

PENN

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL NETWORK of NUTLEY



<http://www.nutleypenn.org>

Evaluation of Board Candidates

Nutley schools have a long, distinguished history of educating our town's children with excellent instruction and efficient administration. The reputation of the school district has attracted new families to Nutley, as well as enticed life-long residents to remain in Nutley to raise their families here.

Today, many agree that the school district's heritage and reputation are in jeopardy. Poor judgment by those who are entrusted with the *privilege* of serving our school district has threatened the district's reputation.

- ◇ **School facility projects have been severely mismanaged.**
- ◇ **School test scores are declining.**
- ◇ **Taxes are on the rise.**
- ◇ **Textbook orders are deferred.**
- ◇ **Full-day kindergarten is never seriously considered an option because of "costs."**
- ◇ **Teachers are being laid off.**
- ◇ **Substantial cuts to special education have been proposed.**

Anger and frustration have replaced the pride and accomplishment once held by many for Nutley's educational system. Out of this frustration formed PENN - a group of taxpayers and parents (**more than 550 members in just a short few months**) demanding immediate attention by our elected officials to develop and implement a plan of action to return the Nutley school district to its previous position of prominence in the State. These demands are not unreasonable. In fact, for many exemplary districts, setting high standards as guideposts for decision-making purposes is simply the starting point.

The starting point to implement real change here in Nutley occurs on April 20. We are optimistic that a return to the rich legacy of the Nutley Schools is possible, even in these trying economic times. In order to provide the district with the best leadership and vision our community can offer, PENN asked each candidate to provide a copy of their resume, campaign literature and respond to a number of questions that concern the PENN membership. A copy of each candidate's response can be found on our website (except that one candidate who refused to respond to PENN's request for information). Based upon a review of the information provided, as well as statements made by the candidates in public forums, Nutley PENN has prepared the following evaluation of each candidate for your consideration.

Remember to have your voice heard by voting on April 20!

James A. Kuchta: Mr. Kuchta invokes the saying -- “if you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it” – to illustrate his message that the Board must engage in a regular and detailed review of school scores, standards and curriculum to ensure that the students are receiving a high quality and cost-effective education.

PROS OF CANDIDACY	CONS OF CANDIDACY
<p data-bbox="181 380 797 409">Member of Board of Education (3 yrs)</p> <p data-bbox="181 447 797 539">No Conflicts: May evaluate superintendent and participate in negotiation of teacher union contract</p> <p data-bbox="181 577 797 732">Strong Financial Background (former Financial VP of MetLife/Director of Corporate Budget): Most equipped of the candidates to develop solutions to address the district’s financial situation</p> <p data-bbox="181 770 797 892">Dedicated Public Servant (Nutley Family Service Bureau – 22 yrs; Nutley Adult School; Nutley Rent Leveling Board; Project Children; Spring Garden PTO)</p> <p data-bbox="181 930 797 1119">Advocates Better Utilization of Committees: Notes that a number of committees have been eliminated in past years; believes that committee structure can be better utilized to develop solutions to potential challenges for district</p> <p data-bbox="181 1157 797 1281">Advocates for prioritizing expenditures: To ensure the most essential elements of the education needs of the students are being met by the district</p> <p data-bbox="181 1318 797 1541">Composed Demeanor: Even during the most contentious moments at meetings, Mr. Kuchta provides reasoned and measured responses and can be relied upon to provide practical advice or solutions as well as clear and concise responses to issues of concerns raised by citizens at public meetings</p>	<p data-bbox="824 380 1430 535">Voted in favor of Tri Tech Settlement: However, when voting, Mr. Kuchta indicated he was relying upon recommendation of counsel to enter into settlement; also later voted for rescission of settlement</p> <p data-bbox="824 573 1430 829">Involved in Negotiation of Teacher Contract: Relied upon by Board to respond to public questions and criticism regarding the approval of a contract to increase teacher’s salaries despite the freeze imposed on town workers in certain instances; indicated that contract for teachers was in line with other contracts entered into by communities within the State</p>

Dr. Robert Reid: Advocates in favor of “raising the bar” for the Nutley school system.

