



# PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Our children, our future*

## THE GRADUATE



Paterson Public School District, united in our diversity and guided by a commitment to educational excellence, through community partnerships and world class instructional practices, develops our students into successful life-long learners who are globally competitive in a broad spectrum of endeavors.

## A Letter from the President

As President of the Paterson Board of Education it gives me great joy to see the revival of *The Graduate* newsletter. Three issues of the newsletter will be published this year as a way for the Board to communicate with students, parents, and community members at-large on trends and issues in education. The newsletter will also be used as a way to celebrate the achievements of our most precious resource; our students. Since the last publication over three years ago a lot has happened in the district including consolidating our once scattered offices into one building at 90 Delaware Avenue and the appointment of a new State Superintendent in the person of Dr. Donnie Evans. The Board itself has also undergone extensive personnel changes over the period. With the exception of Commissioners Taylor, Hodges, and Kerr, all other board members are serving in their first term. The enthusiasm and innovative thinking of our younger members mixed with the wisdom and experience of board

veterans make for a dynamic team focused on improving the educational outcomes for all children in the city of Paterson.

Over the course of the year and moving forward, the board has been making strides to better our communication with parents and the community. Through this document, hosting monthly community forums with extended public portions, shortening the length of our regular board meetings to about 2 hours, adopting official meeting minutes that include only items in which actions has been taken as well as providing a full transcription of meetings on the district's website. With these changes it is our hope that more parents will become engaged and excited about the educational process here in Paterson.

This issue of *The Graduate* contains submissions from Board Members on an array of district, state and national issues around education. Please

read the newsletter and share it with others. Unfortunately due to budgetary constraints we could not print as many copies as we would have liked to but we are thankful to the print shop and students at JFK High School for their help in preparing this document. In parting, please get active, stay involved, and let's solve the problems together.

*Theodore "T.J." Best, Jr.*  
President, Paterson Board of Education

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## Making the Case for Uniforms

Long a contentious matter for students, parents and educators, sending children to school in officially sanctioned uniform clothing is widely becoming standard practice in public schools. Formerly seen as the domain of private and parochial institutions, the use of school uniforms in recent times is being viewed as an iconic cornerstone for schools that are orderly, safe and efficient. Let's examine some of the reasons more public schools are choosing to institute dress codes for their students:

**Increase Safety** - School uniforms are designed to fit properly and provide little or no room for hiding weapons, drugs or other contraband. For this simple reason it can be argued that school uniforms contribute to the general safety level of a facility.

**Promote Discipline** - There is good evidence that schools in which students wear uniforms maintain a high level of overall discipline and a greatly reduced occurrence of fighting and violence. This is particularly true in instances of violent acts precipitated by arguments over fashion and perceptions about modes of dress.

**Reduce Expenditure** - Especially compared to private-sector fashion and accessories, school uniforms are a bargain! When contrasted with designer clothing, uniforms are both inexpensive and durable. Uniforms are purpose-made for longevity, repeated use and "wash and wear" utility. By their nature, designer articles are

more fragile and swiftly replaced by new designs to ensure their obsolescence. Uniforms help remove the burden of high cost, endless fashion updates and the need for children to conform to perceived societal norms. At a recent community meeting at our own Eastside High School,

*"There is good evidence that schools in which students wear uniforms maintain a high level of overall discipline and a greatly reduced occurrence of fighting and violence."*

it was revealed that the newly selected uniform ensemble will cost less than \$20; quite a reasonable figure by any standards!

**Develop Professional Attitudes** - Children clad in uniforms are more likely to take school seriously. Donning the official attire of their school promotes pride-of-place and causes students to automatically emulate some of the

professional attitudes of parents and other role models who must dress appropriately for their professions. Uniforms can be viewed as "work clothes" in contrast to casual attire intended more for "play" than serious business.

**Decrease Distractions** - Particularly in the case of adolescents, school dress codes and uniforms remove the practice of dressing inappropriately and revealingly. The burden of conforming to fads and promoting improper interaction via modes of dress is virtually eliminated.

If you are a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in a Paterson public school and that school does not have a school uniform program, we strongly encourage you to organize and request one.

You'll be glad you did!

