Albuquerque Public Schools
2015 Questionnaire for Board of Education Candidates

The Board of Education is an elected body created according to the laws of the state of New Mexico to serve as the governing board of the school district for the purpose of organizing, maintaining, and locating schools and for providing educational opportunities and services for all citizens residing within the school district.

Candidates are requested to return their questionnaire to the Board Services Office, by 5:00 p.m., on Monday, January 5, 2015. Mailed questionnaires must be received by Monday, January 5, 2015. Address to: Board of Education Services Office, 2015 Board Election, Alice and Bruce King Educational Complex, P.O. Box 25704, Albuquerque, N.M.87125-0704. Questionnaires also may be faxed to 880-2575 by the deadline above. Please call the Board of Education Services Office at 880-3729 to confirm fax arrivals, or for other information.

Personal Information
[Please Print, Type or Use Digital Form]

Name: Mark J. Gilboard

First Middle Last

Residence Address: ________________________________

Length of Residency in School District: ________

(Check Preferred)
☐ Home Telephone: __________  ☐ Office: __________  ☐ Cell: ________

Fax Number: __________  Primary Email address: ___________________________

Occupation: __Advertising Manager__________________________________________

Employer: __Clear Channel Outdoor___________________________________________

Business Address: ___458 Industrial Ave. NE ABQ, NM 87108____________________

Business Telephone: __5052194725_______
Do you currently hold other public office?  
Yes _____ No _X__  
If yes, list office: ____________________________________________

Do you have any affiliations with the Albuquerque Public Schools? Yes_X_ No____

If yes, what are your affiliations? ____A periodic, professional relationship with the communications dept._______

Are you available to attend board meetings the first and third Wednesday nights of the month at 5:00 p.m.? Yes _X__ No _____

Additionally, there are five board committees that mostly meet once a month at 7:30 a.m. or 5:00 p.m. Are you available to attend committee meetings? Yes_____ No_____  
If no, please explain why: ____________________________________________

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 _X__ No _____  
If no, please explain why: ____________________________________________

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, the board requires approximately 20-25 hours a week in reading, researching, miscellaneous meetings, school visits, telephone calls, and e-mail correspondence; some board members spend more time than that. Can your schedule accommodate the extra time involved in serving as a member of the Board of Education?  
Yes _X__ No _____
Experience
Answers should be brief and concise.

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

I want to do my part as a parent and community member to help further the goals of the students and parents of APS, as well as the organization itself. I want to aid in achieving the clear goals that the district has in place, and will define in the future, towards high student achievement and high quality instruction. I want to be an exemplar of collaborative work, beholden to students and the community at large, and with a focus on the challenges facing teachers, employees, administrators and the superintendent in trying to move a very large school district forward in a challenging time for public education. My job as a board member is to look out for students, first and foremost, while incorporating the community’s values and desires regarding student achievement.

2. What is your interest in education?

As the son of a retired life-long Special Education teacher, and a former college educator and HS Volleyball coach in the City of Albuquerque, I am interested in helping to shape the future policies and direction of our school system. Albuquerque is the city I have chosen to raise my family, and as such I want it to be a great place to raise and educate children, for ALL families. High quality public education, and great public schools form the foundation of great places to live. I want to be part of a School Board that works collaboratively to make improvements and sets tangible goals for betterment. I hope to be able to be an integral part of the continued improvement of APS.

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

I would support the district by serving ALL young students - doing my best to keep the academically-motivated, higher achievers here in the public schools, while simultaneously raising the bar and closing the achievement gap for those in the public schools that require greater intervention. I will be a keen fiscal administrator of the district budget, keeping the focus on areas of greatest need, and keeping spending in line with community values and those divisions that best serve the student body and that position ALL students for greater achievement and future success in life after schooling. I would be a steward of the Policies and Procedural Directives of the district, while keeping a keen eye out for improvement and re-direction, where necessary.

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

I am an APS parent with two young daughters that attend the 1st and 5th grades at Bandelier Elementary School, and a member of the PTA. Additionally, I was the Head Volleyball Coach at Rio Grande High School in 1999-2000, and I have been a Junior Achievement volunteer in various third grade classes each year for the past 6 or 7 years, mostly at Bandelier as well.

