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: Barbara E. Petersen  
First: [ ]  Middle: [ ]  Last: [ ]

Residence Address: [ ]

Length of Residency in School District: [ ]

(Check Preferred)  
☐ Home Telephone: [ ]  ☐ Office: [ ]  ☐ Cell: [ ]

Fax Number: [ ] Primary Email address: [ ]

Occupation: Retired teacher; currently, part-time Political Outreach Coordinator

Employer: Retired from APS; currently, part-time Albuquerque Teachers Federation

Business Address: [ ]

Business Telephone: [ ]
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? I am a retired APS educator of 35 years _______

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?

Having taught in APS for over 30 years, I am aware of the ways in which policy decisions impact the lives of children. I believe that I can bring to the board an understanding of teaching and learning in a way to benefit our students and find practical solutions to problems. I hope to add a voice on the board to speak to the needs of the community, families and practitioners. I have been dedicated to our children's future in public schools for all of my years as a teacher and feel it is time to step up for our community as a board member.

2. What is your interest in education?

As an educator, I care deeply about the experience that children have in schools from the first day they enter a classroom until they graduate. I believe in our schools and our children, and I want every single child to succeed.

As a member of the community, I believe public education is the cornerstone of our democratic society. We are educating our children to be active members of this society.

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

My goal as a board member elected to represent District 4 would be to be a voice for the community with the district. Having spent a great deal of time in Santa Fe at the legislature, I would hope to be an advocate for the district as budget and education policy are developed there. As APS develops policy and makes decisions on implementation of state and federal mandates, I would use my knowledge of the community and of classroom practices to protect teachers' time to teach, students' time to learn and families' ability to be involved in the decisions affecting their child's education.

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

I began working with APS in the fall of 1977 as a Kindergarten Assistant and signed my first contract as a teacher in the fall of 1979. I ended my teaching career in the spring of 2012, having spent 30 of those years at Valle Vista Elementary School. During that time, I taught every grade from Kindergarten to 5th, worked as an Instructional Coach, Literacy Leader, and reading intervention teacher. For a number of years, I was a Reading Recovery teacher, benefiting from the focus on professional development and attention to students' learning process of that program, using that strength in all subsequent teaching. The year I retired, I taught three "second generation" students, and understood the importance of relationships between educators and the community.

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

The primary strength of APS is the diversity of the children who enter our schools, the community's desire for the best for those students and the dedication of the educators and staff who do the work of teaching and creating the learning environment. Dedicated educators have developed programs to meet student needs, from the most struggling young children to AP courses in every high school, the development of dual language programs and curricula that reflect our students' cultures and histories. The weaknesses frequently reflect the poverty in our communities. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to lay blame, test, punish and restrict opportunities, rather than providing the opportunities and supports that would lead to equality and success for all students.

6. What do you consider the role of the Board of Education?

By law, the Board of Education is responsible for hiring the superintendent, making district policy and approving and overseeing the budget. While simple to state, each of these has huge implications. The board will need to listen to the community and deliberate among themselves to find a superintendent who will be respectful and knowledgeable of our district, who earns the respect of the districts' educators with an understanding of teaching and learning, who will listen, but also lead. The board must find the best ways to implement mandates, but I also believe must be willing to push back if those policies are counter to best practices. Finally, as well as making careful priorities with the existing budget, the board needs to become a force in lobbying for adequate funding.
7. What do you consider the role of individual board members?

As an elected official, my first role would be to represent and be a voice for District 4. That makes it imperative to strengthen relationships between the community and the district. It is equally vital to establish an effective relationship with the other board members. Within that, I would hold to my principles of hiring a superintendent committed to collaboration in decision-making, to honoring and respecting the educators and the strength and diversity of the community; to make and implement effectively the policies that truly support teaching and learning, but to also to protect students and schools from policies that do not; to work for the most effective use of the existing budget. As a board member I will help organize a lobby that will fight for adequate funding for our schools, for our teachers, and our children.

