



**Stand for Children Colorado, Denver Chapter
2011 DPS Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire**

Candidate Name: Arturo Jimenez

Board of Education - District 5

Section I

- 1) What are your qualifications to become a school board member? Please give specific examples.
 - Existing board member, promoted unanimity on the school board
 - Involved Denver Public Schools Parent, who has experience working with CO Statewide Parent Coalition, etc.
 - Successful attorney—have the communication and organizational skills necessary for success. Can also understand and anticipate legal issues that face the Board and the District
 - On National Taskforce that meets with U.S. Department of Education regarding the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act.

- 2) What are the top three challenges facing public schools in your region? If elected, how would you address them?
 - history of under-achievement in many district schools
 - poor leadership that leads to ineffective teaching
 - a culture of low expectations by all
 - *solutions: renewed focus on teaching and learning; engage teachers, students, parents, & community members in substantive efforts to improve the schools. Treat all stakeholders as *partners* in reform, and make sure they all can use their insider knowledge of schools to craft solutions that will work in their specific school communities, data driven instruction, cultures of high expectations.
 - *solutions: call for more complete accounting of budgets and actual expenditures, and publish these, in English & Spanish, in a more accessible format for Denver's tax-payers; engage in public conversations about our priorities as a district and ensure that we are funding them appropriately as well as data-driven instruction
 - divisive atmosphere regarding school reform issues

***solutions: Continue working to be a bridge between different interests on the school board, promote a spirit of collaboration. School reform needs to be about teaching and learning, not political agendas. We need to put all of our best ideas and resources on the table and work together to accomplish things.**

- 3) Hypothetically, you have a chronically low-performing school in your region; please identify three strategies you would use to improve the school. What role would the community play in your plan?
- Engage the teachers, school leaders, parents and students in the process of identifying the schools' main problems and brainstorming solutions. What are their perceptions of the issues, and what do they think they would need to be successful?**
 - Concurrently, have CDE or another outside, expert body do a diagnostic review of the school to determine their view of what is troubling the school**
 - Work with the school community and district officials to implement a plan for success, adding resources and support and making personnel adjustments as necessary.**
- 4) At what point do you think a school turnaround plan must be considered? If elected, what criteria will you use to review, approve, and implement a turnaround plan?
- Schools, whether successful or struggling, should always be striving to improve, and we as the adult guardians of our students' educations have a responsibility to ensure that we do not neglect our schools to the point of failure.**
 - If members of a school community seem unable or unwilling to take substantive action to improve their performance, and meaningful support and resources have been offered but have gone unused or misused, a more drastic turnaround option should be considered.**
 - In the event of a turnaround, before approving a plan I would look to see evidence of meaningful input from teachers, principals, parents, and students; evidence of a realistic plan that has a good chance for success and minimizes disruptions to student learning. Regarding implementation, I would make sure that members of the school community were involved in overseeing it, to hold the District accountable to them, and that the District has the right people in place to hold the teachers and school leaders accountable to the plan and their responsibilities to the students.**
- 5) What do you expect the district superintendent to do to increase student achievement across the district and at individual schools? How would you evaluate his/her progress?

-set the example for leadership throughout the District, taking responsibility for being open and collaborative with all of Denver's public school stakeholders to improve student achievement

-Create a culture of respect and accountability for *all* adults in the system

-Create mechanisms for effective parent involvement

-work with the Board to make sure that Board and District policies, as well as local and state law, are being followed throughout the District; and advocate for changes as necessary to provide schools with the resources they need to successfully educate students

-evaluate progress by looking at data from the schools and central office, and getting input/feedback from his subordinates, as well as teachers, school leaders, parents, and students.

6) The school board has the responsibility of approving the district budget. How would you propose holding the district administration accountable for strategic resource management?

-make all information about the district budget & expenditures public, in English and Spanish

-periodically audit the central office and school sites to see how money is being allocated and spent

-routinely convene focus groups/meetings with teachers & school leaders to understand how resources are making their way into the classroom, and solicit ideas for improvements

-make this data a criterion for evaluating the Superintendent

7) Considering the current fiscal climate, in which three areas of the district's budget would you support substantial reductions or reallocations? What creative alternatives would you propose to minimize direct cuts to classrooms?

-reduce spending on programs/personnel at the school site that are less essential to schools' instructional mission

-Eliminate redundant and/or unnecessary positions in the central office to free up funds for schools

-ask teachers & school leaders about what kinds of positions/resources are necessary and trim those that aren't

-freeze salaries and bonuses, for central office personnel first, then school and classroom-level

8) Would you support a bond and mill levy increase in 2012? If yes, what would you include in the bond/mill levy request? If no, why not?

Yes, I would support sustainable/energy efficient initiatives to construct new schools, update aging/inefficient buildings and improve all systems overall that will result in higher student achievement.

9) ProComp, Denver's pay for performance system, was designed to be modified and improved over time. If elected, would you support opening up ProComp for renegotiation between the district and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association?

-Yes. I would also solicit teacher & school leader input on which aspects they believe are most important, and which we could probably do without; examine incentive structure to ensure we're incentivizing the right things, collaborating to improve student achievement, holding high standards for professional development and student growth objectives.

10) Please give an example of a situation in which you were not familiar with a concept and had to gain the necessary knowledge to make the best decision. How would you apply similar strategies if elected to the school board?

