

Name: Bill Zarges
District: Las Cruces
Position: 4

Please answer the following to the best of your ability within 150 words or less.

1. What is motivating you to run for the school board?

What I perceive to be a lack of leadership from the Board. Too many issues that distract from the prime objective of improving the performance of the students.

2. What will your priorities be as a school board member?

Hopefully affecting the attitude of the Board and redirecting its efforts to serve the students better. Also the budget—is it optimized for educational needs or is there some fat that might be repurposed?

3. What have you done in the past to help your community thrive?

I am presently serving in my 4th term on the Doña Ana Planning and Zoning Commission. I was heavily involved with both the Vision 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the formulation of the Unified Development Code. While residing in New Hampshire prior to 2007's move to New Mexico, I served 10 years on the Candia NH School Board.

4. How have you previously advocated for students and educators in your community?

I served 10 years on the Candia NH School Board including several years as Chair.

5. How did your educational experiences shape you, and what lessons will you take with you from those experiences?

I learned that a good school board member stays in their lane. The only employee they directly oversee is the superintendent and board members need to craft policies and use their budget responsibilities to ensure the education of the district's students. It helps to stay out of politics and factions.

6. Have you ever worked as an employee in public education? If so, how did your school board affect you? What lessons will you take from your experience into this position?

Only my School Board service although I did teach adult education classes in computer literacy.

7. New Mexico has the lowest high school graduation rate in the nation. What specific steps will you take to address this problem?

I believe in increasing the emphasis on academic subjects and voctech curricula. If funding is an issue, then a decrease in extra-curricular activities might be impacted.

8. New Mexico ranks 49th in 4th-grade reading and math scores. What specific steps will you take to address this problem?

First, I'd work for policies to enlarge pre-K children to enroll in early childhood education programs. Then, encourage curriculum reviews and make sure there is adequate funding to implement the result of these reviews.

9. How will you advocate for both the students and the employees of the public education system in your role?

Anyway I can—public meetings, in-school presentations, being available to discuss concerns in this area with any and all stake-holders.

10. Think New Mexico, a non-partisan think tank, released a study in 2017 which suggests that the percentage of a state's education budget that makes it to the classroom, as opposed to administrative costs, is related to student performance. Do you agree? Will you advocate for an increased percentage of the budget going to the classroom? Why or why not? If so, how will you address the issue?

I do agree. Public school systems frequently are "top-heavy" with administrators and support personnel who do not directly impact student success. My primary budget concern will be ensuring more than adequate funding for educational imperatives.

11. New Mexico is combating a "teacher shortage." A recent study by NMSU said New Mexico's "teacher attractiveness score"* is 2.18 on a scale of one to five. What will you do to increase this score and make sure these vacancies are filled by qualified individuals as quickly as possible?

Make the teacher pay scale attractive to the recruitment of new teachers while at the same time encouraging the retention of good teachers. My previous experience in negotiating a collective bargaining agreement resulted in a pay scale as high as other communities in the area and also one that eliminated percentage increases in favor of set amounts for years of service and teacher educational improvement.

12. How can you make your school board an example of excellence for the other boards in the state?

By being elected. I believe my experiences serving in the past, in a very small district where every penny was pinched until it cried out, will enable me to be a voice for the students and teachers in the Las Cruces School District. The subsequent improvement in performance will make us the example for others.

**According to [NMSU](#) "Teacher Attractiveness Score" takes into consideration compensation, working conditions, teacher qualifications, and teacher turnover.*