

Name: Teresa Tenorio

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 am motivated by my instinctual love, protection, and service of our youth; my respect for the dedicated professionals caring for our students; my desire for thriving school communities; and my commitment to upholding the ideal of public education, which is to raise educated, empowered, and engaged members for a democratic and just society. I have been involved in amplifying our local voice and reclaiming the conversation within public education since 2015. I understand the political and bureaucratic processes that can drive or hinder school policy, leadership, and budget. I feel a moral responsibility to give back to my community and I am in a great position to do so, I have the time and motivation. I also have the knowledge, values, and reasoning suited to advocate on behalf of all of our students.

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

My priority is students. Complicated and multi-factorial issues in policy, budget, and oversight will be easier in scope as long as I always consider how they impact students and their access to quality education, quality educators, and quality school environments. I want to work on the Budget Committee to ensure funding goes into classrooms, reduce class sizes, boost teacher incentives, and plan for population growth. I want to help develop policies for a local Every Student Succeeds Act plan. I want to make sure our district abides by the Martinez/Yazzie court decision in "ensuring, as a part of that process, that as soon as practicable every public school in New Mexico would have the resources, including instructional materials, properly trained staff, and curricular offerings, necessary for providing the opportunity for a sufficient education for all at-risk students". And I want to enhance board presence and communication within the community.

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

For several years, I led a volunteer fitness meetup for mothers with young children and expecting women called "LC Moms on the Move". We promoted outdoor group fitness, socialization, emotional support, and community outreach. We didn't charge a fee so that money wouldn't be a hindrance to participation. Programs like ours improve physical and mental health outcomes for pregnant and postpartum women and they build lifelong family friendships that strengthen community. As a volunteer youth basketball coach for Las Cruces City Recreation, I introduce our youngest players to the sport! I am also a youth catechist at Holy Cross Parish and a girls' troop leader. I am active in supporting activities at the elementary

school my 3 children attend and I am ready to be a present and responsive public servant to all 8 schools and constituents in LCPS District 4.

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

The 2015 PARCC walkouts inspired me to research federal and state reforms that transformed public education over the last 30 years. I listened to educators, administrators, and families impacted by the mandates of the Martinez administration that weakened the supports for authentic learning and caused a teacher exodus. My oldest child wasn't even in kindergarten, but I had to get involved. I became an education activist. I admin education forums on Facebook with 2,000 followers. I developed and distributed information about the negative effects of high stakes testing. Now I share examples of best and innovative student-centered practices. I lobbied in Santa Fe during legislative sessions; defended the Next Generation Science Standards at the Public Education Department; hosted pro-learning discussion booths at our local street market; attended conferences and presentations; gave public input before our school board; and participated in PED community meetings and their Student Success Task Force.

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

I was an eager and quick learner and active in many extracurriculars. I respected the different learning styles and gifts of my classmates and peer-tutored. My best teachers loved their jobs and mentored their students. I was targeted by a school bully for 5 years. It was abusive and stressful. I graduated at the top of our small graduating class and attended Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. I did well academically, but struggled socially and emotionally. I left after 3 years and finished my bachelor's degree at the University of New Mexico. I learned that grades and test scores won't predict success, but a support system and holistic approach can improve one's chances. Our paths are not a straight line from A to Z. And it's the journey itself--with the courage to explore, fail, learn, and connect--that gives value to our lives and empowers us to help others.

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 been directly employed by a public school district. Rather, I have worked for organizations that were community partners within K-12 schools and Head Starts. With the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps, I led a group of high schoolers in a summer beautification project of a school campus and coordinated life skills classes for them. I worked with the principal. At the UNM-Health Science Center, I worked on various public health initiatives to develop, implement, and evaluate evidence-based health education interventions for school-aged youth, caregivers, and community gatekeepers. Our classroom interventions required permission from school principals and even some tribal councils, but weren't brought before a school board nor impacted by board decisions.

