

# I. Executive Summary

Creating a new school district on Albuquerque's Westside will give us the opportunity to have two school districts that work instead of one large district that clearly doesn't. After two school districts are formed, both APS and the new Westside School District (WSD), given the smaller number of students in each, can succeed in making progress with the very pressing needs of both districts. Thus, it is in the best educational interests of APS, WSD, and the state of New Mexico that a new district is formed on the Westside.

Clearly, APS is failing so many of its students, and other districts are outperforming our state's largest district. Report after report has shown that APS is underperforming in the areas of test scores, dropout rate, graduation rate, truancy, reading and math proficiencies, AYP, security and community involvement. APS is simply not working well for our students on the Westside, as evidence will show. One of the main reasons for this lack of success is that APS has simply gotten too large and cannot respond well to the needs of its communities. While there is a natural concern about splitting a district that has been around for so long, we do not believe that we should fear dividing the district only because we fear change. Change is often a good thing, and in this case it most assuredly will be best for the students.

***“In this report we are demonstrating through evidence that smaller districts work better for our children; that APS has not been a successful district over the past decade; that the WSD and APS will benefit from the new arrangement as they can devote more resources to individual attention; and that the WSD deserves a chance to give our children a better education.”***

The boundaries for the new WSD are the Rio Grande River on the east; Central Avenue and I-40 on the south; the Bernalillo County line on the west; and the Bernalillo County line on the north and including a small section of Sandoval County that is now in APS, and also Corrales, approximately 381 square miles. Currently, APS has 88,000 students, making it the 30th largest school district in the nation. If the WSD were created, it would include 21,000 of those students, making it the 3rd largest school district in the state. The new district would have 30 schools, which would include 13 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, one alternative school and five charter schools. There would be three new schools, one high school, one middle school and one elementary school. In addition, as part of the capital master plan, there will also be a new Westside stadium.

Legitimate questions have been raised about the financial viability of a new WSD. We have treated these concerns very seriously. No one wants to have a school district that cannot support itself. In this case, however, we have determined beyond a shadow of a doubt that the new WSD would be financially viable. As the 3rd largest school district in New Mexico, clearly it would have the tax base and student population to make up a successful district from a financial point of view. A report from independent financial consultants herein shows that the district would be able to support itself on an ongoing basis. **In addition, tax increases will not be necessary to support the new district.**

Moreover, this district has been formulated to ensure that the demographic composition is in line with the current APS statistics. In the all-important areas of ethnicity and economic levels, the new district will have in most cases the same numbers as APS currently has.

This district will have appropriate diversity in ethnicity and socio-economic levels.

As a model for success, we hold up the Rio Rancho school district, known as RRPS. In 1994, RRPS became an independent school district, breaking away from APS to form its own district. Since then, it has excelled in student performance, efficiency, and accountability. It continually outperforms APS in the critical areas. RRPS has approximately 15,000 students currently. The WSD, with 21,000, would be able to create similar success.

Our research has indisputably demonstrated that large districts do not serve the best interests of their students, and APS, as the 30th largest district in the United States, clearly has been burdened with many of the intractable problems that weigh larger districts down and keep them from succeeding. There are five reasons why smaller districts work better:

1. Smaller districts give community identity and give influence to parents and other leaders;
2. Smaller districts improve fiscal efficiency;
3. Smaller districts improve efficiency for administrative personnel;
4. Smaller districts enhance school effectiveness;
5. Smaller districts promote better student performance and achievement. The WSD can obviously take advantage of these issues.


Community and parental involvement and participation is critical for the success of a school district. APS has failed in its responsibility to involve the Westside community. A Town Hall Report conducted by New Mexico First cited several community recommendations for APS to follow. Unfortunately, none have been successfully achieved. Much of this is due to the size of APS, which cannot cater to its many communities without damaging the whole. As

a smaller district, the WSD can promote community involvement and successfully carry it out with neighborhood integrity. In addition, the Westside has been shortchanged by the current representation on the school board. As its own district, representation for the Westside would be much enhanced and appropriate to a district our size.

***“It is time for us to have two school districts that work well rather than one large school district that doesn’t function well at all.”***

When a district divides as would happen in this case, there is often concern for the current faculty and staff. The WSD fully expects to create new collective bargaining agreements. Teachers, educational assistants, secretaries and clerical staff, and janitorial, maintenance, and operations personnel will be assured that new collective bargaining agreements will be in place soon. All school personnel can rest assured their employment will be continued.

One of the primary purposes of forming a new district is to improve student performance and create enhanced accountability for our administrators. It is our belief that with inde-



pendence will come the ability to meet the AYP standards, increase student test scores, decrease dropout rates, and increase graduation rates.

This prospectus demonstrates that a new WSD would be in the best interests of our students; would be financially viable; would involve our parents and community in a much more potent way; would improve student performance; and would make both APS and the new district stronger and better school districts. Madame Secretary, the time has come for a new independent school district on the Westside of Albuquerque. We are asking for the opportunity to provide the best education for our children.

***“The potential westside school district (WSD) would have significant resources available to fund capital projects in the district without raising tax rates.”***