Reference: [articlebase.com](http://articlebase.com)



School 12 students model their new school uniforms

# Early Planning for Success

## Public Schools as Human Groups

In a broadly defined way, a Public School may be described as a human group that serves as a conduit for education; within that conduit, plans are made, based upon research to accommodate the entire group in general terms. Upon gathering of the group, observations are made that aid in separating individuals according to their needs and aspirations, frequently based upon age. The *group* is also the venue by which observations can reveal how relationships are formed (or not formed) for reasons both known and unknown.

When considering the nature of human groups, the question arises; what do relationships have to do with the board of education and the schools? A school board consists of similar-minded adults while a school is made up of children, teachers, administrators and other adults and caregivers; organized to interact synchronously. Relationships include who, how and what we are with other people. The aim of the relationship between a school board and schools is to provide the resources for a successful educational program. Again, broadly defined, *relationships* determine how and what we are with respect to the other members of our group, be it our family, school, community or even the world at large.

## The Who

The *who* toward which an individual elevates is the result of step-by-step interactions with father, mother, siblings and *groups*. It is in the family

group that the individual learns (or *doesn't* learn) such things as: "give and take," a willingness to *listen*, a desire to *talk* with others and perhaps most importantly, *compromise*. Properly learned, these patterns although sometimes visible, are often expressed in an unseen way. People use these patterns on behalf of themselves and toward each other for protection, shelter, food, health and spirituality or love.

## The How

*How* individuals behave with, around and for the people in their lives serves to orchestrate actions and reactions.

***"The ultimate success of the educational group will come when all individuals are enabled to trust, believe, hope, contribute and plan for the "filling-in" of the blanks with well thought out endeavors designed for attaining success for students."***

The behavior demonstrated includes interactions with others who enter into one's life at any given point. All behavior is affected by one's relationship with "family." "Family" may include individuals who are related biologically, by adoption, arranged, extended and foster. Any or all of these relationships might be maintained at a great distance or lie within the immediate household.

## The Where

A key factor establishing many of the formative determinants of an individual arises from *where* that person lives. Environment affects *how* individuals behave in their relationships from babyhood through the teen years to adulthood. The earlier good mental and physical behaviors are established, the

better organized and successful one is likely to become. It is during early, formative years that *who* and *how* seem to become intertwined and thus establish individual identity.

It is relevant and extremely important to note that it is the individual's ability to mesh these concepts in a way that yields a successful person. Experiences must be reliable and viable. If one aggregates experiences in a way that is not workable, relationships with others exhibit holes, snags and blanks. The need then arises for other things or people to help fill in these blanks. We seek these things

and persons in order to have more tolerable relationships and to deal with situations. Although such "blanks" might be filled with appropriate and healthy choices, they are all too often filled by

those considered unhealthy; drugs, sex, alcohol and gangs. These influences stand in stark contrast to teachers, religious leaders and other suitable adult counselors. In the Twenty-first Century persons might also include relationships maintained on Twitter, Facebook and other Internet social networks among their support structure. It is the way individuals seek to fix the holes, snags and blanks that ultimately affect all of us, individually and in groups.

The opening gambit of this article defined the public school as a human group. The ways in which a school, a class or other group within a school operates will be expressed by the ways in which the groups' individuals

*(continued on page 4)*

## Putting Children First

**C**hildren First was the mantra of one of our former administrations here in Paterson. As a convenient prop, the phrase was used and perhaps misused in many ways by individuals and organizations. But for the moment, putting the beaten-to-death history of the phase aside, *Children First* remains a powerful couplet of two simple words with untold potential.

One of the amazing things about our city is how dismissive it has been regarding the academic failings of our children. District-wide, poor academic performance has never seemed to evoke the same kind of passion which was evident when layoffs were announced for teachers, nurses, librarian, coaches and others.

Many of us as board members were truly awed, perhaps admirably so, at the energy and pressure that was brought to bear on the current administration by these groups as they lobbied to protect and preserve their jobs. Like it or not, it was a solid display of how to go about mobilizing one's forces in defense of one's self interest in face of a perceived threat. And so,

it is my contention that from the outset the primary concern had always been on the protection and preservation of those groups' economic interest and not on helping children. Again, in principle, nothing is wrong in protecting one's

***"You must give some time to your fellow men, even if it's a little thing, do something for others- something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. — Albert Schweitzer***

self interest, but whenever that is the case it should be clearly stated and not misrepresented for something else. In this case it was not clearly stated.