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

Strengths - Great teachers. Overall, I have seen a learning atmosphere that features committed and caring teachers, employees and administrators at every level. I have first-hand experience witnessing high quality communication, especially in the handling of crises, as well as teacher instruction that caters to the needs of ALL students.

Areas for Improvement - The sheer size of the district makes it hard to ensure quality, uniform initiatives are being implemented. Additionally, there’s a lack of long-term, stable, high quality Superintendent leadership.
6. What do you consider the role of the Board of Education?

The Board of Education is the conduit through which the citizenry of Albuquerque interface with their public school system. The job of the school board is to advocate for the students' quality of education. We embody the community's point of view, and we are beholden to the public and should be held accountable for the performance of the school district. We can also perform a watchdog role to guarantee the best education possible for the taxpayers' dollars.

7. What do you consider the role of individual board members?

The role of the individual Board members is to represent our constituencies, the entirety of the district, with special attention to the traditionally underserved populations. Additionally, there is the need for Board members to do the important day to day and week to week tasks, especially listening then acting upon stakeholders' concerns, namely those of students, parents, teachers and staff and administrators. We must not let ourselves get caught up in micro-management of operational issues, but to focus on the improvement of student achievement by establishing a vision and letting the policies put in place by the district target the specific methods of carrying out that vision. Board members must seek valuable data with which to gauge future needs and areas of focus. We should receive information from many sources, including those mentioned above as well as that of the superintendent and organizational leaders in the district.

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

In a perfect world, the Board of Education would lead as a sort of united team along with the superintendent. We would share our experiences and knowledge, and this shared knowledge would be part of a larger effort to learn in order to improve the district's processes, where necessary. The board and the superintendent would be effective communicators, especially with regard to listening, as we are both entities in pursuit of a common goal, the setting and achieving of the district's goals. Additionally, the board and the superintendent would share beliefs about teaching children at ALL levels, expecting improvement regardless of external factors, such as poverty, existing achievement gaps, and lack of parental involvement.

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

I have the heart of a teacher, having been an educator and a High School coach. I have great empathy for students, parents and teachers, as well as staff and administrators in our public schools. I am accountability driven, as a result of being a parent of two APS elementary school children. I have a boyish enthusiasm, untold energy reserve, and the ability to communicate effectively across many cultures and ethnicities. Lastly, I have a business acumen, possessed of high productivity and an ability to collaborate for a common goal or common good.

10. What school or community volunteer activities have you participated in related to the community?

Anderson-Abruzzo International Balloon Museum Foundation Board, Marketing Committee Member 2007-Present
Junior Achievement Volunteer in APS, 2007 - Present
Member, Board of Directors, Creative Albuquerque 2011-2013
PTA Member, Bandelier Elem. 2009-present
11. How do you plan to work with constituents about district initiatives?

One of the main ways is to really listen to teachers and employees of the district. We must remember that APS is the second largest employer in the City of Albuquerque, and by virtue, the employees comprise a good portion of the constituency itself, especially as parents. Additionally, I expect to be most responsive to any requests by constituents be they parents, grandparents, or "merely" taxpayers. I will promptly respond to all emails and phone calls, and expect to have much interaction at the twice monthly Board of Education meetings. At these meetings, being a good listener, taking good notes and really offering my best collaborative mindset for the betterment of the quality of education within APS will be crucial in planning my work around my constituency's desires.

12. What letter grade would you give to the current Board of Education and the district?

On the one hand, it would not be fair for a relative outsider such as myself to give letter grades on subjects that I am not completely versed in. However, by virtue of the fact that I am running for a seat on the Board, I must have a strong opinion about the current state of performance. In terms of the district, I feel that any perceived lack of success is seen in the person of the superintendent, which is mostly unfortunate, but not entirely inaccurate. Because I have read of the contentiousness between the School Board and the Superintendent, I would have to give the grade of C- in that area, although I am not too certain where to place the specific blame, so to speak. The rubric that I feel needs the most rigorous grading moving forward for the district is in the areas of organizational role models, the leadership of the district, and the allocation of resources. These are the most critical areas to apply letter grades to. I am not too familiar with all the organizational role models, but will speak to those with which I have some basis for evaluation. I have witnessed good quality work being done in terms of facilities, and new and existing school planning and construction, so the leadership in that division seems to be high performing, deserving of at least a grade of B. The organizational leadership that I have witnessed first hand in the Communications Dept. also is high performing, and effective even in very difficult circumstances, especially when we consider the current 24-hour news cycle and the rich fodder that public schools can sometimes provide for the local news. I would give the leadership in that department an A. I look forward to being able to evaluate even more divisions and their leadership and role models in the near future.

