

Name: Gloria Martinez

District: Las Cruces

Position: 5

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?

I had been thinking about running for the Board after the issues with Columbia came about. I was concerned that the decision was made to demolish and build a new school at a cost of \$35 million, and this is my area of expertise. I believe the school board needs to work on transparency because in my opinion we are nowhere near where we need to be. I am concerned with the high number of terminations & forced retirements in the District from 2017-2019. Our school district employees need to be treated fairly and compensated accordingly, all these lawsuits are counterproductive, and they are putting a bad light on the District. I am also concerned that the District is now facing another lawsuit by the outgoing Superintendent. This is again going to put a strain on taxpayers. I want to help make our community better and build our future together.

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

First, we need to address the problem of instability in the administrative leadership of the Las Cruces Public Schools, by hiring the best candidate for Superintendent. This person should have experience working with; school employees, community, business, government agencies and have the vision and leadership skills necessary to lead the District. Second, we need to take care of our students and ensure they are safe and receive a quality education as they prepare for their futures; third, our school district employees need to be treated fairly and compensated accordingly; and fourth, our School Board must be much more transparent and spend taxpayers' money wisely and with public input.

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

As Director of Construction for LCPS, I have experience in working with the Public Schools Facilities Authority, and the Public School Capital Outlay Council. I completed approximately \$400 million in construction projects during my tenure with LCPS. I have worked with the state to acquire millions of additional dollars for the district, to assist with bond projects to help supplement project funds so that our bond dollars go further. And I have also applied for state monies to help secure our facilities in order to protect our students so that they are safer and more secure at school. A new school or major facility upgrade will provide better learning environments for students and will cost less to operate. School construction can bring in much needed money and can create jobs both within the construction sector and within the community and can help with enhancing the local economy.

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

In Los Alamos I was involved with the Women in Science Program, where I would travel throughout northern New Mexico talking with middle school and high school students about STEM programs. Throughout my career I have worked to try and inspire other students in order to increase participation by mentoring, tutoring and encouraging them to pursue a STEM career. Students who complete a STEM program did so because of; encouragement and opportunities that a role model or mentor could offer, and they tend to be more capable of surviving in this field when they have this support. I currently mentor female senior engineering students every semester from NMSU's College of Engineering. I think it is important to pass on knowledge and experience to prospective engineering students so that they will have a better understanding of what they will encounter when they graduate and be better prepared for the work place.

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

I have an Associate's of Arts degree in business, a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering, and a Master's in educational leadership administration, graduating with a 4.0 and with honors from NMSU. Throughout my entire undergraduate career in civil engineering, in the 70's, I was always the only female in the class. I never had a female role model or mentor, and I found my male colleagues were often afforded more opportunities. I was determined to complete my degree and vowed to ensure other female students had a role model and mentor that could help and guide them throughout their school and career. I have become a strong advocate for female students pursuing non-traditional roles, STEM, and I am trying to ensure all students have the same opportunities for success. I believe my engineering educational experience has better prepared me to work in a nontraditional field such as construction.

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?

I have worked 25 years in higher/public education and currently 11 years as the Director of Construction at LCPS. I produce a monthly construction report that is presented to the Board at every Board meeting. I am running for the Board as I believe we need more diversity. I do not believe there has ever been anyone on the Board with a background, experience and understanding in facility maintenance and construction like I have. After the issues with Columbia came about. the decision was made to demolish and build a new school. This is going to cost \$35 million, and this is my area of expertise. I was concerned that no one on the Board truly understood the issues of rebuilding as opposed to remodeling. I also believe the School Board needs to work on transparency because in my opinion we are nowhere near where we need to be.

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

Having and maintaining a high graduation rate begins in Elementary School. Students struggles and challenges must be identified in the early years. As educators, it is our responsibility to

ensure that everything is being done to prevent students' frustration, fear and the decision to "give up." We need to promote a mindset that everyone is accountable for graduation rates in our schools; parents, students, community members and educators at all levels districtwide. We need to communicate and inform students in all grades how dropping out of school will affect their future. Provide and ensure students have appropriate technical resources to motivate and engage students. Explore and provide possible – different pathways for students to be able to earn credits and graduate. (Ex- Different class schedules, vocational schools, etc.) Provide consistent mentor support to guide and help students stay on track. Promote incentives for good attendance, and track student's attendance.

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

By hiring a Superintendent that will address this issue through his/her leadership from a direction that will get students to engage in the curriculum and through enacting policies. As a Board Member I will visit different campuses, initiate conversations with teachers and administrators - to learn what their challenges are and what kind of support they need from us? Ensure that all campuses monitor and promote good attendance. Students need to be in school to learn. Promote teamwork, collaboration, and consistent planning among teachers. Learn how individual School Teachers and Administrators identify their students' strengths and challenges. Promote consistent – appropriate instruction beginning in Early Childhood programs. Ensure that students' learning challenges are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Promote reviewing and analyzing student performance data to identify learning levels and needs of all students' - to ensure that appropriate instruction is being provided to improve student learning.

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

As a school Board Member, we are responsible for supervising the Superintendent, if there are issues, I think these issues need to be resolved through thoughtful and respectful discussion and not ignored. Also, as a School Board member, we need to recommit ourselves to listening well to students, and employees. Any issues that come up should be addressed back to the Superintendent and both sides should be listened to. We need to make sure policies are in place that will benefit everyone from the students to the employees. When polices are changed that could affect either students or employees, we should make sure everyone is given the opportunity for input so that they have a buy in. Also, we need to make sure all students and school district employees are treated fairly, and employees are compensated accordingly.

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?

Yes, I agree with this assessment and I will advocate for an increased percentage of the budget going to the classrooms. The purpose of the school is not the administration. The most important part is the students. I will advocate to be on the finance committee so that I can see exactly where the district's money is going to ensure we are adequately funding our classrooms and not inflating our administrative costs. I want to ensure the school board is transparent and spends tax payer's money wisely, with public input, and that students' needs are put first.

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?

Teachers need to know and feel respected, valued, and that they have a voice. We need to hear what they need, what they see as priorities, and how policies impact their work. As a district we must be willing and prepared to offer competitive compensation. Explore and consider higher pay for all teachers, consider incentives and higher pay for "High need positions" such as Special Education, Bilingual Education, Science, Math, and Reading Specialists. Look at recruitment procedures and look at how "early" in the year the district can start the recruitment process. Ensure that applicants are highly qualified and certified accordingly to avoid teacher attrition. Provide Professional Development that addresses "teacher" needs to improve instruction. Collaborate with the Universities to support and mentor future teachers. Track applicants and teacher vacancies to determine what we can improve on to hire highly qualified teachers and maintain strong teachers in our district.

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

By having a commitment to equity, being transparent and accountable, trying to find the best innovative ways to help the students and having the ability to trust in the professionalism and expertise of teachers and other professional educators. We need to hire the best candidate for Superintendent. This person should have experience working with; school employees, community, business, government agencies and have the vision and leadership skills necessary to lead the District. We need to listen to students, parents, employees and the community. Encouraging the importance of K-12 policy issues for all students, representing the district at community events, ensuring accountability for student and district performance. We also need to be a good steward of the of our tax dollars, closely watching how we spend it, how we prioritize funding, with public input, and finally, ensuring our priorities always focus on students' needs.

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