

# **Post-Pandemic Public Education: Equity & Excellence**

ATF's Priorities  
2021 Legislative Session

Presented by  
Dr. Ellen Bernstein, ATF President



**ALBUQUERQUE  
TEACHERS  
FEDERATION**

This summer at the AFT convention, delegates overwhelmingly passed a raft of ambitious resolutions taking on the health, economic and racial justice crises our country faces, and envisioning a better America now and as we build back after COVID-19.

Elevating public schools beyond the legacy of COVID-19, is a visionary motion that addresses years of disinvestment in public education have led to overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating school buildings and outdated books, materials and technology. COVID-19 has not only heightened the challenges many students already face in their daily lives, such as food scarcity and unsafe housing, but also increased the inequities of the digital divide.

This [resolution](#) envisions an opportunity to “move toward reopening school buildings and continuing American public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past but as it can be.” The resolution commits the AFT and our affiliates to advocate for the safe reopening of America’s public schools and to provide schools where families want to send their children. It urges AFT affiliates to mobilize members and unite with their communities to win more equitable state and local distribution of education funds and to be more proactive in planning for returning to school buildings by collaborating on programming, space, operations, staff deployment and scheduling.

The whereas statements from that motion, reprinted here, set the stage for our work in New Mexico for a **Post-Pandemic Public Education: Equity & Excellence**.

#### Elevating Public Schools Beyond the Legacy of COVID-19

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers believes in and stands ready to fight for public education, as a high-quality public education is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, a moral imperative and a fundamental civil right; and

WHEREAS, years of disinvestment in public education have led to overcrowded classrooms, schools without nurses, librarians, counselors and the specialized personnel that ensure children’s well-being; deteriorating school buildings with outdated materials and technology; unhealthy and unsafe environments; and a too-narrow array of academic, enrichment and extracurricular programs; and

WHEREAS, the over-reliance on standardized test scores in punitive test-based accountability systems has created an education system where schools are ranked and sorted rather than supported, pitting the needs of our most vulnerable students against more affluent communities; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus is a global pandemic threatening the health, safety and economic well-being of the people we represent and those we serve; and

WHEREAS, the AFT recognizes that the burdens of systemic racism and poverty are felt in communities where members live and work, and we fight for equitable educational opportunities for all students; and

WHEREAS, temporary school building closures due to COVID-19 highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities within the education system caused by polarization, privatization, and cuts to public education funding, and added to the challenges many students already face in their daily lives, such as food scarcity and insufficient housing, child care and health services; and

WHEREAS, students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to lack access to high-speed internet<sup>1 25</sup> and 1:1 access to a device (tablet or laptop); and

WHEREAS, delivering virtual distance learning, where students spend most of their school day online—interacting with their coursework, teachers and peers through technology—is only an emergency option and doesn't meet the full needs of any student; and

WHEREAS, research shows that teachers are integral to the success or failure of technology use in schools, and educators must have meaningful input on the purchase of technology, virtual distance-learning plans, and professional learning opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the AFT has long been an advocate for providing teachers and students with the highest-quality instructional materials and pedagogy, and adapting to new knowledge and tools to support improved instruction; and

WHEREAS, reopening America's public school buildings in a post-pandemic era affords this country the opportunity to rethink schooling to achieve a more equitable, student focused education system that helps each child to succeed and achieve; and

WHEREAS, brain science tells us that healthy cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of students must be our focus; and

WHEREAS, we are at a critical moment when we must move toward reopening school buildings and continuing American public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past but as it can be—as the center of democracy and the cornerstone in our community where every child can succeed.

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## Post-Pandemic Public Education: Equity & Excellence

A positive call to action

The closing of school buildings during the pandemic affords us an opportunity to rethink the schooling we have been providing. We must seize this opportunity to achieve a more equitable, student focused education system that helps each child to succeed and achieve.

The 2021 legislative session is the critical moment when we must move toward reopening school buildings and continuing American public education - not as it is today or as it has been in the past - but as it can be: *the center of democracy, the foundation of a fair and just society and the cornerstone in our community where every child can succeed.*

During this session, we can start working to rise above the decades of underfunding, testing as the foundation of schooling, half-hearted measures, the misdiagnoses of education problems, and blame-shifting. We can lay the foundation for the schools our students need and deserve by reimagining our public education systems as:

- Relationship rich
- Student centered
- Anti-racist, and a
- Professionally satisfying institution .....in which we are able to prepare students to be caring, competent, critical thinkers and fully informed, engaged, contributing members of society.

## **Why We Should Aim for Reinvention**

Our current system took shape almost exactly a century ago, when scientific managers were looking for ways to accommodate the huge influx of students into urban areas from migration and immigration, coupled with the spread of compulsory education. The primary goal was preparing students for manual work on farms and in factories, as factory and landowners sought efficiencies from the rise of assembly-line technologies and new model bureaucracies. Schools were developed to maximize rule following and rote learning and to minimize relationships.

Only a small number of students were identified for access to the higher-order skills needed for thinking work. Funding, school assignment, and tracking systems designed to allocate students to their “places in life” were enacted within contexts of deep-seated racial, ethnic, and cultural prejudice.

Educators and policymakers have sought to evolve this system over the ensuing decades, with recurring eras of reform that have made small dents in the systems we have inherited. However, in a moment when we have more knowledge about human development and learning, when society and the economy demand a more challenging set of skills, and when—at least in our rhetoric—there is a greater social commitment to equitable education, it is time to use the huge disruptions caused by this pandemic to reinvent our systems of education.

We now know a great deal that we did not know 100 years ago. We know much about how people learn; how to enhance children’s development through productive relationships in supportive settings; and how to enhance their learning through inquiry-oriented, culturally relevant pedagogy and curricula, as well as through authentic, formative assessments.

The question is: How can we harness these understandings as we necessarily rethink school? How can we transform what has not been working for children and adults? As state and district leaders prepare for what schooling will look like in 2020 and beyond, there is an opportunity to identify evidence-based policies and practices that will enable them to seize this moment to strengthen learning opportunities for students. Currently, these efforts are highly variable and inequitably available, but growing coordination across state and district lines can solve some of our greatest challenges.