With regard to the School Board itself, one area that I feel needs grading and shows room for improvement is their alignment with teachers and employees of the district. One of the primary functions of School Boards is to understand the role of teachers as the key linchpins in the educational process. High performing teachers seem to be most valued in places where there is a culture of teamwork. The School Board would do well to work for a greater understanding of what it takes to retain high quality teachers. My current grade for them in this regard would also be a C-. There are too many teachers leaving the profession. It seems to me that there is too much time placed on entertaining the notions of merit pay and other incentives that may not be of interest to teachers. I have read local news articles about award winning teachers rejecting monetary incentives and we must ask ourselves why this is the case, and seek to improve the conditions in order to retain the best of the best.

13. What do you think is the best way for the district to:

a. Improve academic achievement and close the achievement gap?

My role on the board is to focus on student achievement, not politics or personalities. I will treat all constituencies equally, and allocate resources to needs, while watching the return on investment. If we spend tax dollars engaging the community, using data to drive accountability, and spend more on instruction and training, and perhaps less on testing and unproven pet projects, we can work collaboratively to close the achievement gap. When we commit to high expectations for student achievement, spend less time on operational issues and define clear achievable goals towards an agreed upon vision, we will be successful. We must not fear the data that is being collected in the district, even if it is negative. A lot can be learned even from the most dismal of performances. It does not serve us well to place blame, but to embrace the notion that expecting to see
Improvement as a result of thoughtful initiatives can overcome the challenges that we face in Albuquerque - poverty and lack of parental involvement.

b. Maintain financial accountability and still support student achievement, family and community engagement and a safe school environment?

The best way to do this is by aligning the resources, be they limited in times of budget stress, to the district's goals as laid out in collaborative efforts between the Board and the superintendent. One of the most effective ways to do this, in my opinion, is to continue to provide valuable professional development programs for teachers, staff and administrators, even when budgets are tight, as those stakeholders are the closest to the goal of student achievement. Any additional dollars that can be allocated to Pre-K initiatives or to overcome the widespread poverty we see in our district, such as through a free breakfast program for every student, would also be money well spent to support safe school environments and community engagement.

c. Make a safe and supportive climate for learning and working that maximizes student achievement?

I alluded to this earlier, and I am firm in my belief that trusting teachers and staff to do what's right for their students is the best way to foster a safe and supportive climate for learning and high student achievement. Improving workplace conditions, focusing on an atmosphere of support and mutual respect and appreciation, is the best way to do this.

d. Engage families and enhance partnerships in the community to maximize student achievement?

I feel that the best way to achieve this very important goal of the Albuquerque Public Schools is threefold. First, there have to be processes in place by which teachers can build relationships with parents, extended families, and community members. Holding "Science Nights", or even activities and dinners that are less "academically" oriented, can be an effective method. Second, understanding the class and cultural differences that are present in the diverse districts that we serve can go a long way to enhancing partnerships. Lastly, having all stakeholders - parents, teachers, staff and administrators - share in the responsibility of student achievement can serve as an example of the enhanced partnership as well. Some specific strategies that come to mind that demonstrate some of the above are:

1. Showing examples of student work on family nights, open houses, or community days

2. Using report card and conferences as a chance to have meaningful discussions with parents about the current state of student achievement in the district, both specific challenges and ways to improve.

3. Using the school newsletter, making it bilingual if necessary, to discuss current achievement at the school, in generic terms as well as specifying where improvements need to be made.

4. Sharing grading rubrics for current student assignments with parents, in dual languages where needed, so that families can encourage higher achievement in their student's work.
By my signature, I affirm that I meet all requirements to become a member of the Board of Education.

[Signature]

Candidate Signature

___1/5/15____

Date