

# CUSD Governing Board Candidate Questionnaire

## Noemy Esparza-Isaacson



**How long have you lived in Chandler USD boundaries?**

20 years

### **Education Summary**

I graduated #8 in my class from Mayfield High School in Las Cruces, NM.

After high school graduation in 1988, I attended New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, NM.

I graduated from NMSU in 1992 with a Bachelor of Business Administration, emphasis on Management Information Systems and a minor in Music.

I currently attend Arizona State University as non-degree intermedia student.

### **Current Employment**

I currently work as a ceramic arts instructor, Spanish teacher and intermedia artist. When opportunities arise, I accept consulting contracts as a programmer analyst. I am also a full-time parent of 4 amazing human beings.

### **Civic Engagement**

My family and I volunteer with local charities such as Feed My Starving Children.

I also volunteer at my children's schools with the PTO and Booster organizations and I serve on the Art Masterpiece Board at Knox Gifted Academy.

### **Additional Information**

2017-2018 CUSD Parent Advisory Council

## **Questions**

### **1. What unique qualifications do you bring to the Chandler USD Governing Board?**

There were many deciding factors that helped define my path to school governing board member candidacy. My passion for education, my commitment to the arts and the concept of a STEAM based education, the honor of parenting four CUSD children, my volunteer efforts in Arizona and a deep commitment to our community families and their educational goals are just a few. As a member of the Parent Advisory Council I felt a calling to pursue a higher level of involvement. In addition, my background as a parent, community leader, educator and three decades of experience in Information Technology and the Arts makes me the ideal candidate for this position. My first and foremost reason however, is my desire to give back to my community and be the voice for all CUSD families.

**2. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge facing our school district, and how would you address it as a board member?**

- a. Teacher salaries: Our district is outperforming most districts in our state. I'm proud to be a CUSD parent because I know that the board and superintendent are doing everything in their power to maintain a high standard of academic excellence for our students and simultaneously doing everything in their power to meet the needs of our teachers. Ultimately, they are responsible for determining district budget allocation and teacher salaries. This is a challenge the board and superintendent face every year. The budget, ultimately, is determined at the legislature level but they must make all the puzzle pieces fit precisely. Thankfully, bond measures also provide additional monies for the construction of new schools, school transportation, etc. I know we can find a common-sense approach to ensure that teacher salaries are not only fair but equitable. Also, teachers should not be burdened with paying for classroom supplies out of pocket.
- b. Students that have a consistent support system from their parents, teachers and family and a healthy emotional foundation will usually perform well and excel academically. One of my biggest concerns is reaching students that need emotional and educational support most. Determining how do we get closer to a 0% drop out rate will be an issue that I hope to champion. Helping to empower students to take the reins of their education when certain pillars of support are not present is critical in adolescence.
- c. I also believe that fully reintegrating the arts into our schools will have exponential benefits. The arts foster leadership skills, autonomy, emotional stability, abstract thinking and more importantly provides a cohesive platform for all disciplines. One of the most advantageous benefits to exposing our children to the arts at an early age is their improved self-directed learning experiences. Entrepreneurship is directly linked these skills.

**3. What role do you feel CEA should have in the district? How would you engage with CEA in your role as a board member?**

CEA is integral to the success of our district because it provides a cohesive voice for its teachers and a valuable platform to voice their needs. United, this collective front invokes change when it matters most.

**4. Describe your decision-making process and how you would utilize it as a board member regarding district policies such as contracts, working conditions, evaluations, etc.**

I am an analytical thinker and I love to crunch the numbers. Numbers speak volumes. But, when it comes to decisions, I listen first, I study the issues, I analyze, I revisit previous decisions and I talk to people to gather feedback. As a board member the latter strategy is the most important. I hope to be a sounding board for the community. As a board member, if elected, I will be their voice of our community and echo and support the values and needs of our district's parents and students. In summary, my decision making is a collective conclusion of not only technical data but also social and emotional data.

**5. As a board member, how would you help the district attract and retain talented education professionals?**

Attracting and retaining professionals in any field is challenging. Offering competitive salaries is key to attracting teachers to our district. Teachers also need to feel supported in their teaching environment.

**6. As a board member, how would you prioritize funding in the face of severe budget cuts (e.g., loss of federal funds, legislative cuts, reduction in student population/per-pupil funding, etc.)?**

As a school board member, my contribution to funding discussion and decisions will always put the students and teachers first. They are the most important factors in the education equation.

**7. What is your position regarding due process rights for school employees? Explain.**

All citizens, including school employees, have an inherent right to due process. Due process protects teachers from unjustified dismissal, discriminatory treatment, protects their academic freedom and provides a forum to openly dispute claims. This includes the right to receive notice of termination and a right to a hearing.

**8. What is your position on Proposition 305, and will you sign the invest in ed pledge as a candidate and/or a voter? Explain.**

The original intent of the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) was to allow parents of qualified students to seek a range of alternative educational services such as private school, homebased education or to tailor an individualized plan that was the best fit for their child. Qualified recipients include preschool and K-12 students with disabilities, children of active duty military, legally blind, deaf or hard of hearing students, students within a D/F rated school, students residing on an Indian reservation, siblings of existing applicants, or wards of the court. I am a supporter of the ESA program. As we look out decades into the future however, excessive expansion of the program could weaken our public schools, where 95% of Arizona children are educated. We have quality educational choices within CUSD and I believe ESAs are one of the important choices for students which meet the eligibility criteria. Because of this reasoning, I am not in favor of Proposition 305 and I would commit to signing the invest in ed pledge as a candidate. I am eager to be a part of a continuing dialogue regarding ESAs and Proposition 305.

I want to reassure voters however that I understand both sides of this issue. It is complex. As a board member I would be a part of the conversation and ensure that I was taking all points of view into consideration. The education of our district students requires our utmost respect and attention. We all need to see the big picture as well as understand its moving parts.