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: _____Kathy____________________________________________Korte___________
First    Middle    Last

Residence Address: ______________________________________________________________

Length of Residency in School District: ___ _____

(Check Preferred)
☐ Home Telephone: _____________ ☐ Office: _______________ ☐ Cell: _____________

Fax Number: __________________ Primary Email address: _____________

Occupation: __Mother, wife________________________________________________________

Employer: __None_______________________________________________________________

Business Address: __________________________________________________________________

Business Telephone: _________________
Do you currently hold other public office?
   Yes _X__ No ____
   If yes, list office: ___APS Board of Education, District 2___________

Do you have any affiliations with the Albuquerque Public Schools?
   Yes _X__ No____
   If yes, what are your affiliations? ___Mother of four public school children_________

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 _X__ 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 don't believe my work on the board is finished. It has been frustrating for me as a parent and board member to fight against the over-testing of our children in schools and the unwillingness of so many to listen and address this very important problem. I believe my voice is a voice not only for parents but for teachers -- all of whom are being ignored with platitudes and surface arguments that do not address the underlying issue: the millions of taxpayer dollars spent on high-stakes tests that do not help our children; the use of this money for tests instead of for our many successful education programs that run on financial fumes; the use of these tests to blame teachers and label them as inferior using a math formula that cannot be replicated or proved except by one small staff in a backroom at the Public Education Department; the government takeover of our schools; and the complete lack of transparency in how this takeover is occurring, even though parents and teachers do not believe it's the right thing to do.

2. What is your interest in education?

I have four children in our public schools. They have had phenomenal teachers. I am proud of the efforts of our schools and I can testify to the success my children will have in life because of the schooling they received in APS. I also believe that public education is the bedrock of our democracy. If we allow governments -- both state and federal -- to take over the day-to-day activities of our children and teachers in our schools, we are chipping away at the equal opportunities every single child has with a public education. I fear a future where public schools have been decimated to places where only the poor and marginalized go because "reformers" have made all others believe -- with the help of the news media -- that our public schools are failing. I fear an America where only the have's and have-not's exist. That is not the America I want for my children and grandchildren. Our public schools are the only way to ensure equal access to all, regardless of socioeconomic, racial, gender, religious or ethnic differences among us. Public education must be preserved for a democratic America to be preserved.

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

I have supported wholeheartedly the mission of Albuquerque Public Schools in all its evolution as a board of education member and as a parent. Part of supporting APS is also being willing to criticize programs that don't work and offering ideas for how to make things better. I have done all this and will continue to do it. My job as a board member is to ask tough questions and to ensure that every action taken by our district is accompanied by measurable results -- be they successful or not. My job as a board member is no different from my job as a parent: Make myself available to offer solutions and also offer constructive criticisms when warranted. I support the district’s efforts in educating every child, no matter the circumstances. I do not support the district in its efforts to mollify the state officials who are forcing districts to do things that do not help children, most notably the overtesting of our kids and the use of those tests to evaluate teachers unfairly.
4. What is your past and current involvement with Albuquerque Public Schools?

As a parent of four children and for many years before being a Board of Education member, I have been an active volunteer in my kids' schools and classrooms. I also served as PTA president at LBJ Middle School for three years. I also worked as a substitute teacher in APS for one school year prior to being elected to the Board of Education.

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

**Strengths:**
1. Our financial house is in exceptional order. We have a Aa1 rating from Moody’s with a stable outlook, which was upgraded from a negative outlook due to improved cash reserves, tighter financial controls and the stability of our Finance Department.

2. Our continuous look for new programs that help kids succeed, such as the International Baccalaureate program; the eCademy; the CNM High School; the numerous magnet programs we are embarking on and our amazing programs for the high-achieving students, such as elementary gifted and middle and high school AP classes. We also continue to support the APS-authorized charter schools that offer families alternatives to the traditional APS school.

3. Our continuous efforts to help children with disabilities. Charters and private schools can't offer the focused programs we do in APS for those children with autism or severe behavioral, mental and emotional needs.

**Weaknesses:**
1. We lack a vocational program outside of our Early College Academy success. Not every student is destined for college. But that doesn't mean every student cannot succeed in life. We need to focus on our vocational programs with the same emphasis we have focused on college readiness. To be frank, we have a vocational program and director. As a board member, I cannot tell anyone the solid success stories of this area. We can do much better and should be doing much more for our children in the vocational area.

2. We pander to the state government and allow ourselves to be blackmailed with the money the state Public Education Department offers in the form of grants. We do need money at the district level. But by attempting to placate politicians, we have done nothing to help our children and our teachers -- all of whom are beleaguered by the increasing mandates of state officials. We do not do enough to protect our schools.

3. We still have much work at the district level in terms of wasting money on unnecessary items. Our budget process needs fine-tuning. "Wish list" items appear on the budget and there is no ability of board members to line-item veto budget requests. Where do the "wish list" items come from? There ought to be open work sessions for board members to discuss proposed budgets in the open -- not in three-by-three sessions. Those open work sessions should be accessible to the public so the public can hear what is being discussed and advocated for.
6. What do you consider the role of the Board of Education?
   The Board of Ed has three roles: set the budget; make policies; and hire/fire the superintendent.

7. What do you consider the role of individual board members?
   A board of education member does not: Get involved with day-to-day hiring/firing of school personnel; get involved with disciplinary issues concerning children unless the issue can be translated to a policy or student behavior handbook issue; order district officials to do anything without a majority consent of the entire board of education; take any action on behalf of the board without the majority consent of the entire board of education.

