

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOARD GOVERNANCE TRAINING/RETREAT**

March 2, 2023 – 5:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting (via Zoom)

***Provided by: Deborah L. Keys Write, National Board Governance & Equity
Consultant***

The Write Keys 2 Consulting, LLC

Presiding: Comm. Nakima Redmon, President

Present:

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel

Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz
Comm. Valerie Freeman
Comm. Eddie Gonzalez
Comm. Jonathan Hodges

Comm. Dania Martinez, Vice President
Comm. Della McCall
Comm. Kenneth Simmons

Absent:

Comm. Manuel Martinez

Comm. D. Martinez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused adequate and electronic notice of this meeting:

**Board Retreat
March 2, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
Virtual
90 Delaware Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Deborah Keys Write introduced herself and gave a bit of her background, and highlighted the Board's responsibilities:

- The framework within which boards of education operate has already been set. It is the responsibility of Board members to learn how to navigate within that framework as a cohesive team.
- Part of the Board's responsibility is to hire and evaluate the appropriate education experts, including the superintendent.
- Board members should be well-versed in the inner workings of the school district at the highest level. This will allow them to govern effectively to accomplish the best outcome for students.
- Board members bring their unique skills and experience to the table, along with their connection to the community. This is aligned with the data and the financial and human capacity of the district.
- The Board can and should ask questions of the superintendent that will help them make an informed decision concerning educational priorities.
- Part of a Board's governance responsibility is to keep themselves as informed and educated as possible on the topic of education. This includes independent reading, professional development, asking questions, and listening carefully.

BOARD MEMBERS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES

Question: What Made You Want to Become a Board Member?

Comm. Freeman – Has always been involved in advocating for children. Involved with Home School Councils in the past. Enjoy empowering parents. Children are her first love.

Comm. McCall – Has served community for many years in many capacities. This was an opportunity to serve at another level. Wanted to give a greater part of herself.

Comm. Gonzalez – Served as a Board member 12 years ago. Conditions today are similar to when he served previously in that the district is transitioning to a new superintendent. Wants to lend his experience to the Board. Works for an organization that is very involved with the district and education. Is a Patersonian and his wife is a teacher in the school district. Loves Paterson. Wants to improve programs and increase the efficiency of the district. Wants to get the community more involved and informed. He is a community organizer at heart. Wants the community to understand that the education of Paterson's children will have an impact on the future of the city.

Comm. Simmons – The Board was able to get through pandemic and now it has to work even harder to catch students up.

Comm. Hodges – Is here for one thing - the education of students. In his view, it hasn't happened and that's why he's still unhappy.

Comm. D. Martinez – Still learning. It's been a humbling experience to be on a Board of Education.

Comm. Redmon – Likes to work behind the scenes. Comm. Simmons pushed her to the forefront in order to allow her to grow. Does not feel the district is where it needs to be, but is making strides forward. The entire Board worked through the pandemic and

never got a break. Believes in 'we' over 'me.' Is excited to work with new Board members.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Nature of Governance

- Governance is steering the ship – Management is rowing.
- Governance is the process where the direction of the district is set, the structure is established, and accountability both fiscal and programmatic is assured.
- Governance is about defining the 'what' of the district; administration is focused on 'how' policy gets implemented.

BREAKOUT GROUP EXERCISE – THINK, PAIR & SHARE

Questions:

- 1. How Do You Stay Focused on Effective Board Governance Practices?**
- 2. What Areas of Governance Do You Need Clarity on?**

Group 2: Integrity as a Board member is important because it means others can trust you. Talked about the importance of transparency. Outside politics can sometimes be distracting and a hindrance to the work of the Board.

Group 1: The Board stays focused on effective governance practices by pushing issues through different sources, such as traditional and social media and by making sure the community is aware of the issues. Also, by staying engaged in the issues and having structure to them, as well as understanding how other districts are dealing with the same issues and comparing strategies and approaches to the mutual challenges. The Board could use more clarity on legal issues. Want to be sure the Board is ethically and legally correct. Transparency and information is important.

Group 3: Sometimes the Board feels like it's walking a 'tightrope' when dealing with politics while at the same time striving to address the needs of students. At times, the outside political pressure causes Board members to become involved in matters that are not within its' purview. It's a challenge for the Board to be informed about external politics, but not be immersed in it. It must constantly evaluate between what's relevant to education and what isn't. Many times politicians have to be lobbied in order for them to act as advocates for the school district, such as in the area of funding.

THE WATER OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

Question: What is the Water, or pervasive environment, that the Board is swimming in?

- The Board is working hard to change the public perception that there is discord and infighting within the Board.
- Coming from the community to now being a new Board member has given some a new perspective.

The Board needs to 'jump out of the water' from time to time to get a fresh perspective on the situation.

- Over the years, different boards have had different agendas, not always centered on education.
- That situation has improved, but it requires constant vigilance and perseverance to continue keeping student achievement as a priority.
- Any Board requires at least five members who are truly committed to education and student achievement. Any fewer and the administrator will not pay as much attention. Having five Board members who vote and think in agreement constitute a majority and have a powerful voice.

A Board member asked how the Board can come to a mutual understanding and present a unified front. She asked how they can better come together to share ideas and strategies without violating protocol.

Board members are prohibited from discussing specific Board agenda when they are not serving in their function as Commissioners.

However, they can get to know each other on a personal level. They can become acquainted with one another's professional expertise, educational background, life experience, and interests.

A Board member expressed the fact that when she first came on the Board, she didn't always understand what she was voting on. There is some trial and error involved in decision-making. A lot of data is thrown at Board members and it is necessary to assimilate and digest that information before reaching decisions.

It was clarified that the Board does not want to have "serial meetings", having separate, consecutive conversations about Board topics. They can converse with each other about Board agenda, but there must be fewer than five members in such conversations.

A Board member expressed that things were slightly different when the Board was state-controlled. In the past, there was more conversation and sharing of information by committees to the rest of the Board. Instead of making a general statement that certain topics were discussed, it would be more helpful if specific details about the discussions were presented to the Board.

SLIDES

- Board: Policy, goals, accountability, and community leadership
 - Superintendent: Staff, operations, educational leadership
 - Effective Governance Action Plan: Board authority vs. Superintendent authority
 - 8 Traits of Effective School Boards
1. Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction.
 2. Have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students.
 3. Have a collaboration relationship with staff and the community.
 4. Are accountability driven (1-4).
 5. Are data savvy and use it to drive continuous improvement.
 6. Align and sustain resources to meet district goals.
 7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent.
 8. Take part in team development and training.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. McCall that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

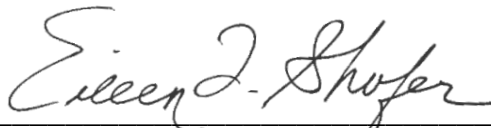
No speakers.

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. D. Martinez that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. McCall that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eileen F. Shafer", written in dark ink. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools/
Board Secretary