

Chamber of Commerce CUSD Board Candidate Written Responses

Marilou Estes, Candidate

Written Response

1. What are the major issues you see facing CUSD schools? What would you do to address these?

Let me begin by thanking the Chamber for the opportunity to discuss my candidacy and for their support of CUSD schools. Across the nation and state schools face many issues. CUSD, while considered by many to be a premier school district, has felt the strain to meet the ever-increasing number of challenges. The single most pressing issue is one of retention and recruitment of qualified teachers, support staff, and administrators. But I fear that unless the governing board, CEA, administration, community leaders, teachers and parents come together immediately to develop a plan to retain our current staff and recruit for the future, CUSD will soon become just another mediocre district. The key to this plan's success is focused communication to better understand the reasons for teacher attrition, and the development of achievable action steps designed to both retain and recruit quality instructional staff and administration.

2. Would you support a board decision you did not vote in favor of? Why or why not?

I believe in the consensus process for decision making. Unfortunately, this is not always possible when it comes to a group of individuals, such as a school board, tasked with making difficult decisions. I also believe that listening with an open mind is critical to clear thinking and quality decision making. If a school board has followed proper procedures, all board members as well as community partners, have had the opportunity to express their opinions and advocate, even argue, in support of their beliefs. Should I find myself in a minority when final votes are taken, assuming the decision was not unethical, illegal, or immoral, I would stand behind the decision of the board.

3. What programming and policies do you hope to bring to the district?

Occasionally a school board candidate endorses specific programming or policies that are partisan in nature. This partisanship may have profound effect on the programming and policies that are put forth for governing board consideration. I believe this partisanship to be inappropriate. My candidacy is built around the notion that all children have the right to a quality public education and all parents and community partners have the right to participate in this design. I mentioned earlier my intention to look for ways to retain and recruit quality instructors. I intend to be an advocate for reform of the

current educational funding model in Arizona. If elected, I would encourage on-going evaluation and fine-tuning of district mental health programs and services already in place. I would propose the study of, and incorporation of, research-based mental health programs designed to be supportive of the LGBTQ student community and parents of vulnerable children.