

Observer Corps Report, July 10, 2023  
APS Board of Education meetings, 7 and 21 June 2023  
Laura J. Downing ([downinglauraj@gmail.com](mailto:downinglauraj@gmail.com))

I “attend” the YouTube live stream of the meetings, and I report on topics most relevant to LWVCNM policy positions.

**Public Forum** on 7 June included 21 members of the public. No one signed up for the 21 June public forum. Issues raised include: new early start time for elementary school students at Bandelier ES. Several parents raised this problem and complained about lack of community involvement in making the change. The owner of Two Steps Ahead Child Care center and several parents complained that the center was shut down abruptly with no explanation and no replacement facility offered. The complaints focused on the lack of community involvement and lack of transparency in deciding to close the facility. The issue that drew the most public comment was the recent APS decision to permanently expel students who provoke violent incidents on school campuses, especially ones involving guns: <https://www.koat.com/article/albuquerque-public-schools-expulsion-guns/44133291>. A couple of mothers of children affected by school violence spoke out in favor, but the vast majority of those commenting at the public forum, many of them youth or parent organizers, spoke out in favor of other approaches: for example, restorative justice, violence prevention policies, parental accountability. Many noted that the permanent expulsion policy is likely to be implemented most strictly towards students of color and students with cognitive disabilities, increasing educational inequities in the APS system and violating the Yazzie-Martinez agreement.

**The Board meetings proper** continued to be dominated by detailed discussion of finalizing the strategic five-year plan for APS in order to satisfy the settlement requirements of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit, which addressed inequities faced by certain groups of students – in fact, the vast majority of students – in the New Mexico public school system: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/yazzie-martinez-updates/>. The current version of the Goals and Guardrails that have been put in place to address these issues can be found at this link: <https://www.aps.edu/about-us/board/aps-goals-and-guardrails>. Next steps include a focus on community engagement, on improved teacher training and on monitoring how well goals are being met in the coming school year. The Board will receive training on the monitoring process.

An issue discussed at length at both meetings concerned right-sizing (i.e., down-sizing) schools in the face of dropping enrollments. Indeed, right-sizing as a way to address lower resources as the result of lower enrollments led some Board members to question even routine funding measures like a capital improvement tax needed to support current facilities before right-sizing is completed. There was also lengthy discussion of whether to fund a new Early Child Center in the face of right-sizing, even though the legislature has just passed a law making pre-K education a right and a mandate for APS. It is a concern how to meet right-sizing goals while also meeting early childhood education requirements and providing adequate support for dual language programs.

At the 7 June meeting it was announced that Scott Elder will be stepping down as Superintendent of the APS when his contract ends on 30 June 2024. At the 21 June meeting, an update was given on the search process for a new Superintendent. The goal is to name a new Superintendent by spring 2024. Community feedback will be sought in formulating the position announcement, and a search firm will be used to find qualified candidates.