relations, Fairleigh Dickinson University. Family. Past and current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Board member for 3 years. Civic involvement. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: All. Three major issues: (1) Funding; we have been underfunded by the state for several years, which hindered our children from having access to resources that they deserve. We have about 30,000 thousand students with various needs, being funded properly does not only allow us to meet those needs but to offer resources that other districts have. An extremely importance example is after school programming. (2) Facilities; we have school that are over 100 years old. Antiquated buildings do not promote learning. It is difficult for a child to learn to in hot classroom with no air condition, but because of the age of some of the buildings adding a simple window air condition is impossible. (3) High Schools; as a school district I believe that we have to prepare our children for what happens after they finish their education in our district. We have to prepare them not only on basic academics but prepare the for life. I believe that when our students leave High School, they should leave with more than just a High School Diploma. They should leave with certifications, college credits or with a trade. We should prepare our children for college, for the workforce or for both. Most of our students pay their own way to college and we need to make sure that we give them the resources that they need to accomplish their dreams.

Shanikwa Lemon, 12-16 Hopper Street. Cell: 973-207-0895. Email: Shanikwa.lemon@gmail.com
Employment: School Age Program Director, Starlet Academy Owner/Director, Beyond the Books Tutoring and Childcare. Length of residence in Paterson: Lifelong Resident. Education: BA Psychology from Ramapo College. Family: Single, no children. Past and current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Service-Learning college hours, member of School #12 Action Team. Civic involvements: Various educational initiatives through my business and community services with organizations such as Muture Sisters, Habitat for Humanity and The Bridge Movement Global. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: All. Three major issues: (1) Provide effective resources. (2) Create safe and healthy learning environments. Revamp curriculum to be inclusive of diversity while incorporating technology. (3) Engage parents and the community to create life-long learners and productive members of society.
Manuel Martinez, Jr. 747 Market Street. Email: memartinez@optonline.net. Employment: Current Vice President for the Paterson Board of Education. Length of residence in Paterson: Lifelong resident. Education: Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership. Family: Past and current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools: Taught 1st grade teacher in PPS. Civic involvements: Numerous. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: All. Three major issues: (1) Increased Academic Rigor- Ensuring that our scholars receive quality instruction is a top priority. High expectations coupled with targeted instructional strategies will bring us closer to the student success we want to see for our scholars not only in PPS but beyond. (2) Budget Planning- We must be looking two to three years down the line as we prepare our budgets moving forward. Proactively planning will help us avoid untimely circumstances arising and creating unforeseen problems (3) We are on record as having the oldest facilities in the state of NJ. We must work simultaneously to not only improve our current schools but also have new constructions in our district.

Nakima Redmon, 54-4 Colonial Avenue. Home Phone: 973-595-1073. Email: Kredmon@gmail.com. Employment: Length of residence in Paterson: Life-long resident. Education: Bachelor of Arts from the College of New Jersey. Family: Past and current involvement in the Paterson Public Schools. Civic Involvement: Chairwoman of Planning Board (County of Passaic), Commissioner of Historical Preservation Commission (City of Paterson), Former Board member for Paterson Task Force for Community Action, Inc, Former Planning Board Commissioner (City of Paterson), Member of National Council of Negro Women (Life-Time Member), NAACP Member. Number of Board meetings attended in the last six months: All. Three major issues: (1) Improving the culture and curriculum. (2) Improving and adding new school facilities throughout the district. (3) Working with the city to streamline and improve our shared services agreements (i.e., more recreation/Afterschool programs.)

☑️ Look for the school board candidate section at the bottom of your general election ballot.

Use the link to view our Candidates Forum held on October 12, 2021. https://youtu.be/PrbC7hjQ52U
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 the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 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.

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. In January of 2021 the State Board of Education voted to return full local control to the Paterson School Board, after 30 years of State takeover. The Board has full voting rights and makes all local policy decisions.

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

Our Children Can’t Vote but You Can!
School Board Election Day is November 2, 2021

Vote
As if your children’s futures depend on it. Because they do!

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