As things unfolded every presentation to the board on behalf of these groups was done in language tailored to maintain the status quo. This was done even with the knowledge that there were no funds there to support such a proposition. Speaker after speaker told us how disastrous the reduction in force would be for our children and the district.

Of course some of the concerns expressed were substantive, while others were without merit given our peculiar situation here in Paterson. A quality education is what is needed and what is not being delivered to our children in the district. So to make the claim that a layoff

of teachers and supporting cast would spell disaster for our children is less than credible. I can recall that to offset some of the fiscal pressures brought on by the reduction of state funds to the district, members of the board

appealed to the Paterson Education Fund (PEA) leadership to forego their traditional step increase in salary for a year to give

the district some breathing room to keep 110 teachers in place. This did not happen, nor was even considered which would have lent credibility to the claim that it's about children.

If there was any disappointment in the whole exercise surrounding the reduction in force, it had to be the deafening silence of the parents and guardians of the children in our system. There were no outcries, protest or any action close to those which came from the other groups in our system. This was a golden opportunity for us to make amends and for once cast our lot squarely behind our children. But as usual, this was not to be! What resulted was a shameless, self serving campaign by every special interest group in the district to preserve themselves at the expense of our children.

## Early Planning for Success *(continued)*

learned to give and take, compromise and work together. The formative determinants of individuals comprising the group can be directly attributed to the success of organized school/class activities.

The ways in which the entire public school learning community

(students, Pre-K to 12, parents, teachers, administrators and board of education) choose to fill in *their* particular holes, snags and blanks will illuminate how well organized and successful their group activities will be. The ultimate success of the educational group will come when all individuals are enabled to trust,

believe, hope, contribute and plan for the "filling-in" of the blanks with well thought-out endeavors designed for attaining success for students. Early life planning is essential and must include parents, teachers, the greater community and yes, the board of education.

# A Letter from the Superintendent

## The Superintendent and School Board as the District's Leadership Team

It is widely known that the Paterson Public School District is in serious need of improvement to increase the academic performance of its students. It is also widely understood that we must overcome numerous obstacles and challenges in making the changes needed to bring about these improvements. In order to facilitate these improvements, we have created a Strategic Plan that provides a clear roadmap for developing and implementing strategies that will result in improved student achievement.

Providing leadership for implementing the strategies included in the Strategic Plan is one of the highest priorities for both the Superintendent and the School Board. It is critical that the Board continues to enact policies that provide the structure for needed reforms while continuing to advise and guide the Superintendent on the focus, development, implementation, and administration of the improvements.

In a very real sense, the Superintendent and the School Board are the district's leadership team. To this end, we are working very hard to improve our effectiveness and efficiency as a team. This includes, but is not limited to, continuing to enhance timely communication between the Superintendent and the Board, between district and community and clarifying roles and responsibilities of both, including the Superintendent's staff.

Both the Superintendent and the School Board remain committed to keeping our children first in all that we do while helping our district become a "leader in

this state in educating urban youth." We ask for the continuing support of the community as we make this vision a reality.

### PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT Board of Education COMMITTEE LIST

CURRICULUM	FISCAL	LEGAL
Theodore Best, Chair	Errol Kerr, Chair	Christopher Irving, Chair
Jonathan Hodges	Wendy Guzman	Alex Mendez
Errol Kerr	Alex Mendez	Pedro Rodriguez
Kenneth Simmons	Willa Mae Taylor	Kenneth Simmons
*Brenda Patterson	*Mark Kramer, *Frances Finkelstein	*Donnie W. Evans

FACILITIES	HUMAN RESOURCES	POLICY
Jonathan Hodges, Chair	Wendy Guzman, Chair	Kenneth Simmons, Chair
Theodore Best, Jr.	Errol Kerr	Wendy Guzman
Christopher Irving	Alex Mendez	Jonathan Hodges
Alex Mendez	Willa Mae Taylor	Christopher Irving
*Donnie W. Evans, *Marysol Berrios, *Michael Maglio	*Marysol Berrios	*Donnie W. Evans

