

Kyla Armstrong: New Leadership for a Brighter Future

How will you make APS different?

I will make APS different being there for the community as a public servant and being held accountable to the community of which I serve. I will also bring equity, I am very passionate about serving ALL students and families. I am also bilingual in Spanish and I have lived abroad in Argentina and Mexico, so I have a unique perspective in terms of what it means to be culturally aware, responsive, and sensitive. Lastly, I will bring transparency. I will advocate for more parent, teacher, and student involvement at our board meetings. If the community doesn't come to us, I will come to the community.

Why do you want the position? What is your current occupation?

I want this position, because I know that I can make positive changes in my community, because I've done so where I work in Denver. I am the director of the Second Judicial District Senate Bill 94 Program which is a program that serves at-risk youth and provides alternatives to incarceration. I am very passionate about education and serving the community. I also teach graduate and undergraduate courses at Colorado Technical University. I was recently appointed by Governor Hickenlooper to the State Board of Accountancy, I am also a member of the Kiwanis Club and a member of Colorado Black Women for Political Action. Furthermore, I have a Ph.D. in Human Services and a MS in Criminology. My undergraduate degree is in Spanish. As an educator and juvenile justice professional, I have a well-rounded viewpoint. My unique background of higher education, juvenile justice, advocacy, and serving non-profits can bring a fresh perspective to what should be a well-rounded, community-minded School Board.

What are your thoughts on last year's discovery of Eric Nelson's fabricated resume?

School Board Directors are leaders and public servants. As a public servant, we should be held accountable by the community of which we serve. Honesty is one of the most valued and valuable leadership qualities one must have. Without honesty, you lose legitimacy. This is an exciting time for the District; having four open seats and candidates who all have unique backgrounds and valuable characteristics that they can bring to the Board. We can really make some positive changes! In my honest opinion, I think that School Board Directors should receive background checks in the same manner that teachers and other school personnel receive them. I would be a strong advocate for that.

What do you think is the biggest problem currently in APS?

Based on my research and understanding of key issues in Aurora Public Schools, there are several top priorities and concerns that I have that I'd like to address. Addressing the budget shortfall and establishing transparency would be priorities, along with teacher retention and student engagement.

How do you plan on approaching the budget deficit?

Considering the shortfall, it is important to have transparency and an improvement of communication about how the cuts will impact the entire district. Education needs to be the primary focus of the board and decisions should not impact overall service delivery and/or access to education for ALL students. The bottom line is that we need to be very strategic in how we make our decisions and involve key stakeholders in the decision-making process.

What would you do to positively impact the current teacher shortage and attract more teachers?

I see this question two-fold: in terms of teacher retention and recruitment. My opinions for improving teacher retention are simple: Provide Support, empower them to succeed, and create better work

environments. Give them more opportunities to express their concerns and opinions. The School Board should not be so disconnected and isolated and we need to empower the teachers to tell us directly about their concerns. In terms of recruitment, our community is very diverse. It is important that our recruitment strategies are targeted to engage candidates that have unique and diverse backgrounds. Education plays a critical role in empowering our society and paves a way for equity and opportunity. I want all students and families to know that they are supported by Aurora Public Schools. That needs to be represented by our hiring practices as well.