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

Our classrooms have been underfunded and underresourced for more than a decade. Class sizes are too large. Our teachers, social workers, and counselors are spread too thin. At-risk kids who would benefit most from mentoring and services fall through the cracks; research shows students with disabilities graduate at a significantly lower rate. The former PED changed graduation requirements yearly, as well as pass scores and test burnout, which contributed to kids losing interest in or being denied graduation. The hyperfocus on college prep has led to neglecting post-graduation options for different types of thinkers and doers. Let's fund our classrooms; reduce class sizes; support teachers and staff through pay, professional development, and workload so they can better tend to students; develop consistency in graduation requirements; provide alternative demonstrations of competency; and incentivize graduation as being a stepping stone towards THEIR goals, including technical and vocational training.

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

New Mexico also ranks last in child wellbeing. We need politicians, business leaders, and non-educators to understand that standardized test scores reflect more than just reading and math proficiency. Test scores also reflect cultural bias; socioeconomic status; housing, food, and job (in)security; childhood trauma; and the (in)ability of our schools and communities to respond to the needs of struggling children and families. When we have well-trained personnel and resources to address these issues, a child is ready and able to learn, it can even happen simultaneously. On the school board, I will help frame the problem, expand public understanding, and influence board decisions and state legislation to bolster student support and equity. Increasing recess and "specials" does not reduce scores, so we should better balance the elementary curricula. Also, let's invest more in early childhood education and extended learning opportunities.

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

A school's work environment is a student's learning environment. I will be the board member that I want as a parent: available, approachable, and responsive. LCPS benefits from a student advisory representative who sits on the dais and contributes at each board meeting. I want to encourage caregivers to work with us in advocating for their child(ren). I have started building relationships with administrators, departments, and employees. Because of my efforts and sincerity, I received the recommendation/endorsement by our teacher union, NEA-LC, and our classified employees council, CSEC-LC. I will use press and social media for communications. I will regularly host meetups with District 4 constituents. With permission, I will visit our schools, as I have already started doing. I will listen to multiple points of view, research, reflect, and act in the best interest of our students, being ethical, reasoned, and courageous.

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?

The budget is a moral document and I will advocate for an increased percentage of the funding to go into classrooms. I have visited classrooms and talked to teachers. I have seen and heard about the lack of instructional supplies, reduction in field trips, and the pressure on teachers to use their personal money for classroom expenses. We need to be vigilant about fulfilling the Martinez/Yazzie court decision. More money must benefit our Title I students, special education students, English-language learners, and introduces or enhances culturally relevant teaching and programs. When a superintendent is allowed to recklessly grow administrative positions and salaries, it may not directly impact student performance, but it takes away from other district investments and expenses that continuously get put last but shouldn't. I want to be on the Budget Committee and become well-versed on our district's budget and 910B related to the state equalization guarantee.

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?

Governor Lujan-Grisham and the Legislature are committed to meeting the Martinez/Yazzie decision and teacher shortage. This year, districts bumped teacher pay 6%. It's a start. Salary, benefits, and a supportive environment must be better than neighboring states. Las Cruces Public Schools' interim superintendent, Dr. Trujillo is the expert on building the teacher pipeline through recruitment and retention of local talent, and recently, the Department of WorkForce Solutions partnered with NMSU and LCPS for a teacher development scholarship program led by nationally-recognized teacher, Mr. Morales. I will advocate for teacher salary compression, so that a Level 1 educator can reach Level 3 salary over 30 years instead of 50 years. I will ensure funding goes towards requested professional development for teachers and their educational assistants. I want the superintendent to oversee Human Resources recruitment and encourage his/her principals to foster teacher collaboration and support for new and alternative-licensed educators.

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

I will abide by the New Mexico School Board Association (NMSBA) Code of Ethics and be vigilant about following the procedures for conduct of school board meetings. I am an upstanding member of my community and will continue to do so. I will keep the best interest of students as my main focus in all interactions and I will take an active and communicative approach to work with our various district stakeholders, including families, educators, employees, administrators, school community partners, the business sector, and state/county/city elected officials. I will continue to be receptive and learn. I will apply my knowledge concerning all aspects of positively transforming public education towards making informed decisions on the board and I will share with other boards across the state for their consideration.

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