I was not completely knowledgeable around what changes could be made to the Elementary and Secondary Elemenary Act and who made those decisions at a federal level. I took the initiative to get involved and found out that I could become part of the national dialogue in shaping the reauthorization of the ESEA, otherwise known as the No Child Left Behind. I was selected to be a part of a Task Force that meets with the U.S. Department of Education, members of Congress and other stakeholders around the reauthorization. As a result, I helped to draft proposed legislation that will benefit English Language Learners and am deeply involved in the continuing dialogue about how to better ESEA for all students the next time around.

11) In recent years, DPS has been building a portfolio of diverse public school options. As a school board member, what role do you think diverse public school models play within the district? How will you support the unique learning needs of students?

-Our students, teachers, and school leaders are all different, so our schools shouldn't all be the same

-Diverse school models are an important ingredient for school success;they give options to families, and offer different ways of meeting students' different needs

-I support the unique learning needs of students by

***involving them and their parents in discussions of changes and reform to their schools**

***promoting flexibility in the assessment of special schools, like our alternative schools that serve some of our neediest students**

***respecting their cultures and assets, and promoting schools like Academia Sandoval and Beach Court, to name a few, that use student differences as a resource in the classroom**

12) If elected, how will you attract and retain students in the district?

-Working to offer strong schools and programs in *all* neighborhoods

-Promoting school choices that are inclusive of all students, including our highest-need students

-Work with school communities & district personnel to strengthen school visit programs & transparency, so families can see all the wonderful options we have in Denver, and make an informed choice about where they would like to send their children

13) Do you support the concept of social promotion? Why or why not? What action should be taken if a student has not demonstrated the skills necessary to move to the next grade level?

No. If a student has not demonstrated proficiency, they should not be passed to a level where they will fall behind even further. This is why data-driven instruction is so necessary in order to assess students throughout the school year and then provide intervention strategies that target specific needs of students.

14) What is your philosophy on board governance? What strategies will you use to be a productive member of the board?

-believe in collaboration and consensus-building—routinely work to bring different groups together for example when Bruce Randolph School applied for autonomy, I was the Board member that was able to get a unanimous vote in favor of the proposal.

-believe in being respectful—I don't target others; state my beliefs clearly while keeping an open mind to others' beliefs

-believe that an informed board is a board that makes better decisions which is why I call for continuing professional development of our members and a full accounting of the relevant information, community input, and sufficient time to consider something before voting.

15) What are your top three ideas to recruit, retain, develop, and reward excellent teachers and principals?

-Offer sound compensation and benefits to stay competitive with surrounding districts. One example is how I ran and won my last campaign partially based upon a merger between the DPS Retirement System and PERA. We now have portability.

-Make sure schools are well-resourced/that funds are spent wisely, so teaching and learning conditions are optimal. Smart professionals want to work in environments where they can focus first and foremost on educating students, not tracking down necessary materials

-Build/grow connections to area universities and teacher education programs, and expand models that are doing a good job of preparing teachers for work in DPS. Strengthen the pipeline into schools, and work with the many wonderful departments of urban education we have to offer robust ongoing learning & development opportunities for existing staff.

16) DPS continues to see a high level of principal turnover in low-performing schools. How would you work with the superintendent and school staff to address the school leadership

challenge?-Offer sound compensation and benefits to stay competitive with surrounding districts. One example is how I ran and won my last campaign partially based upon a merger between the DPS Retirement System and PERA. We now have portability.-Make sure schools are well-resourced/that funds are spent wisely, so teaching and learning conditions are optimal. Smart professionals want to work in environments where they can focus first and foremost on educating students, not tracking down necessary materials-Build/grow connections to area universities and school leader education programs, and expand models that are doing a good job of preparing leaders for work in DPS. Strengthen the pipeline into schools, and work with the many wonderful departments of urban education we have to offer robust ongoing learning & development opportunities for existing staff. Also, engage school leaders in the reforms around all systems and in meaningful parent engagement.

17) DPS is a pilot district for the implementation of Senate Bill 191. What is your position on the law? If elected, what role will you play to ensure successful implementation in DPS?

-I believe, as everyone does, that we need great teachers and leaders in our schools. I believe we accomplish this by doing what I said above, strengthening the pipeline into schools, ensuring that teachers and leaders are prepared to do a great job *before* they are hired, giving them the support they need to do their best work, and encouraging those who are not prepared or able to meet the challenges of working in DPS to find another profession. As a board member, I listen closely to teachers and school leaders to make sure that the law is being implemented in a fair and equitable manner. We can have strong accountability and maintain a nurturing and professional culture of success.

18) If elected, what are 3-4 measurable goals you hope to accomplish in your four-year term?

The effective implementation of the 2008 Bond project for Critical Maintenance that is already underway and will lead to identification and implementation of another bond for 2012 or later.

The effective revision of the School Performance Framework to include a reliable measure of Parent Engagement.

The effective engagement of communities by refining the community committee processes that we have already begun.

Create reform in partnership with the leader and teacher pipelines that exist with the schools of education that provide most of our teachers and leaders.

19) What else could you tell us about yourself or your experience that can help us make an endorsement recommendation?

I have been the voice of reason on the board and have brought different perspectives together as I have a balanced approach towards education reform that seeks to have all of the participants in student achievement provide input and collaborate in the best interest of

students. I am a lifelong North Denver resident, a parent of two school-aged children and a newborn so I am invested. I am bilingual and multicultural in order to help bring different groups together.