

**Name:** Duncan Ware

**District:** Raton

**Position:** 1

*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?**

My motivation for running for the Raton Public Schools Board of Education is bringing a new voice to the board. A voice that will represent students, teachers, parents, and the community at large. Something as important as our children's futures should not be undertaken with limited public discourse, but should rather be characterized by robust conversations and debate.

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

My priorities as a school board member will be improving student achievement, transparency, sound fiscal management, and utilizing local talent.

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

I have served on our local juvenile drug court and the City of Raton Continuum Advisory Board. In these positions, my focus has been to improve opportunities for children in our community to have access to a variety of services and programs that will enhance their chances at success in the future.

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

Yes, I am a committed supporter and advocate for students and educators in our community. As mentioned in the previous question, I have worked to provide the availability of services to our youth through my work with the City of Raton Continuum Advisory Board and juvenile drug court.

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

My educational experiences have made all the difference. Education has permitted me to be a part of our world in a meaningful way and to contribute to our community. Education and experience has taught me that we all are endowed with talents, skills, and abilities that are diverse and that it takes all of us to make our communities work and thrive.

**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?**

Yes, I have 26 years of experience in education. I have served as a classroom teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. The effect a school board has on educators can be significant or nonexistent. I have seen school boards that are driven by individual board member agendas and have seen school boards that have a common goal/ vision that guides their decision making. I have personally found that when school boards are driven by a common purpose and vision that their decision making has the most positive effect for students, teachers, and parents. The lesson

that I will take from my experiences with school boards is that the best school boards focus on the following: sound fiscal decision making, well researched and vetted curriculum, policy review and development to provide guidance to school administration, staff and parents, and finally, to provide for appropriate district leadership in the selection, oversight, and if necessary, even termination of a superintendent.

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

The specific steps I would take to increase high school graduation are:

1. Increase student awareness that high school graduation is important and impacts future opportunities;
2. Provide alternative education opportunities for students that could include adjusted school day schedules to allow for employment or internships in the student's area of interest;
3. Increase student awareness of options available to them other than the traditional path from high school to college and provide information on vocational, technical, and the arts training programs;
4. Identify student interests and develop plans to provide opportunities for students to explore careers in vocational, technical, and the arts fields; and
5. Provide support by working to furnish the finances, personnel, and curriculum resources needed for vocational, technical, the arts.

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

The specific steps I would take to address reading and math achievement would be:

1. Provide support for fundamental skill building in reading and math;
2. Identify curricular support for skill mastery to include site word proficiency, reading fluency, contextual clue practice and development; and emphasis on learning fundamental math facts to increase math computation, math fluency;
3. Utilize local resources and talent to improve reading and math achievement; every school district has talented reading and math teachers; what do they do that is different and how do we capitalize on their success;
4. Utilize formative assessment to inform instruction; it is better to address learning issues on a regular and routine basis.

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

I believe that the opportunity to advocate for students and educators as a part of every daily discussion and action you take as a board member. I believe that the best way to advocate is to listen and gather information from constituents that will inform my decision making as a board member. By listening to and knowing your constituency you move beyond your personal assumptions to a more comprehensive and broad understanding of what will help improve student achievement and educator working conditions.

**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 agree wholeheartedly that financial resources being directed in a systematic and intentional way to instruction has a huge impact on student learning and achievement. I have worked in states that had statutorily mandated percentages for instruction and administration. In my position as superintendent of schools in Delta Junction, Alaska, the state required that seventy percent (70%) of the district's budget went directly into instruction in the form of personnel salaries, materials, and other instruction focused uses. Thirty percent (30%) of the district's budget went to administration to include not only licensed school administrators, but also maintenance and transportation. Any deviation from these percentages had to be approved by the department of education with evidence that some type of emergent situation would require an adjustment. I believe that in order to effectively direct funds to classrooms it is necessary to legislatively mandate the percentage. As a board member, I would actively advocate for a compulsory percentage of budget to instruction with the state legislature.

**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?**

I believe that, in our school district, it is important to develop relationships with colleges of education in our region, identify and actively recruit non-traditionally prepared teachers, advocate for elimination of the "one year sit out" provision required of retired educators by the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board, and salary schedules that don't just reflect impressive starting salaries, but salary schedules that entice teachers to stay. Many salary schedules reflect the state mandated minimums, but sometimes only show annual increases of little significance. Teachers' salaries, in some of these districts, remain stagnant until the legislature calls for increased minimum salaries, so teachers remain at the minimums year after year and have little incentive to remain. We need to make teaching as a career attractive to teachers and provide incentives to remain in the field.

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

I can make our school board an example of excellence by ensuring that the board focuses on the job of school boards. The school board should hire and retain an effective superintendent, budget appropriately, identify effective curriculum and curricular materials, and develop and review policy. I also believe that board excellence is measured by transparency and lively discourse to achieve the best decisions possible for the children of our community.

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