PROS OF CANDIDACY	CONS OF CANDIDACY
<p data-bbox="181 291 797 323">Newcomer with innovative ideas:</p> <ul data-bbox="240 327 797 678" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="240 327 797 516">▪ Supports the preparation of a comprehensive needs assessment for entire district; recommends implementation through academic committee; encourages input by educators of district<li data-bbox="240 520 797 678">▪ Supports Greater Community Input (establish standing community advisory groups to represent different community groups, i.e., parental, business community, as issues arise) <p data-bbox="181 716 797 806">No Conflicts: May evaluate superintendent and participate in negotiation of teacher union contract</p> <p data-bbox="181 844 797 968">Strong Academic Background (Ph.D and Masters from Columbia University; Masters and Undergraduate from Rutgers; Nutley High School)</p> <p data-bbox="181 1005 797 1096">Background in Social Work: Assist district in formulation of policies to address social issues facing students today</p> <p data-bbox="181 1134 797 1194">Professional Experience in Education (Associate Professor at Montclair State University)</p> <p data-bbox="181 1232 797 1264">Soon-to-be Spring Garden Parent</p> <p data-bbox="181 1302 797 1362">Encourages Greater Cooperation with Board of Commissioners to Address Needs of District</p> <p data-bbox="181 1400 797 1453">Grant Writing Experience for Grants for Educational Purposes</p>	<p data-bbox="824 291 1430 323">No Prior Experience as Board Member</p> <p data-bbox="824 361 1430 422">Ability to implement proposed changes as newest member of board</p>

Charles W. Kucinski, Jr.: Vocal about his concern about the effectiveness of present Board and about the district being too complacent with the present status of the school district: “no matter how effective our current education standards or existing curriculum, we owe it to our children to always strive to do better.”

PROS OF CANDIDACY	CONS OF CANDIDACY
<p>Prior Board Experience (1982-97): During his tenure, he has acted as both President and Vice President of the Board</p>	<p>Ability to Work with Fellow Board Members: Mr. Kucinski has been very critical of Board activities publicly. Unsure whether it will adversely impact his ability to work with fellow Board members if elected.</p>
<p>No Conflicts: May evaluate superintendent and participate in negotiation of union contract</p>	
<p>Financial and Management Background</p>	
<p>Soon-to-be Spring Garden Grandparent</p>	
<p>Prior Member of Nutley Fire Department</p>	
<p>Wants to Restore Integrity of Board</p>	

Dr. Phil Casale: Dr. Casale notes that, as a Board member, he has stayed focused “in the face of great adversity.”

PROS OF CANDIDACY	CONS OF CANDIDACY
<p>Experienced Board Member (13 years)</p> <p>Knowledge of School System</p> <p>Parent of Children in School System</p> <p>Professional Experience: Dr. Casale is an educator in the Clifton school district following a career as a private business owner in Nutley</p> <p>Supporter of Music Program</p> <p>Supports the Appeal of DOE Sanctions</p> <p>Advocated the retention of special counsel to handle construction litigation</p>	<p>Board member during period of time resulting in the imposition of financial sanctions to District (\$326,000) by Department of Education for “Building Irregularities”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DOE found contract with construction manager was illegal; noted instances where district did not comply with Public Contract Laws ▪ DOE found district engaged with contractors not properly pre-qualified as required by law ▪ DOE found settlement agreement with Tri Tech was contrary to public interest ▪ DOE found district redefined scope of construction projects without voter approval and/or Department of Education approval <p><u>See:</u> http://www.nutleypenn.org/images/NJDOE_report.pdf</p> <p>Conflict of Interest: unable to participate in negotiation of teacher contract</p> <p>Heavy-Handed Approach to Dissent: Frequently blames “prior administrations” for district problems (although Dr. Casale was a trustee during those prior administrations)</p> <p>As BOE President, eliminated BOE committees (academic, technology, etc.)</p> <p>Fails to ensure observance of fundamental board governance policies</p>

Angelo Frannicola: Did not respond to Nutley PENN’s request for information. It is unfortunate Mr. Frannicola did not take an opportunity to convey to our members his message about his candidacy because it conveys he is **disinterested** in the concerns of the public and PENN members. It should be noted, however, that Mr. Frannicola has conflicts that prevent him from participating in the negotiation of union contracts.