

Observer Corps Report, 14 November 2023
APS Board of Education meetings, 18 October and 1 November 2023
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I “attend” the YouTube live stream of the meetings, and I report on topics most relevant to LWVCNM policy positions.

Public Forum. The public forum has continued to be dominated by speakers concerned with books and classes that potentially discuss gender-identity and the availability of gender-affirming counselling in APS schools. Speakers have continued to accuse APS of spending more time providing information on issues like abortion and gender identity than on educational basics. Supporters of the LGBTQ+ community have spoken out in favor of schools as a safe space. Several speakers spoke against the idea of banning books in schools that discuss discrimination and other sensitive issues.

The Board meetings proper continue to be dominated by detailed discussions implementing the strategic five-year plan for APS in order to satisfy the settlement requirements of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit. At the 18 October meeting, an early literacy monitoring report was presented. There was discussion of what can be done to improve scores. It is hoped that the new emphasis on early education will soon begin to impact results for grades 2 and 3. . The Superintendent reported on graduation rates for 2021, which was significantly affected by the loss of students during the pandemic. The President of the Board’s report at this meeting highlighted a recent tribal leaders’ summit and discussion of strategies to improve the graduation rate of native students. At the 1 November meeting, community engagement events were discussed, specifically ones aimed at getting community input for the search for a new APS Superintendent. There was a long discussion of the new Board of Education Governance manual focusing on how to interpret requirements to report gifts and conflicts of interest that might influence Board members’ votes