While deep inequalities have pervaded every aspect of education since schools were closed in the spring, remarkable areas of innovation and change have also occurred. We have seen more rapid progress in 2020 in bridging the digital divide than we have seen in the last 20 years. We have seen more uptake of technology-driven innovations in teaching, more outreach directly to families, and more collaboration time for teachers than were thought possible even a few months before the pandemic shut down in-person learning.

The initial changes were made quickly to meet immediate needs, but a broader question should guide our efforts throughout this year and beyond. How can we redesign schools to be:

- student-centered in ways that support the whole child’s social, emotional, cognitive, moral, and identity development;
- focused on deeper learning that meets the demands of today’s society;
- culturally and linguistically connected and sustaining;
- grounded in collaboration among students, staff, families, and communities; and
- equitable in the opportunities provided and outcomes achieved?

- Darling-Hammond, L., Schachner, A., & Edgerton, A. K. (with Badrinarayan, A., Cardichon, J., Cookson, P. W., Jr., Griffith, M., Klevan, S., Maier, A., Martinez, M., Melnick, H., Truong, N., Wojcikiewicz, S.). (2020). *Restarting and reinventing school: Learning in the time of COVID and beyond*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

**Priority 1:  
Addressing Yazzie/Martinez Beyond the Surface and  
Into the Deep Structures of Schooling**

The ruling in *Yazzie/Martinez* challenged the state to provide students – especially low-income, Native American, English language learner (ELL), and students with disabilities – with the educational programs and services necessary for them to learn and thrive. In addition to sufficient funding, the judge specifically mentioned the need for multicultural and linguistically relevant education. While still relevant and essential, in the few short years since the ruling it is clear that we must dive deeper. We must strive for an education system that is anti-racist.

**Anti-racism**

- Anti-racism is the “active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.”  
*The National Action Committee on the Status of Women International  
Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity*
- As schools in the United States try to reopen during the coronavirus pandemic, they're also opening during a racial reckoning across the country.
- Anti-racist work means acknowledging that racist beliefs and structures are pervasive in all aspects of our lives – from education to housing to climate change – and then actively doing work to tear down those beliefs and structures. Schools across the nation are committing to the all-important work of anti-racism.
- Equitable school environments reject a colorblind ideology and curriculum centered around whiteness. Equitable education efforts intentionally replace the historically dominant narrative with culturally responsive teaching and curriculum that is inclusive of other racial groups’ history, contributions, and insights.
- Anti-racism is a cultural shift in our K-12 classrooms that moves from students being seen as “receptacles” for learning to a framework that recognizes the simultaneity of students’ intersecting identities (race, class, sexuality, gender, citizenship status, differing abilities, primary language, etc.), situates those identities in systems of inequity and resistance, and values these lived experiences as assets in the classroom.
- The framework of anti-racism supports cultural responsiveness as a much deeper introspection of instructional practices in order to ensure that teachers



are not simply teaching content but teaching students in ways that respect, promote, and incorporate diverse ways of thinking, learning, and communicating. As such, in all classrooms we must support a critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color and address the social, economic, and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression and privilege connect.

### **Policies that support: Anti-racism**

1. Create a policy that will protect the teaching of anti-racism in our schools:
  - There shall be zero tolerance for racist speech and policy in NM educational institutions.
  - There is nothing political about teaching anti-racism. Therefore, teaching anti-racism shall not be construed as supporting a political position on the part of educators or districts.
  - Educators who teach anti-racism shall not be sanctioned or silenced.
  - Districts shall make no rule or policy limiting educators' ability to teach anti-racism.
  
2. Change the public school code that governs the purchasing of textbooks:
  - Since 2015, Representative Sheryl Williams Stapleton has introduced legislation that would amend the section of the public school code to expand the definition of "instructional material" to include "original source material from primary sources" and "content resources, excluding electronic devices and hardware that support digital learning formats and educational programs."
  - This change provides schools more flexibility in spending instructional material funds by eliminating the requirement that schools must use 50 percent of their annual instructional material allocations on materials from the state approved list.
  - Textbook companies do not provide anti-racist materials. Nor do the texts that school districts purchase from the approved list include rich literature in multiple languages, from black, brown, and native authors; that challenge racism and shine a spotlight on systemic injustice; or that correct a whitewashed historical narrative and offer a vision for a more equal future. We need instructional materials, fiction and non-fiction, in which students in New Mexico can see themselves.

- Note: #DiversifyOurNarrative is a student-led initiative that targets USA school boards to expand curriculum with diverse and anti-racist texts. Their mission is, "to fight to be anti-racist and encourage a productive dialogue on race and identity among our student bodies through the inclusion of racially diverse, anti-racist texts in USA Schools; to work towards racial justice, educational equity, and community power."
3. Create legislation that would move us forward in implementing the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act:
- Incentivize bilingual citizens to become teachers.
  - Require all schools to implement over time Dual language programs in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages.
  - Note: Judge Singleton's ruling cited the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act created by the legislature to ensure equal education opportunities for students in New Mexico. This act states that cognitive and affective development of the students is encouraged by:
    - using the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in a bilingual multicultural education program;
    - providing students with opportunities to expand their conceptual and linguistic abilities and potentials in a successful and positive manner; and
    - teaching students to appreciate the value and beauty of different languages and cultures.
  - Note: The writers of the NM State Constitution envisioned a public school system in which all schools were bilingual, and all students graduated as bi-literate. Our NM Constitution states:
 

Article XII - Education, Section 8. (Teachers to learn English and Spanish.)  
The legislature shall provide for the training of teachers in the normal schools or otherwise so that they may become proficient in both the English and Spanish languages, to qualify them to teach Spanish-speaking pupils and students in the public schools and educational institutions of the state, and shall provide proper means and methods to facilitate the teaching of the English language and other branches of learning to such pupils and students.

**Priority 2:**  
**Continue to Focus on Attracting and Retaining the**  
**Educators Our Students Need and Deserve**

Attracting and retaining excellent educators is one of the most important drivers of a well-functioning education system – a system that must prepare diverse students with complex needs to participate in today’s knowledge-driven economy.

