

## **Candidate Statement: Oscar Torres-Reyna**

### *1. What is your family's history at PCS (grades, length of time at school, etc.)?*

Oscar Torres-Reyna has one daughter in 5th grade at PCS, and a PCS alumna now in 9th grade at Princeton High School. Oscar's family has been at PCS for three years. This may not seem to be an advantage, but Oscar brings a fresh set of eyes to a great school system in need for some improvements.

### *2. Please explain how your background and experience make you a suitable trustee for PCS.*

Oscar brings strong teaching experience and unique perspective on academic achievement and performance (please see my bio at the end of this document). The board can benefit from an expert educator in reviewing the current academic structure at PCS to make sure the school remains strong as a whole, but also it is able to provide and fill the educational need for every single kid enrolled at PCS. Here I am talking about not only the average student, but also those with special needs and those who join at later years. Every student should, by 8th grade be as prepared as their peers and ready to go on to High School. Let's recall, this is a very small school, there is no excuse for every single student not to be attended.

### *3. What has compelled you to run to serve as a trustee at PCS?*

After eighteen years, PCS has become a brand name and synonymous with high quality education. Indeed, as a school, PCS is well-positioned in the rankings, however, at the student level, the perceptions seem to be mixed. Among other issues, it seems some kids are not getting the benefits of a well-rounded education; parents do not have, in their hands, full details of their children learning process; there seems a disconnect between "a little too much" homework (as one parent put it) and testing results; and, as another parent pointed out, there is a real retention problem in 7th and 8th grades (which not only questions the quality, but also poses some real funding problems for the school). It looks like, towards the end, the incentives that PCS provides against the alternative do not seem to be that great. These and other issues have motivated me to run to serve as a trustee at PCS.

### *4. If elected, are there specific goals or initiatives you would like to pursue?*

A serious and an honest self-criticism and self-evaluation are important for any institution that wishes to thrive. PCS as great as it is, is not immune to the negative effects of a vicious cycle that can happen due to the lack of transparency, accountability and diversity. I want start and to be part of that conversation, and would like to see some tangible results, in particular, regarding PCS academics.

### *5. Do you have any specific ideas about how PCS can be improved?*

I see some transparency problems in the school, in particular in the learning process and in some teaching practices. We need to have a serious and honest conversation on this topic and bring all the parties together with an open mind. There is also a communication problem between parents and the school administration regarding substantive response on issues and/or

complaints. On this last point, I have to be clear that we need to keep the balance between frivolous complaints and complaints that are symptomatic of more serious issues going on. As I mentioned before, PCS is a great school, offering high quality education, we just need to make sure that all students benefit from it, including those with special education needs, and those who join at later years.

### *Oscar's bio*

Oscar brings twenty-five years of teaching and consulting experience in public, private and academic sectors. His areas of expertise are data analysis, statistics and public opinion. In the public sector he worked for the presidential adviser to two Mexican presidents, his main job was to predict electoral returns, track presidential approval, and to evaluate the citizens' reaction to public policies. In the private sector, he worked in the public opinion unit of Phillip Morris Management Corp. on projects related to corporate social responsibility, societal alignment and corporate image. In the academic sector, in Mexico, he has taught courses on public policy, governance, transparency and accountability. Since 2007, he has been working as Data and Statistics Consultant at Princeton University where he helps students understand the complicated world of data analysis, and to explain complex statistical procedures in a one-on-one approach and through workshops. He is also a part-time lecturer in the Department of Statistics and Biostatistics at Rutgers University where he teaches statistics courses at undergrad and graduate levels. His long experience as educator has taking him to explore teaching methods that allow students not only to understand concepts and procedures, but also to empower and motivate them to become independent learners. His teaching efforts were recognized in 2013, when the Princeton graduating class made Oscar an honorary member. Education: BA in economics from the School of Economics/UNAM (Mexico); diploma in applied statistics from ITAM (Mexico); Masters in Public Administration, and an MPhil. and PhD in political science from Columbia University (New York City).