GOVERNMENT JOINT EDUCATION	PARENT/COMMUNITY	NEW JERSEY QUALITY SINGLE ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUUM (NJQSAC)
Theodore Best, Chair	Errol Kerr, Chair	Theodore Best, Chair
Jonathan Hodges	Wendy Guzman	Jonathan Hodges
Pedro Rodriguez	Pedro Rodriguez	Christopher Irving
Willa Mae Taylor	Theodore Best, Ex-officio	Pedro Rodriguez
*Donnie W. Evans	*William Kemper McDowell	*Brenda Patterson

LIAISON TO DISTRICT STAFFING UNITS	SCHOOL NAMING
Jonathan Hodges, Chair	Jonathan Hodges, Co-Chair
Errol Kerr	Pedro Rodriguez, Co-Chair
Pedro Rodriguez	Christopher Irving
Theodore Best, Ex-officio	Theodore Best, Ex-officio
*Marysol Berrios	*Donnie W. Evans

\*District Administrator/Liaison Attending

## Four Parenting Steps for Academic Success

This school year we want to encourage parents to focus on what needs to happen in order to make their child's academic journey a successful one. The educational process calls for parents to take some deliberate steps to ensure that children are learning and on track for a bright future. To help parents plan, we have developed four basic parenting steps for student success:

### Step 1 - Set and understand your child's academic goals.

Parents, what are your short-term and long-term goals for your children; and most importantly do you understand what is required to meet these goals? If your short term goal is for your child to attain a better math score, talk with your child's teacher to



understand what is required. If your long term goal is to see your child go to college, talk with that child's guidance counselor to understand what is needed to achieve this goal. Remember, it is important to include your children in the goal setting process, it is their future, after all!

### Step 2 - Get an academic check-up for your child.

We know that in order to keep a healthy body we must get frequent check-ups with our medical doctor; the same goes for our children's academic health. Is your child academically healthy and prepared to meet the goals you have set? Parents need to fully understand what their children are "working with." Before you and your child can strive for better reading grades, you need to understand their current reading level. Is your child on track for Algebra I and college-level math? Understanding your child's current reading and math levels is important in ensuring that future goals are attainable. Visit your child's teacher and ask them about your child's reading and math levels

### Step 3 - Build a good support system for you and your child.

Parenting can be a very rewarding, albeit challenging experience. Whether you are a single parent or part of a two parent household, there are times when any parent needs support. Parents can create helpful networks of like-minded individuals by joining their school Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and by attending grade-level meetings and workshops. Another key to building a good parent support system is to identify good role models for your children. As we know, we cannot be with our children every single moment of every day, therefore it is important that we surround our children with people that share and reinforce our family values. Remember, children learn from the examples set by the people placed before them.

### Step 4 - Closely monitor and evaluate your child's progress.

One of the most important activities for parents is to be proactive monitoring and evaluating their child's academic progress. Parents must make sure that students are on track for achieving their goals. Parents should attend back-to-school events and meet with teachers at least two times during a marking period. Most importantly, parents should maintain a healthy dialogue with their children, continually discussing their school activities and progress. Ask your child's teacher, "Is my child on track, are they taking the correct classes towards their goals?" Ask to see your child's quizzes, tests, bench mark tests and standardized tests. Don't leave this important step to someone else, stay on top of your child's progress!

# A Long and Winding Road

The members of a board of education have a tortuous path to follow as they struggle to help

guide their district to educational excellence. As one of New

Jersey's three unique takeover districts, there is no road map that tells them how to perform their duties and be effective agents for change; they must independently chart their own course. Normally, the New Jersey School Board Association (SBA) provides training to school board members on how to be effective school board advocates for their children. They have years of experience doing this and excellent staff members arrayed for this purpose.

Unfortunately there is no unique training course for takeover districts. The law that created them was new, ill-conceived, and inadequate. Its initial iteration

spelled out unclear duties and had no escape clause, no way out for the board members or their district's children. Later attempts at clearing this up have gotten closer to a reasonable process but still fall far short of being sound

public policy.

