

Name: Peggy Muller-Aragon

District: Albuquerque

Position: 2

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?

The children are what motivates me. Everyday, I wake up and I think about our students and what we, as a district and community, can do to help them succeed. I am a retired educator, and taught at many schools throughout Albuquerque, and one thing that I know to be true across the board, is that every student has promise and deserves the best of our teachers, staff, leadership and community.

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

My priorities will be the same as when I was first elected. I demand that in every decision we make, students are put first. There are many interest groups whose priorities are not the children or their academic outcomes. I have worked diligently and successfully to add to our board policy that 'decisions will be made in the best interest of the children'. We must not lose focus of who, at the end of the day, we are responsible for.

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

I am proud to be active in my local community and have been most of my life: team mom, PTA, fine arts president, athletic booster clubs, school improvement team. Since being elected to the APS Board of Education, I have been fortunate to serve on the National Association of Latin Elected Officials Board of Directors; ABC Community Schools Partnership Board; Bilingual Advisory Committee; Council of Great City Schools Member District. Additionally, this past summer, the APS Board was fortunate to participate in Harvard University's Accelerated Board Capacity Institute. I am proud and passionate about Albuquerque and its students and will continue to serve on these boards and programs to highlight what's best about our community.

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

I have advocated for students and educators in my roles as a mom of three daughters, as a teacher, and now as a school board member.

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

Having taught in all four quadrants of Albuquerque, I emphatically know, all children can learn and every single one of them has promise.

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 worked as an APS educator for twenty-six years, and was taken aback at how detached the school board was from the everyday classroom experiences. As a life-long teacher, I know what good teaching and learning looks like, and will work hard to ensure this is what our students are able to experience.

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

Most importantly, we must empower our parents and students to make educational choices and decisions that best meet their needs. I will continue advocating for more vocational programming in our schools, and outcome based evaluations of our teachers, administrators and superintendent. We must bring all stakeholders, students, parents, business and community leaders, as well as, teachers, to the table to develop successful curriculum that benefits all parties. Our programs and options should always include what students want to participate in, but also what our local businesses need. The one size fits all approach clearly is not working, our schools must be cognizant of the needs and wants of those involved in our school system and beyond.

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

I am an advocate for using student data to drive instruction. Teachers who use this data have the roadmap that will help guide their teaching and in turn should lead to successful academic outcomes for their students.

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

I have been a student, a parent and an educator in our schools, and I believe that when we put our students' best interest above politics and outside interests, that the result will build a better school system. My first and foremost role, as a school board member, is about serving the best interest of our children and if ancillary to that, adults benefit, so much the better. Our schools can succeed if we think long term and not just about the next election.

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?

APS is a billion-dollar institution, with too many administrators making six figure salaries. These individuals serve at the pleasure of the superintendent. As such, they do what they must to protect their jobs, as well as, the superintendents. This arrangement works to circumvent any meaningful institutional reforms and I view this as quid pro quo. Yes, it is a shame that more of

this funding does not reach our students in the classroom. I will continue to call on our board to add a metrics system into our superintendent's contract. It is unfair that our teachers, on average, received an approximate \$5,000 pay raise, while the superintendent received almost \$30,000, with no accountability for classroom success. Our teachers deserve better, and most importantly our students deserve better.

11. New Mexico is combatting 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?

We need to encourage teacher internships at the high school level, teacher residency programs at the university level, and allow teachers to be compensated based on merit and student outcomes. We should change the perception that teaching is not a worthy profession. I believe we can start this by creating a culture that values teachers and teaching, that values learning and student success. This can be the impetus to halt the teacher shortage. Teachers do not choose their profession based on bias or politics, we choose this work because we believe in the promise we see when we look in every child's face.

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

We can create a model code of conduct, follow procedures and don't deviate from them, give our community absolute transparency with few closed sessions, have a meaningful dialogue with our school board audience and always live by the motto that CHILDREN COME FIRST.

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