



## Albuquerque Public Schools Questionnaire for Board of Education Candidates

Date: **January 2011**

Name: **Katherine Shelley Korte**

Length of Residency in School District: **5 years**

Occupation: **Regional Elections Coordinator, The Associated Press**

Do you currently hold other public office? **No**

Do you have any affiliations with the Albuquerque Public Schools? **Yes**

If yes, what are your affiliations: **Parent, substitute teacher, president LBJ PTSA**

Are you available to attend Board meetings the first and third Wednesday nights of the month at 5 p.m.? **Yes**

Additionally, there are four board committees that meet twice a month at 7:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. or 5 p.m. Are you available to attend committee meetings? **Yes**

Periodically, the Board must meet during daytime hours for Board meetings, budget hearings, and luncheons. Are you available during daytime hours for these activities? **Yes**

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, the Board requires approximately 10 hours a week in reading, researching, miscellaneous meetings, school visits, telephone calls, and e-mail correspondence. Can your schedule accommodate the extra time involved in serving as a Board member? **Yes**

### **Experience**

#### **1. Why do you want to be a board member for Albuquerque Public Schools?**

I am the mother of four APS students, so I have a big stake in APS and education in our city. I am in the classrooms as a substitute. I am in the schools as a parent volunteer. I have fought – on behalf of parents and teachers – some of the proposals to come out of district headquarters and would love to be an active participant in district decisions that affect our students and teachers.

#### **2. What is your interest in education?**

I want my children to grow up and have many job opportunities in this beautiful state of ours. I want my children to live in communities where crime is not rampant. Education is the key to making sure our children's futures are bright and promising. I want to see our students succeed.

*continued*

### **3. How would you support the mission of the district?**

I am committed to seeing our students achieve academic excellence and creating a safe learning environment at all our schools. I want our schools to be fiscally efficient and have effective curriculums that reach out to all levels of students. I would love to see morale among teachers and administrators strengthened and the quality of our schools increased.

### **4. What is your past and current involvement with Albuquerque Public Schools?**

I am a parent. I am the president of the LBJ Middle School PTSA. I am an active volunteer at Chamiza Elementary. I am a substitute teacher.

### **5. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of Albuquerque Public Schools?**

Strengths: APS has fantastic teachers and principals who are 100% willing to put their efforts into their jobs of teaching our children. I have been blessed to work with so many wonderful teachers and principals who have aught and guided my children. My children are getting a very good education in their APS schools.

Weaknesses: I believe we should re-evaluate some of the district's 8 Goals, namely No. 7, which mandates district instead of site-based management of schools. One-size-fits-all proposals are not effective at reforming schools and only create bad feelings among teachers and parents. APS' size is a weakness. Data from the state Public Education Department shows that smaller school communities reap greater results. A low parent participation rate (6-8 percent turnout in school board elections) indicates a lack of interest among parents. We need to either increase the number of school board districts based on natural boundaries or divide the district. In either case, more schools with fewer populations should be a goal. (A great example of a small school within APS doing great things: Griegos Elementary.)

### **6. What is the role of the Board of Education?**

The board, as an elected body, sets budgets and education policy and hires the superintendent. The board should also re-evaluate the 8 Goals at the end of the three-year plan for deficiencies, strengths.

### **7. What is the role of individual board members?**

Board members should be in communication with teachers, students and parents. They should be responsive to the community and ask the tough questions and make the tough decisions. Board members represent all stakeholders in their respective communities.

### **8. What should be the relationship between the superintendent and Board of Education?**

The most effective groups and workplaces are those in which leaders and constituents can agree to disagree and yet work on behalf of the common good. So it should be with the superintendent and board members. There should be open lines of communication and the ability for both sides to feel comfortable airing their concerns and voicing their opinion. While the ultimate authority to make a decision falls with the superintendent, I would hope the superintendent's actions are deliberate and made with the full knowledge of how the board members – and thus their constituents – feel.

*continued*

## **9. What unique qualities would you bring to the Board of Education?**

No. 1, I am a parent who is active in my children's schools and has a wonderful rapport with teachers, staff and other parents. No. 2, I am a journalist and I have the ability to hear many sides of a position and not only weed through the muck to ask a good question but also to communicate my concerns/beliefs in a logical and pragmatic way. No. 3, I am proud of the efforts I have made to encourage rapport between parents and staff at LBJ Middle School. Through constant communication with staff and administrators, we parents are welcome at the discussion table and our voices are heard. On the flip side, because our teachers/administrators have included us in decision making at the school, they enjoy our support when they need it.

## **10. Other school/community volunteer activities related to the community:**

- Past vice president of Rancho Sereno Neighborhood Association; developer and web master for neighborhood web site [www.abqrsna.com](http://www.abqrsna.com)
- Youth Faith Formation teacher at St. Joseph on the Rio Grande Parish
- Eucharistic minister at St. Joseph on the Rio Grande
- Chamiza Elementary PTA member

## **11. What are your thoughts about:**

**a. No Child Left Behind** – This federal law is flawed. By judging schools based on six subgroups of student performance and two curriculum areas, schools and teachers are cheated of a fair assessment. ALL subjects are vitally important to our children being well-rounded and successful adults. Every August when AYP results are released, parents are in an uproar and teachers are stressed out. It's ridiculous.

**b. Closing the achievement gap** – How about closing the parent gap? I believe with all my heart that success in the classroom begins with success in the home. If parents are not active participants in their children's educational progress, then how can teachers alone fill the gap? Parents, too, must be held accountable for their students' success and failures. That being said, I do not support social promotion. Second, our excellent teachers should receive pay raises and incentives for staying at or transferring to low-performing schools. Third, we must involve the business community in our efforts to raise the bar for our children.

**c. Parental involvement and community engagement** – I believe teachers are overburdened as diagnosticians of the many tests and assessments they must do for each child. As a result, they don't reach out to the parent community as often as they should, especially in the no-man's land of middle school! We need to look at ways to reduce teachers' diagnostic burdens AND entice parents to join their school communities. Many charter schools and all private schools mandate parent volunteer time. Why don't we do that in public school? We should also consider incentives to parents who do take an active role at school and work with the business community to do so. In turn, there should be rewards such as tax breaks to N.M. businesses and employers who become active participants in their community's schools. These ideas are some of the recommendations made by a panel of N.M. parents, teachers and students who attended last summer's New Mexico First forums held in Albuquerque and other parts of the state. I participated in the Albuquerque forum and wholeheartedly agree with the idea that schools, parents and the business community must work together to achieve success.

*continued*

**By my signature, I affirm that I meet all requirements to become a member of the Board of Education.**

Katherine J. Korte