The board is relegated to an ill-defined "advisory" status where there are unclear limitations on what the board can and cannot do other than to withhold voting on personnel matters. In actuality, board commissioners do not have a final say on anything; the State-appointed Superintendent can overrule their votes entirely. There is no description of responsibilities and there is no clear delineation of limitations. Most importantly, the State-appointed Superintendent reports to and is responsible to the NJ Commissioner of

***"NJQSAC does not, as it should, hold the true authority, the Department of Education, accountable for official management of the district."***

actions. In a stark contradiction, the very process that evaluates the district and is the determinant of release from state takeover, the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) holds the board fully responsible for governance of the district. NJQSAC does not, as it should, hold the true authority, the Department of Education, accountable for official management of the district.

In an effort to effectively advocate for the educational needs of the community's children, the board members find themselves in the untenable position of trying to support a superintendent that they did not appoint (the previous governor appointed this one) and cannot control,

(the education commissioner does this). It is a difficult balancing act and members have to remember that they don't support the superintendent but rather the superintendent's actions and only when those actions accrue to the benefit of Paterson's children.

Despite the enhanced difficulty

and many financial, educational and social challenges, the struggle for educational progress in Paterson is an extraordinary journey, well worth it if, at journey's end, the children of Paterson finally receive the kind of educational system they deserve.



Education, not the local school board. The board may resolve to work closely with them as a courtesy, but ultimate authority for how the district functions rests in the hands of the education commissioner. The board cannot dictate authoritative

## Student of the Year

Carlos Torres considers himself a shining example of the "American Dream" fulfilled. He came to America only seven years ago and has achieved so much. Carlos is a 2010 graduate of PANTHER Academy and was chosen valedictorian for the entire Paterson Academy High School. Aside from his noteworthy local academic prowess, Carlos also became one of only 1,000 students nationwide to receive the coveted Gates Millennium Scholarship founded by Microsoft chairman, Bill Gates. Historically, Carlos is one of three PANTHER Academy Students to have received this honor. For the 2010 scholarship, Carlos was chosen from a pool of nearly 20,500 applicants! Who says Paterson students can't achieve?

Carlos and his family immigrated to the United States from Peru in 2002. From the time he entered school in Paterson, he has worked for academic success. He will tell you it hasn't been easy; learning a new language and starting a new life in a new country at age eleven had its challenges. Carlos took advantage of his school choice options by coming to PANTHER having previously attended the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School. His dedication to excellence and receipt of the Gates award is a tribute to Carlos and his parents who have supported him every step of the way on his journey. In 2011 that journey will lead him to Rutgers University as a business major. Carlos' brother Al is also attending Rutgers as an engineering major. Al, by-the-way, is a 2008 PANTHER graduate!

During his career at PANTHER, Carlos managed to participate in many extracurricular activities including

varsity soccer and the robotics team. In 2010 he served as captain of the golf team. He spends his free time giving back to the community by tutoring students in mathematics. He was a member of the Interact Club, setting a fine example as a roll model for his classmates. During his senior year he participated in the dual enrollment program at Passaic County Community College (PCCC) achieving A's in all of his classes. His leadership skills and determination shine in everything he does. As he moves to the next phase of his education we feel certain he will continue to use what he has learned to



Carlos Torres

motivate others to do the same. Hopefully, this talented high-achieving young man will find ways to give back to the Paterson Public Schools community, after attaining the success he is sure to find as an adult!

### Board of Education Meeting Schedule

Dates and times are subject to change  
Please check our website for latest information

August 4, 2010	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
August 18, 2010	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
September 1, 2010	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
September 15, 2010	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
October 6, 2010	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
October 20, 2010	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
November 3, 2010	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
November 10, 2010	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
December 1, 2010	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
December 15, 2010	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
January 5, 2011	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
January 19, 2011	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
February 2, 2011	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
February 16, 2011	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
March 2, 2011	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
March 16, 2011	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
April 6, 2011	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
April 20, 2011	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School
May 11, 2011*	Organization	John F. Kennedy High School
June 1, 2011	Workshop	90 Delaware Ave.
June 15, 2011	Regular	John F. Kennedy High School

#### Time and Location:

Workshop Meetings – 6:00 p.m. Formal action may be taken if deemed necessary by the State District Superintendent

Regular Meetings – 7:00 p.m. Formal action will be taken

\*Organization Meeting – 6:30 p.m. Formal action will be taken