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

The Board must be integral to all of the input in the hiring process, listen to the concerns and perspectives of the community, make sure that educators and employees have a voice in the process, and ensure that the superintendent is first and foremost committed to the public schools and all the students who enter them. Once hired, the Board cannot micro-manage. Communication, respect, and a focus on issues are key to a positive, productive relationship.

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

In my years of teaching children, being active in our school Instructional Council and the preceding school-based decision making bodies, working as an elected Federation Representative and as an Instructional Coach who supported educators in professional development, I learned that collaboration, listening, and focusing on the problem to be solved is always the best approach to any goal. Respecting others and their perspective and intentions is always critical. At the same time, I will stay true to my principles, based on the learning needs of children, the respect due to the educators who work hard every day to meet students' needs, and the families that entrust their children to the public schools.

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

For a teacher, school and student activities dominate a great deal of after-school and weekend time. This is time that helps to build relationships with students and families. Family conferences and communication that are so important in supporting children become an important tie to the community. From Kindergarten to graduation my daughter attended APS, so as a parent, I was involved in the events and groups in which my daughter participated. As a member of the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, I was part of organizing, lobbying, and activating people, both educators and community members, in support of the public schools.

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

District 4 has many vibrant community and parent organizations, both in the schools and neighborhoods. I will work tirelessly to build relationships in my community. I believe that the relationships I have with those organizations, as well as expanding the community forum and town hall formats already established by APS, will be vital for communication and input. There are numerous organizations focused on supporting students and expanding opportunities. An example is the development of Community Schools, where finding ways of making existing resources accessible and efficient, while also working to increase resources, can make a big difference in children’s lives.

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

I don't accept the letter grades imposed on schools. The grades simplify or ignore the complexity of schools, and, in the case of the School Grades, use high-stakes test to label and shame schools in direct correlation to the rate of community poverty. They do not reflect the innovation and successes that actually go on in a school, or the true struggles that need to be understood and addressed. I believe that the same would be true of giving a single grade to APS. There are numerous instances of dedicated educators at every level of the district, working to do the best for students. There are places where lack of communication, information, understanding, time, or resources fail our students. I care about analyzing and solving problems. In my experience, labeling does not help.
13. What do you think is the best way for the district to:

a. Improve academic achievement and close the achievement gap?

The achievement gap is reflective of an opportunity gap created all too frequently by the economic status of a family. The poverty in some communities greatly impact a family's ability to provide the experiences that build the background knowledge and the academic language that is rewarded in school. I would make sure existing resources are used to focus on instructional practices, recognize and build upon the strengths that children bring with them into school, while providing the pre-school and early education opportunities, content-rich curriculum and enrichment, as well as intervention opportunities, both within and beyond the school day that build the bridges to academic success.

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

Because our schools are funded primarily through the state, with additional federal funds, the Board needs to be extremely attentive to the priorities of the budget and use every cent with attention to its impact on students. I believe it is also imperative to involve the community, inform them of the budget realities, and to organize and help activate in advocating for sufficient funding.

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

Teachers' work environments are students' learning environments. Supporting educators and respecting the collective bargaining agreements are beneficial to our students' education. Ensuring that there are adequate resources and time for educators to respond to the needs of their students, to provide the instruction and programs that reflect the language, culture and history of our diverse population. All these things strengthen our public schools. Another proven means of making a safe and supportive climate is bringing in additional supports for students and their families through the expansion of Community Schools.

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

District 4 is a microcosm of a much larger world, and therefore, contains tremendous potential as well as facing many challenges. My first task would be to become even more knowledgeable of the organizations and programs that already exist. The Community School pilots in the district are an exciting solution to many problems and need to be expanded. These Community Schools depend upon the connection with the resources within a community and help develop a tangible connection between the schools and neighborhoods.

In this current environment of challenges and threats to public education, I am inspired by the possibilities of being a vocal advocate for our children and schools as a member of the APS Board of Education.

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

Barbara E. Petersen  [Signature]  January 5, 2015

Candidate Signature  Date