ATF President Ellen Bernstein created and promoted a continuum of support designed to attract and retain teachers to our state. Based on research from world-class systems across the globe, she crafted a set of policy recommendations entitled “A Systematic Approach to Attract and Retain High Quality Educators in New Mexico Through a Continuum of Professional Support.” The ideas were fleshed out and later presented to the Legislative Finance Committee, the Legislative Education Study Committee, and the APS Board of Education.

The policy recommendations begin in high school, with revitalized career and technical education programs that include expanding Educators Rising, a “grow your own” high-school program that is currently in many high schools across the state. The policy recommendations then follow a teacher to college and throughout their career. The continuum includes:

- Pre-Service: A rigorous college preparation program with more clinical practice time and loan forgiveness for service.
- Teacher Residencies: A paid, alternative licensure route for post-baccalaureate students.
- Mentoring: Increased funding for beginning teacher mentoring, as per NM state law.
- Induction: Continued support in year 2-5, if needed.
- Resources: Funding needs to be sufficient and consistent.
- Professional Development: Site-based, job-embedded, and ongoing.
- Teacher Evaluation: Fair and informative.
- Competitive Salaries: Creating an enriched state-wide career ladder.

As a state we have made progress toward this goal. We believe that we now have a fair and informative teacher evaluation system well on its way to full implementation. However, some of that progress was interrupted by the Covid crisis and the impact on the state’s budget.

## **Policies that support: Attracting and Retaining the Educators Our Students Need and Deserve**

1. Restore funding cut during the 2020 Special Session:
  - \$6 million was cut from elementary physical education programs;
  - \$40 million was cut from K-5 Plus programs;
  - \$4.2 million was cut from mentorship stipends;
  - \$2 million was cut from early literacy interventions;
  - \$92.6 million was cut from the planned school personnel salary raises;
  - \$32.4 million was cut from the base SEG appropriation;
  - \$8M million was cut from the Public Education Department Education Reform Fund for culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional materials and curriculum;
  - \$5M million was cut from the Public Education Department Education Reform Fund for a pilot extended summer learning program in historically defined “Indian impacted” school districts or charter schools (including early childhood);
  - \$4.5M million was cut the Public Education Department Education Reform Fund for instructional materials;
  - \$2.9M reduction from the Public Education Department Education Reform Fund for school improvement grants; and
  - \$1 million was cut reduction from the Public Education Department Education Reform Fund for teacher residencies.
  
2. Phase out substandard teacher preparation programs:
  - The NMPED Alternative Licensure pathway targets those with a BA in a non-traditional teaching field and wishing to “fast-track” into teaching.
  - The Online Portfolio for Alternative Licensure (OPAL) Pathway Program allows an educator to teach at a school district for 2 years (nonrenewable, 2-year) while being mentored and evaluated at a New Mexico Public School District, as well as, simultaneously complete the required teaching of reading course(s) and required licensure exams.
  - Note: Underprepared teachers are more likely to be found in schools serving high percentages of English learners and low-income students. These shortages remain particularly troubling in special education, science and math, and bilingual education.
  - Note: Alternative licensure does not have to equate to substandard preparation. New Mexico can develop high quality alternative routes into teaching, such as residency programs, without compromising on essential

oversight of candidates, learning specific learning theories and strategies and connecting them in a clinical experience, and having the correct coursework to address the needs of the students they will be assigned to teach.

- Studies have found that teachers who entered teaching after completing substandard, “fast track” alternative programs were less effective than fully prepared beginning teachers working with similar students. However, these studies also found that, for those alternative route teachers who completed the education coursework for full certification and gained experience, there were few significant differences in effectiveness.
  - The use of alternative teacher licenses – two- to three-year temporary licenses where college graduates without teaching degrees begin careers in the classroom while they take education classes – has surged as the teacher shortage crisis has deepened in New Mexico. There were 466 teachers on alternative licenses in 2014, according to PED data. This school year it was 2,352, or about one in 10 teachers in the state (Santa Fe New Mexican, October 14, 2020).
  - Research has shown that student access to certified teachers varies across districts within states, across schools within districts, or across classrooms within schools, and that teachers who are not fully certified are sometimes disproportionately assigned to teach students with greater needs exacerbating issues of equity.
3. Sponsor a cost analyses of current staffing our schools and the cost of meeting these staffing standards to work on the goal of staffing schools for the needs of students:
- School walkouts In Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Paul, and Oakland and protests in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Minnesota were not just about salaries, they centered around demands for support staff focused on students’ well-being. Support staff can have profound effects on student learning and are vital to properly address everyday student issues such as physical and mental health problems, homelessness, and all adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
  - Teaching conditions - which also define learning conditions for students - are a strong predictor of teachers’ decisions about where to teach and whether to stay. Appropriate staffing for the needs of students is essential.

- Supporting student mental health in New Mexico is a critical step to addressing the predictability of disparities by race, socioeconomic status, and disability, and will accelerate learning and achievement for all students.
- Student mental health needs are best served when the school community is supported by a team of trained professionals and support staff including Licensed School Social Workers, Licensed School Counselors, Licensed School Psychologists, Licensed School Nurses, and Behavioral Support Specialists or equivalent educational support professional staff.
- To that end, we must staff school based on the needs of students. Each public school servicing students in pre-K-12 should have a Mental Health Team comprised of staff in the following positions. These individual positions will each play a distinct and important role in providing complementary mental health supports to students.
  - **Licensed School Social Workers:** Trained mental health professionals who can assist with mental health concerns, behavior concerns, positive behavioral support, academic and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents and administrators as well as provide individual and group counseling/therapy. School Social Workers have special expertise in understanding family and community systems and linking students and their families with community services essential to promote student success. School Social Workers' training includes specialized preparation in cultural diversity, systems theory and social justice, risk assessment and intervention, consultation and collaboration, and clinical intervention strategies to address the mental health needs of students. Licensed School Social Workers assigned to Special Education work specifically with students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to meet their identified needs.
    - Special Education: (ratio of social workers to students receiving special education services)
    - Elementary: 1:35
    - Middle: 1:40
    - High School: 1:40
      - General Education: 1 (one) social worker to work with general education students. Buildings with more than 500 students should be assigned additional social workers based on a ratio of 1:500 social workers per student population.

