

**Name:** Jesus Favela

**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?**

I believe it is important to take a proactive approach in my child's education rather than reacting to her education. I believe a solid educational foundation for children is more important than the policies implemented in middle and high schools. I understand they are important, but with no educational foundation, kids will struggle and are more likely to drop out. I am also motivated to run because there is a lack of transparency currently at LCPS including school policies, budget and personnel matters. I strongly believe that if an organization is receiving public funds, it should be open and transparent in their transactions. However, the number one motivation I have is my daughter and the children in Las Cruces. My daughter is not old enough now to attend school, but that is why I decided to run with the hope to have a positive influence within Las Cruces Public Schools.

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

My priorities are as follows (in no particular order):

- a. Educational standards
  - i. Higher standards for high school students in order to graduate
  - ii. Have LCPS staff create a consistent curriculum for elementary students and middle school
- b. Create an incentive program to attract and retain teachers (dependent on budget)
  - i. Pay to have teachers return to school for a master's degree in education field
  - ii. Increase school districts contribution to retirement and medical costs above minimum
  - iii. School loan payback
- c. Transparency
  - i. School budget
  - ii. Student and staff policies
- d. Planning for the future
  - i. Maintenance schedule for all schools to follow
  - ii. Creating a 5, 10 and 15 year plan for school building upgrades/replacement/new construction
- e. Student and faculty safety
  - i. Safe buildings improvements
  - ii. Access to all faculty to buildings

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

When I was attending college and after I graduated, I volunteered my time as a soccer referee and soccer coach for kids ages 3-6. There is a shortage of people willing to do either. In many cases, the games would not occur, as there were not enough officials.

As a soccer coach I started coaching my niece and nephew. Once they got older and began playing at the next age group I could no longer dedicate the time to coaching. However, I continued to coach young children. I enjoyed teaching them the basics of soccer as well to simply enjoy playing. I think parents also enjoyed the experience and learned to respect the kids, the official, and to allow their children to enjoy the game.

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

I have not had the opportunity to advocate for students and educators. My child is too young to attend school and I am not in the education field. My only experience is my personal experiences while attending LCPS. I was able to witness my parents advocating for my education and I strongly believe their advocacy is what helped me succeed in my education. I think parents need to advocate for their child's education, as they are their child's voice.

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

Not many candidates can say they are looking to represent the school district they attended. I can. I can also speak to my educational experiences at LCPS. I was taught two lessons, one was that some school staff view students as a way to secure and obtain funding. They will convince parents to allowing a child to stay in a program by telling them that their child will fail or drop out. In my case, my parents did not listen to them and advocated for me to leave the program, bilingual in my case.

Growing up I had amazing teachers that taught me valuable lessons. They taught it's okay to fail, it's how you respond that determines if it was a failure or a lesson. I saw them spending extra time to explain the topic making sure students who struggled understood the concept, and for that I thank them!

**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 not worked as an employee in public education.

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

This board has taken an interesting approach in addressing this issue. I strongly believe it is the wrong approach. By reducing the number of topics covered and removing some graduation requirements they are doing a disservice to the students, teachers and the public who are paying for a quality education.

I believe that addressing this issue at the high school level is the wrong approach. In order to address this issue it needs to be addressed at the elementary level. A good foundation in reading and math needs to be focused on because they are the building blocks in what's to

come. A student who has a good foundation is able to understand and comprehend the tougher subjects and materials in their educational career.

**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 main issue that contributes to this problem is the inconsistency in the curriculum. State officials force schools to adopt new curriculum and change requirements year after year under the pretense of being better for students to learn. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, but what it has done is lower students' comprehension and understanding in both reading and math.

I believe consistency in the lower grade levels needs to be a priority. I will address this by communicating with teachers who have a grasp on what actually works in the classroom. I will talk with them and determine what the shortcomings of the curriculum are and what needs to be addressed. Waiting on state officials to solve this problem has not worked and if we continue to wait on them will not get us anywhere. School districts need to take the initiative in order to address this problem.

**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, my priority will always be that of the students. The school board should make sure that students receive quality education. In order to guarantee this, the school district's budget needs to reflect this. The budget will need to have less administrative expenses and more on school classroom equipment.

School boards have one employee they are responsible for, the superintendent. However the policies the board enacts impacts employees in positive and negative ways. The board often forgets this and are often more concerned with administrators rather than the school employees as a whole. I will advocate for good pay for all non-administrative individuals and if able to start a back to school program for staff who want to obtain a bachelors or master's in education.

**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 believe this is a true statement, because students learn best and teachers perform better when they are given opportunities to attend educational workshops. The current training/workshop methodology applied at LCPS is to obtain this training and condense a weeklong course into one to two days. This is extremely impractical and serves no real purpose for students or teachers.

Classroom expenses are not limited to teacher trainings and workshops but also support staff. Staff such as full time social workers, diagnosticians and speech language pathologists. Support staff is beneficial because they provide a service to students that teachers are not trained to offer and the students receive a service to help them learn. In order to address the issue the board has to make it a priority to reduce administrative expenditures and increase classroom spending.

**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?**

The teacher shortage is a real problem for a lot of school districts nationwide; it is not just New Mexico’s problem. The data from NMSU was relevant and now it is not as it was weighed heavily on the compensation aspect. The move this summer by the state to increase starting salaries is a move in the right direction but another real problem that is often forgotten is the lack of graduates from teaching programs.

LCPS is attempting to address this issue by initiating a mentorship program to attract teachers to the district. This is a move in the right direction and will need oversight to ensure it is successful not just from the college’s standpoint but also for the school district by filling positions. I proposed other options that will attract qualified teachers and staff above and of course are budget constrained.

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

I believe accountability and transparency in a school board will make it an example to follow. There are several ways to do this. First, by increasing spending in the classroom. Second, by following through on their promises. Third, administrators and school board members need to be accountable for their actions. Lastly, doing this will lead them to being transparent in their expenses, policies and in personnel decisions. By doing this the public’s trust will be regained as currently public opinion of LCPS is less than ideal.

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