8. What should be the relationship between the superintendent and Board of Education?
   It should be respectful and open. I dislike back-door politics very much. I believe a superintendent should bring issues to the full board of education for discussion and/or action. The superintendent, if unclear on what direction the district should take on any issue, should seek direction from the Board of Education in an open meeting with an action request.

9. What qualities would you bring to the Board of Education?
   I believe being a parent on the board is vitally important. Policies and procedures always look good on paper. How they actually play out in classrooms is something that policy-makers should understand. I bring that viewpoint and perspective to this Board of Education. I am an avid researcher and reader. My journalism skills have done me well on this Board of Education. I scrutinize and ask tough questions. That is a huge asset when dealing with policies and administrative rules that have really hurt our kids and teachers. I love being around kids. And despite what the media portrays, I love being around people and I do compromise and negotiate. But I don’t like the issues I raise on behalf of parents and teachers to be dismissed and ignored. I don’t take on any issue lightly. All things I pursue I do with great diligence and research to back me up. I am tenacious and I don’t give up if I know I speak the truth. I am fair if given the full picture view of any issue.

   I resent that as a parent of children who speaks on behalf of parents, I have been targeted by state reformers who seek to silence me with their bully tactics. I am not just a parent. I am a taxpayer. I am a citizen of the United States. And it is every citizen’s right to speak out against systems and programs that are not good for our children, our communities, and our schools. I believe in America. And I believe I have a duty to raise awareness of these dangerous reform policies insidiously being implemented by money-grabbing politicians.

10. What school or community volunteer activities have you participated in related to the community?
    I am active in the Rancho Sereno Neighborhood Association and I am an active member of St. Joseph’s on the Rio Grande parish. I am a huge supporter of Volcano Vista HS booster clubs that support drama, choir, orchestra, track and field, ROTC and band programs. I have worked in my
kids' elementary schools as a teacher's assistant and in the PTAs. I walked our Marie Hughes Elementary School neighborhood as part of the Bubble Gum Brigade to ask people to support the bond election. That election passed and Marie Hughes and Chaparral elementaries are getting redesigned. I also am an avid supporter of Boy Scouts and in particular, Troop 126 in Taylor Ranch. I have talked to the boys and helped them in achieving their badges, as well as hosting them at Board of Education meetings. I also worked tirelessly as a board member to ensure that the Community Stadium would be built. The stadium is a huge asset to our West Side community and I enjoy the football games at the stadium tremendously.

11. How do you plan to work with constituents about district initiatives?

I think my actions with citizens and on behalf of citizens in my four-year term can best be summarized with our grass-roots efforts as Stand4KidsNM. I have used social media to help spread the word to parents and teachers about our efforts against high-stakes testing pushed on our kids and teachers by the so-called "reformers." This movement has been very effective. I have answered every email from constituents and have advocated for solutions on behalf of citizens when needed. I have sent 132 District 2 newsletters in four years via email to those who want to be on my distribution list. I have conversed daily with constituents both within District 2 and outside of my district on Facebook pages. I am very open, transparent and accessible to all.

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

Letter grade for current Board of Ed: "D"
Letter grade for district: "C"

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

a. Improve academic achievement and close the achievement gap?

I can tell you it isn't by testing our kids to death! We have great examples of academic achievement and closing the gap. Among them: Emerson Elementary and Atrisco Heritage High School - the largest high school in the state of NM. APS partnered with UNMH to have a health clinic with physicians on staff on campus, and this whole approach to education is helping kids achieve. Medical care is in the community and open to students and their families. This is huge. AHA has a Student Success Center. Truancy and tardies have been reduced in just one year of operation. Outside partnerships with agencies that can help students and their families is also improving academics, with AHA being the largest contributor of UNM freshmen this school year. Parents need help. Kids need help. If we provide help to families, we can engage them more and help children succeed academically. We are also improving achievement by offering choices to our kids, such as nexGen Academy, the IB School at Sandia High, Early College Academy, CNM High School and the gifted programs offered in our elementary and middle schools. There are so many success stories and the bottom line is that High-Stakes Testing alone Does NOT result in achievement.

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

We need local control of taxpayer money. I will never advocate for more taxes being levied for schools. This state is currently wasting millions on testing and the associated
technology needs to administer the tests. If we can educate lawmakers about successful school programs like those at AHA, maybe we can persuade lawmakers to focus our taxpayer dollars on these types of programs instead of focusing on the false belief that tests will make kids more successful.

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

We have discipline problems in our schools and some of our teachers don't have the management skills to address them. Instead of professional development on how to administer tests and read test results, we ought to be devoting more of our resources to professional development that really helps teachers teach better and manage behavior issues better. In addition, school administrators need professional development in how to create school climates that are safe, nurturing and academically focused. We have several administrators in District 2 alone that are exceptional at doing just this. But our school leaders and teachers need to be able to get professional development that is useful to them -- not to the test-makers.

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

Well, I find APS to be quite hypocritical in saying it supports families and wants to engage families while ignoring the hundreds of parents and teachers who have spoken at Board of Education meetings since April, begging the district to do something about the over-testing of our kids. To parents actively engaged in this battle, such as myself, it appears to us that the district wants our engagement on its terms: fund-raising, helping teachers in the classroom, etc. That's all great, but true engagement of parents means really listening to them when they are opposing how their students' time is being spent in our classrooms.

On a positive note, we have a Parent University and some schools like AHA are making valiant efforts to make parents feel more comfortable in their children's schools with Parent Centers, which helps parents to be more engaged in helping their kids learn. Homework Diner is another program helping parents to be better engaged.

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

__________________________  ____________
Candidate Signature       January 5, 2015

Date