- **Licensed School Counselors:** Professionals who are uniquely qualified to address all students' academic, transition, career, and social/emotional development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating, and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling program that proactively promotes and enhances student success. The School Counselor works directly with students and families daily to proactively support mental wellness through classroom lessons for all students, evidence based small group counseling, and individual counseling support. In addition, counselors assist in the coordination of post-treatment plans for students and refer students for school or community based mental health support.
  - Counselors provide comprehensive school counseling services for all students. Caseloads should not include counselors who have specific job duties such as Early College, Career, and Technology Education (CTE), or who are grant-funded.
  - In addition to appropriate caseloads, it is essential that School Counselors are able to perform their duties according to their professional training. To ensure this occurs, the following duties shall not be assigned to a Licensed School Counselor: Test proctoring, teaching prep classes, substitute teaching, master scheduling, and clerical work.
  - Registrars should handle clerical duties and assist counselors with preparing reports and documents, new student registration and scheduling, transcript evaluations, maintenance of school records, course change requests, and serve as a liaison between school and student placement center.
  - The below is based upon the minimum ratios as recommend by the American School Counselor Association:
    - Elementary: 1:250
    - Middle: 1:250
    - High School: 1:250
  
- **Licensed School Psychologists:** Highly qualified members of school teams who support students' ability to learn and collaborate with teachers to problem solve and support instruction. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children

and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School Psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to help create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community. School Psychologists receive specialized advanced graduate and post graduate preparation that includes coursework and practical experience relevant to both psychology and education.

- A minimum of Licensed School Psychologists to students ratio of 1:700, as recommend by the National Association of School Psychologists practice model.
- **Licensed School Nurses:** Healthcare professionals who understand the link between health and learning. They provide a comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing student health problems, including mental health concerns, that interfere with learning. The school nurse leads change to advance overall health and collaborates with school staff, students' families, and community members to keep students safe at school and healthy to learn.
  - A minimum of a 1.0 FTE Licensed School Nurse to each building. In addition to the 1.0 FTE Licensed School Nurse, each secondary school should be assigned a 1.0 FTE Health Aide to work under the direct supervision of the Licensed School Nurse.
- **Behavior Intervention Specialists:** Educational support professionals who have the most regular direct contact with students. They provide behavioral support for students beyond Tier 1 in a Multi-Tiered System of Support and support re-entry into the classroom by assisting students in assessing their behavior. Behavior Intervention Specialists or equivalent positions (School and Community Service Professionals or Educational Assistants) to every building based on the following:
  - Elementary: 1: school
  - K-8: 1: grades K-5 and 1: each grade level for grades 6-8
  - Middle (6-8): 1: each grade level
  - High School (9-12): 2: each grade level



The school mental health team will provide support to schools by utilizing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).

### **New Mexico's Multi-Layered System of Supports (Background)**

Dr. Margaret McLaughlin, Martinez Expert Witness in the Yazzie/Martinez court case, in her expert witness report "Report on Status of Special Education in New Mexico," September 30, 2016, pointed out concerns with NM's RTI framework. In her report she stated the following concerns that were also noted in her deposition:

- "Further, it is well acknowledged in research and practice that tiered intervention models are only as effective as the first tier...general education."
- "If the general education classroom has a strong research-based curriculum and personnel who are able to implement evidence-based interventions (with support from special educators, schools psychologists, and others), then the model works (See Denton, RTI Action Network, for an excellent summary of the requirements for effective tiered intervention models.)"
- "In the absence of these features, using tiered interventions can serve only to delay formal identification and likely create a pattern of failure for the child."

Dr. McLaughlin also expressed concerns about NM's students who are Hispanic and Native American having a slightly to moderately higher proportion of students identified as needing special education and related services. In addition, she reviewed data from multiple school districts, including the Albuquerque Public Schools, for students who are English Learners.

She concluded that with the exception of two districts she reviewed, a greater proportion of English Learners are identified for special education and related services in comparison with their proportion in the overall population.

Teachers and principals from the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) schools were interviewed during site visits regarding RTI and SAT. During the interviews, they talked about the high number of students in the SAT process due to the RTI tiers and the Istation tiers. For example, students who scored "yellow" in Istation had an automatic SAT plan and students who scored "red" were referred for a special education evaluation. During the 2017-2018 school year, the Title I Bureau sampled the RDA schools to gain a better understanding of the RTI tiers and the students' movement up the tiers or the lack of movement.

Moving away from the tiered interventions under NM's RTI framework, in which tiers are considered "places" and adopting the fluid MLSS model like so many other states across the country, meets the needs of the whole child. Under MLSS, teachers and health and wellness staff can quickly respond to the needs of the students without delays and imposed timelines. Layer 1 interventions are continued for students receiving Layer 2 Targeted Interventions and Layer 3 Intensive Interventions. In the current RTI Framework, students needing Tier 3 interventions automatically receive an evaluation for special education and related services which can lead to inappropriate and over-identification of students. Addressing these concerns, NM's MLSS model provides ALL students with layered interventions and supports.

[https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/MLSS\\_Background.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/MLSS_Background.pdf)

#### 4. Long-term compensation planning

- Research from the Economic Policy Institute has shown over more than a decade and a half of work on the topic, there has been a long-trending erosion of teacher wages and compensation relative to other college graduates. They call this the teacher wage penalty and it has grown substantially since the mid-1990s.
- Teachers, and all educators, are paid less (in wages and compensation) than other college-educated workers with similar experience and other characteristics, and this financial penalty discourages college students from entering the teaching profession and makes it difficult for school districts to keep current teachers in the classroom.
- School teachers earn about 20% less in weekly wages than nonteacher college graduates.
- According to the Learning Policy Institute, the turnover rates among New Mexico teachers are among the highest in the United States, 23 percent – second only to Arizona between 2011 and 2014.
- The 2019 Phi Delta Kappa poll of the Public's Attitude Toward Public Schools, found motivators for teacher retention include higher pay and benefits.

- Legislative action during the 2019 session certainly raised the average, but other states also increased pay in the last year. New Mexico should continue our drive to compensate educators fairly and to reward experience, expertise, and leadership.

- **Compensation Policy Recommendation #1**

Restore 4% raises (reduced to 1% in the 2020 Special Session) for SY 2021-2022.

- These raises will begin to move us toward higher Tier minimums of \$45K/\$55K/\$65K respectively for each of the 3 licensure tiers.

- **Compensation Policy Recommendation #2**

We envision an innovative career ladder through the weighting of additional roles and responsibilities that teachers assume (e.g.: Extra Curricular Leadership, Co-Curricular Leadership positions such as Departmental Chair, Student Assistance Team Chair, Mentoring, etc.), as well as leadership positions in school-based reforms such as Restorative Justice Initiatives and Project-Based Learning. By acknowledging the diverse credentials, talents, and work of our New Mexico teaching force, we can better retain highly qualified teachers in the profession.

We call this the Teacher Weighted Formula. The approach for New Mexico should build on the current three-tiered licensure system by enhancing the teacher cost index (TCI) with teacher attribute factors that would carry a weight in the SEG, much in the same way the public school funding formula attaches a weight, or multiplier, to students' attributes. The concept of a Teacher Weighted Formula supports building on House Bill 188 (2018) that enacted the Teacher Cost Index (TCI) to create a teacher compensation system that will:

- Be an innovative alternative compensation system
- Enhance retention efforts
- Address compression issues

To facilitate this, we seek to reintroduce the bill that would form an **Educator Compensation Task Force** (G. Andres Romero & Christine Trujillo) which died in the 2020 Regular Session. The task force will study how the teacher cost index can be enhanced with additional teacher attributes that reward teacher qualification such as micro-credentials in

specific specialties, additional duties, and leadership positions.

A Teacher Weighted Formula will build on, and exceed, the current research and practice on alternative teacher compensation, while acknowledging the importance of:

- Teacher Leadership
- School Responsibilities
- Diverse Credentials/Qualifications
- Advanced degrees or micro-credentials
- Retention of experienced teachers

By building onto the existing TCI framework, calculating actual teacher costs through a Teacher Weighted Formula, and determining individual attributes which contribute to school function, success, stability, and ability to meet student needs, we have an opportunity to:

- Promote Longevity of Teaching Professionals
- Diversify Qualifications
- Attract/Recruit into the Profession
- Alleviate Compression of Teacher Salaries

Moving to a Teacher Weighted Formula in conjunction with the current TCI is not a deep departure from current practice. Rather, it is the next logical step in our efforts to attract and retain a diverse, well-qualified teacher workforce in New Mexico.

The NM Legislature has already recognized that additional credentialing – National Board Certification for example – is valuable in our schools and provides a differential for those educators holding that certification. Advocates for the groundbreaking Martinez/Yazzie v. State of NM lawsuit believe that additional credentials such as TESOL, Bilingual, Reading Intervention, etc. are also worthy of such differentials. Other areas of school-based responsibilities and teacher leadership should be treated equally.

To create a true teaching profession in New Mexico, our school systems must provide the supports and structures that allow teachers to assume meaningful leadership roles in the school site, the district, and the profession as a whole.

These roles should provide diverse opportunities and choices for teachers to continuously develop their skills in and out of the classroom. One important way to help create these opportunities is innovative compensation systems that provide a clear mechanism by which we can capture the leadership and instructional capacity that already exists within our system.

Career ladders or “lattices” enable all staff to achieve their full potential, which in turn increases levels of personal satisfaction and improves job performance. But most importantly, a career ladder/lattice program builds the internal capacity of the school district to positively affect student achievement by using its most underutilized resource: its people.

### **Priority 3: Modernizing High Schools for Excellence and Equity**

In 2007, six years after Congress passed No Child Left Behind, the NM Legislature passed HB 584, High School Redesign. HB 584 increased requirements for graduation to three credits in mathematics (one must be equivalent to Algebra II) and at least one unit as advanced placement, dual credit, or one distance learning course. The New Mexico PED added a year of math to the requirements in 2009 and a half year of Health in 2013. Health is typically paired with the half year of NM History Social Studies requirement. The current NM requirement for graduation is 24 credits.

#### **Rethinking New Mexico Graduation Requirements with Equity in Mind**

Overall, our course requirements do not prepare students for **careers that exist today** and do not allow the **flexibility** needed to serve all students. Ideally, students should be able to choose pathways to graduation (much like we do in college). This way, the focus is on skills and relevant knowledge based on student choice. For example, in an area like English, students who plan to go into a technical field still have to take literature courses for four years. However, they would benefit much more from taking a technical writing and reading course. By rethinking some basic requirements for ninth and tenth grade we could then allow students to choose pathways for eleventh and twelfth grade. The NMPED could develop some common course descriptions, still allowing for districts to develop their own or add onto these descriptions. This way, a student interested in a career in construction can focus their attention on relevant math coursework, hands-on CTE electives, business communication, etc. and forego an emphasis on math-heavy sciences, literary analysis, etc.

- Our work should connect to our **state industry** partners. New Mexico boasts two of the nation's largest labs, as well as technology companies like Intel. Yet, our students are not prepared to enter those careers through our structures. Students who end up on a path to those high-paying jobs typically come from families with connections and receive training and internships on their own. We need to push for **technology coursework and then provide the resources** for those fields of study so our students can be prepared for the jobs our society currently offers. Our technology is drastically outdated and our state lacks infrastructure to provide reliable Internet to many rural areas. These are both huge issues of equity and could address the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit.

The **math requirements** make no sense for the majority of our students. Current graduation requirements force students to take four years of math and to reach at least Algebra II. Even our math teachers don't understand why we require this. Students are not learning math that is relevant to all and are not learning the skills they need to be successful in real careers, in college, and even for the SAT, our new exit exam. Algebra should not be a gatekeeper for future success.

Research is telling us that the most relevant math students need for careers is all about statistical and data analysis. When compared to foreign countries on assessments like the PISA, one of our students' greatest deficits is in this area. This leads to problems like being able to differentiate fact from fiction. Our math requirements should vary by pathway and should emphasize real-world skills in areas like Financial Literacy, data analysis (for a variety of contents) and other real-life skills.

- As a quick note, the **NCAA does not accept certain classes**, such as Financial Literacy for a math class. So, work would need to be done with the NCAA so that our student athletes who wish to play sports at the university level meet those requirements. Perhaps stronger course descriptions or collaboration with NCAA would be helpful. I am not sure what their criteria is for determining accepted classes.

Changes to course requirements and which courses are allowed for graduation is shifting with the new standards. Apparently, only **math-heavy science courses** will count towards the three science credits. This means, engaging classes like Geology or Astronomy (which are accepted at universities) will not be eligible for meeting the three years of science. Again, we seem to think there is only one path for all students. Instead of focusing on areas of interest and allowing flexibility with strengths, we are disengaging students and forcing requirements that are unrealistic for our real world.

**New Mexico History and Health are often repeated** courses from middle school. Especially New Mexico History could be substituted for a course that focuses on more relevant skills.

The requirement stating: **"One of the above units must be honors, Advanced Placement, dual credit, or distance learning"** has caused interesting issues. While some students are ready to move ahead and take courses in these areas, many students are not. This has led to watered-down AP curriculum, excessive online classwork (while research tells us students still learn best with texts in front of them and in an interactive classroom) and undue stress on students who should be allowed

to do high school level work if that is where they are at with their skills. Every child develops and learns at their own pace and we should honor that.

This could also connect to revision of **standards** that are more appropriate to the skills our students need. We should be re-examining how we teach math and also how we integrate technology and other real-world skills that are much needed for our students to be successful in the global and local community.

Districts have been forced to move to **seven-period schedules** under these new graduation credit requirements (24). The worry is that students cannot meet the requirements if they have no wiggle room in their course taking patterns over 4 years. If they take six classes a year and fail one, there is no credit recovery option during the school year. This most negatively impacts our poor and minority students. However, moving to a seven-period schedule creates a plethora of issues for students such as excessive homework loads, stress, and shorter class periods and issues for teachers like not exceeding the state student limits and having too many classes for which to prepare.

A vibrant electives program should be considered just as precious as core classes and this must include **Career Technical Education**. Across the nation, *student choice* ranked high in results. And according to education researcher Robert Marzano, choice “has also been linked to increases in student effort, task performance, and subsequent learning.” Yet this very quality—student choice—seems to be one of the factors that make electives vulnerable.

Unlike many European countries that continued their strong commitment to ensuring students could choose technical paths to career and postsecondary success—building a technically skilled workforce in the process—the United States largely turned its back on craftsmanship and innovation flowing from the high school shop floor.

The U.S. has experienced a steady decline in CTE over the last few decades. This has become a challenge for American employers struggling to find skilled workers and for students desiring an applied education or a streamlined entrance into the workforce.

Although a number of states have impressive CTE schools or particular programs, very few have an entire CTE system that provides the kind and quality of opportunities available to students in top-performing systems.



The **mental and emotional well-being of our students** is an essential focus in any work aimed at designing high schools that truly address the sophisticated youth of today.

Students today face a range of demands that can impact their emotional/mental health. From meeting high academic expectations to navigating the world of social media to maintaining relationships with their peers, many students are also dealing with distress, crises, and trauma in addition to typical life stressors. Mental health challenges can negatively impact all areas of functioning in students, contributing to social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems. We must be purposeful in addressing this urgent and important issue as we work to modernize High Schools for excellence and equity.

### **Rethinking Credits**

Credits are based on the “Carnegie Unit” created over a century ago as a rough gauge of student readiness for college-level academics. The standard Carnegie Unit is defined as 120 hours of contact time with an instructor. New Hampshire became the first state to abolish the Carnegie Unit in 2005.

A focus on excellence and equity in High School entails moving away from “seat time” as a measure of success and moving toward engagement and mastery. Mastery-based education is a term that describes learning progressions based on mastery of content rather than passage of time. A growing number of states are encouraging or mandating the transition to mastery-based learning to give teachers and schools flexibility and tools to optimize and personalize learning for students.

Transitioning away from traditional classroom “seat time” toward a more flexible structure allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content. With increased flexibility in time and pace of learning, students can work at their appropriate level regardless of age or grade level. Instead of earning credits, students in a mastery-based system exhibit readiness to graduate through capstone projects.

The use of capstone projects (also called culminating projects) has its origins in higher education, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, to prepare for the complex problems graduates face in the workforce. From there, the use of capstone projects spread to other areas in higher education. High school capstone courses appeared in school reform programs beginning in the 1990s, intended as culminating projects for high school seniors. Recent focus on

college and career readiness has brought renewed attention to capstone programs in high schools.

According to *Best Practices in Capstone Projects*, Hanover Research (2013), capstone projects are described as a “culminating activity” that students complete in their senior year that “synthesizes classroom study and real world perspective” through a project that focuses on a student’s personal interest. Capstone Projects:

- Encourage students to think analytically, logically and creatively and to integrate experience and knowledge to solve problems.
- Give students a chance to explore a topic in which they have a great interest.
- Offer students an opportunity to apply their learning in a “real world” way.

In the context of the goals as described by the Learning Policy Institute in *Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning In the Time of COVID and Beyond* modernizing the High Schools by shifting to mastery-based schooling with capstone projects as a graduation requirement will create schools that are:

- student-centered in ways that support the whole child’s social, emotional, cognitive, moral, and identity development;
- focused on deeper learning that meets the demands of today’s society;
- culturally and linguistically connected and sustaining;
- grounded in collaboration among students, staff, families, and communities; and
- equitable in the opportunities provided and outcomes achieved.

Hanover research found:

- **Schools often implement capstone programs to support students’ transition from high school to college or the workforce.** Research indicates that students are less academically invested during their senior year because most of the work that dictates their postsecondary options (e.g., SAT exams, submitted grades, extracurricular activities) has already been completed, and this “senior slump” is associated with negative postsecondary outcomes. Capstone projects engage seniors during their last semesters, maintaining the academic rigor needed to ensure postsecondary success.
- **While education advocacy groups recommend focusing the formal elements of capstone projects in the junior and senior years, they also recognize that preparation for the capstone project can begin as early as**

**eighth grade.** The majority of capstone projects are completed during students' senior year, but some schools do require students to maintain portfolios or journals throughout all four years of high school.

- **Capstone programs generally emphasize the importance of student interest, integration of acquired knowledge, and real-world applications to any relevant culminating experience.** While different programs may require various types of projects (e.g., portfolio, research paper, community service project), they all expect students to apply their talents toward a project that is relevant outside of the classroom.
- **Most districts or schools that offer capstone projects require them for graduation.** However, there are schools for which capstone projects are optional. Many of the schools that require capstone projects are in states that encourage or require such projects for students throughout the state. While some schools require individual completion of the project, others allow for group work in certain areas. Some experts suggest that group work is beneficial, as it encourages the development of communication and other 21st century skills.

NM is currently supporting capstone projects as a demonstration of competency for graduation. However, the credits and Carnegie system are actually counter to that idea and direction. While adding a capstone project as an option that eliminates an over-reliance on testing, which is good, as is the capstone adds work to students but does not serve as an integral guiding part of a system for student choice and career preparedness.

In order to truly use Capstone Projects as a path toward modernizing High Schools we must fundamentally change the system to support students in a meaningful way that better prepares them for their future.

### **Policies that support: Modernizing High Schools for Excellence and Equity**

1. Phase out credit-based graduation requirements and phase in mastery-based high school with capstone project graduation requirements.
2. Build innovative Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

- Create a CTE weight in the NM Funding Formula to fund the development, implementation and restoration of middle school and high school CTE programs.
- Establish meaningful partnerships between local industry, postsecondary education and high school CTE programs to identify skills gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Identify career pathways for students aligned with local industry needs.
- Create policies that connect local industry with secondary and postsecondary partners.

## **Priority 4: Middle Schools, Not Junior Highs**

The emergence of the middle school movement in the 1960s represented a milestone in the history of Human Development Discourse. This movement recognized that young adolescents are not simply older elementary school students nor younger high school students, but that there are dramatic changes that occur during this time of life requiring a radically different and unique approach to education. Middle school educators understood that the biological event of puberty fundamentally disrupts the relatively smooth development of the elementary school years and has a profound impact upon the cognitive, social, and emotional lives of young teens. In line with this important insight, they saw the need for the provision of special instructional, curricular, and administrative changes in the way that education takes place for kids in early adolescence.

As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act middle schools have reverted back to a Junior High model that no longer takes into account the unique developmental needs of middle school students at all. The impact of this shift can be seen in dropout rates.

Kids who dropout of high school usually start to pull away in middle school. Research indicates that there are several reasons for this such as a bullying incident, feeling hopeless academically, like in math, a suspension or expulsion, or some kind of social problem that gets out of hand.

Refocusing on a middle school model along with a specific credential in middle school teaching can provide students in early adolescence with an environment that can help them negotiate the impact of puberty on their intellectual, social, and emotional lives.

There is an expertise to teaching middle level students that is different than that needed to teach elementary or high school students. Middle level education must be grounded in the nature of young people ages 10 to 15. The characteristics of young adolescents in the physical, cognitive, intellectual, moral, psychological, and social-emotional dimensions of development should be understood as they are separate and distinct from both elementary and HS.

New Mexico needs policies, programs, and practices that are effective in developing the talents, skills, knowledge, and character of young adolescents.

What follows is a list of 12 key features of an authentic, developmentally appropriate plan for reforming middle schools (adapted from the Best Schools by Thomas Armstrong, Chapter 5. Middle Schools: Social, Emotional, and Metacognitive Growth, ASCD).

1. **Safe School Climate:** schools need to create positive interventions such as restorative practices, anti-bullying programs, conflict resolution, gang awareness, alcohol and drug abuse counseling, student court, peer mediation, and anger management.
2. **Small Learning Communities:** Students are assigned to a community in 6th grade and stay there until they leave for high school. Teachers work in teams so they can get to know the students better.
3. **Personal Adult Relationships:** providing a student with one teacher who serves as an advisor, mentor, counselor, or guide can be instrumental for some kids to help them feel a sense of safety, confidence, and purpose in their learning. Exemplary middle schools assign students to homeroom teachers or advisor-teachers who are with them during their entire journey through the middle grades.
4. **Engaged Learning:** The National Middle School Association affirms that educational programs for young adolescents must be:
  - Developmentally responsive: using the distinctive nature of young adolescents as the foundation upon which all decisions about school organization, policies, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are made.
  - Challenging: ensuring that every student learns and every member of the learning community is held to high expectations.
  - Empowering: providing all students with the knowledge and skills they need to take responsibility for their lives, to address life's challenges, to function successfully at all levels of society, and to be creators of knowledge.Equitable: advocating for and ensuring every student's right to learn and providing appropriately challenging and relevant learning opportunities for every student.

5. **Positive Role Model:** Middle schools need to be places where a student will have contact with older people who have vital lives of their own and who are themselves authentic human beings. There are many other ways in which middle schools can expose their students to positive role models. Parent volunteers can offer their services as experts in specific fields. Outside experts can be engaged to share their findings with students. The school can offer a program of positive role models in the curriculum to study the lives of famous individuals who overcame adversity, or successful individuals in the community who come in and talk about what helped them achieve success. The Role Model Program in San Jose, California, for example, brings business and community leaders into Santa Clara County classrooms to encourage positive life choices and educational achievement. In these and other ways, middle school educators can help to counteract much of the negative influence young teens receive from tainted media heroes, celebrated gang leaders, and other damaged individuals who never quite made the journey into maturity.
  
6. **Metacognitive Strategies:** Students entering the emotional turmoil of adolescence are going through a major shift in their ability to think. They are entering the formal operational stage of cognitive development. Now, for the first time, they can think about thinking itself. They can stand above themselves and look down and reflect on what they're doing. This capacity is an important resource for adolescents who have their foot on the gas pedal before their brakes have been fully installed. Instead of acting on impulse, the mind can be trained to observe what's going on and to take appropriate measures. Students should be helped to use their new kind of mind in learning study skills, reflecting on curriculum materials, exploring the nature of conflicts in their lives, and setting realistic goals for themselves.
  
7. **Expressive Arts Activities:** The arts provide opportunities for young teens to express themselves in an atmosphere that is *without judgment* in areas such as sculpture, painting, drama, music, and dance. It's virtually impossible to fail in the expressive arts. In the course of expressing themselves artistically, students can sublimate sexual energies, channel violent impulses, sort out emotional conflicts, and build a deeper sense of identity. These are all critical developmental tasks in early adolescence.
  
8. **Health and Wellness Focus:** As students' bodies change during puberty, somebody needs to be around to help them understand what's happening to

them. Sex education should be only a part of a larger effort to inform young adolescents about issues relevant to their lives such as substance abuse, depression, eating disorders, and other ills that can begin at this stage of development. Moreover, all of this should be done within a context that emphasizes how to stay healthy, rather than how to avoid disease. By not shying away from sensitive subjects that are critical to the lives of young adolescents, middle school educators can show that they are really tuned in to the lives of their students.

9. **Emotionally Meaningful Curriculum:** Given that the limbic system or “emotional brain” is particularly active during early adolescence, it seems clear that the curriculum needs to be built around topics and themes that have emotional content and that engage students' feelings in a gripping way. Yet, as noted above, much of the curriculum in middle schools is textbook-based. Exemplary middle schools teach history, social studies, literature, science, and even math in ways that have an impact on the emotional lives of young teens. Whatever the lesson might be, teachers always attempt to link it in some way to the feelings, memories, or personal associations of the students. Any time teachers can connect the curriculum to young adolescents' limbic systems, and then link those emotions to metacognitive reflections (“How would you handle the problem differently now?”), they are teaching in a developmentally appropriate way for this level.
10. **Student Roles in Decision Making:** Although student-initiated learning is an important component of good middle schools, students must also have a wider role to play in the affairs of the school. They should be involved in maintaining discipline through teen court, shaping school assemblies or special events, and providing meaningful feedback about courses, the school environment, and other aspects of running the school. They should have an opportunity to express their ideas and feelings in a democratic context in the classroom. It seems rather strange to me that we expect students to learn about democracy in school climates that are more often run like dictatorships!
11. **Honoring and Respecting Student Voices:** A deeper manifestation of giving students significant roles in decision making in the school is the respect that needs to be given to their authentic voices. This may be the most important thing that educators at the middle school level can do for their students: help them find their own true voice. Students at this age are struggling with a



myriad of inner voices internalized from peers, gangs, the media, and other sources, and in the midst of all of this, they are faced with the significant challenge of trying to pick from that hodgepodge of noises their own unique identity—their own true voice.

12. **Facilitating Social and Emotional Growth:** Good middle schools help students develop their emotional intelligence and their intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. They use cooperative learning as a key to fostering positive social relationships. They have well-trained counselors on staff and maintain good referral networks for students needing special help with their emotional problems from mental health professionals. They engage students in curriculum-related activities that serve to develop their social and emotional intelligences.

### **Policies that support: Middle Schools, Not Junior Highs**

1. Create a work study committee to study and make recommendations for a New Mexico middle school model along with a specific credential in middle school teaching.

## **Priority 5: Elementary Schools Designed for Elementary Children**

Since 2001, when the federal No Child Left Behind legislation made standardized reading and math scores the yardstick for measuring progress, the time devoted to both subjects has grown. In turn, the amount of time spent on social studies and science has plummeted—especially in schools where test scores are low.

And yet, despite the enormous expenditure of time and resources on reading, American children haven't become better readers. For the past 20 years, only about a third of students have scored at or above the "proficient" level on national tests. For low-income and minority kids, the picture is especially bleak: Their average test scores are far below those of their more affluent, largely white peers—a phenomenon usually referred to as the achievement gap. As this gap has grown wider, America's standing in international literacy rankings, already mediocre, has fallen.

It turns out that the best way to boost reading comprehension is not to drill kids on discrete skills but to teach them, as early as possible, the very things we've marginalized – including history, science, and other content that could build the knowledge and vocabulary they need to understand both written texts and the world around them.

Prior knowledge makes a huge difference in students' ability to understand the text – more so than their supposed reading level. Researchers found that when wealthier kids and poor kids had equal prior knowledge about a subject, their comprehension was essentially the same. In other words, the gap in comprehension wasn't a gap in skills. It was a gap in knowledge.

While in some respects American schools vary tremendously, in nearly all elementary classrooms you will find the same basic structure. The day is divided into a "math block" and a "reading block," the latter of which consumes anywhere from 90 minutes to three hours.

Many teachers want to spend more time on social studies and science, because their students clearly enjoy learning actual content. But they've been informed that teaching skills is *the* way to boost reading comprehension. Education policy makers and reformers have generally not questioned this approach and in fact, by elevating the importance of reading scores, have intensified it.

Numerous studies have shown that literacy skills, including reading, writing, and math, are developed through play. High-stakes testing combined with the notion that indoor/outdoor spontaneous play are a “waste of time” have contributed to the condition known as “play deprivation”.

Play deprivation is the name given to the notion that not playing may deprive children of experiences that are regarded as developmentally essential and result in those affected being both biologically & socially disabled.

Negative effects resulting from play deprivation include an increase in violent crimes, decreases in brain and muscle fiber development, and reduction in communication, problem-solving, and social skills as well as depression, feelings of hostility, and aggression.

According to Carol Westby (2017), “Pretend play and semantic language share the common feature of relational meanings between things. In pretend play, children learn to classify, compare, and reason, all semantic organizational skills”. As children play, they use objects flexibly, interchanging the purpose. That block that represented a car can be picked up and used as a phone. That same block can also be used as a building block. Children’s abilities to substitute objects in play allow flexible thinking. Thinking “out of context” can guide their ability to retell narratives. When retelling a narrative, children are free to use language that extends beyond the here and now.

### **Policies that support: Elementary Schools Designed for Elementary Children**

1. All elementary students in New Mexico should have 3 recesses of at least 15 minutes built into their school day, as well as physical education.
  - Recognize that recess for elementary students provides children with opportunities to engage in physical activity that helps to develop healthy bodies and practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate and problem solving in real life situations.
  - Research shows an unmistakable link between movement and thinking because performing complex movements like dancing, throwing a ball or playing tag engage the same area of the brain, the cerebellum, as those used for problem solving, planning, and sequencing.

- A person's capacity to master new and remember old information is improved by biological and chemical changes in the brain caused by exercise.
- Brain functioning, attention, memory, social and emotional development, and language development all reveal the unmistakable advantages of physical exercise.
- Exercise promotes academic growth.
- Free play improves social and emotional health.
- Breaks with physical activity improve memory, attention, and concentration.
- More frequent breaks and exercise reduce disruptive behaviors.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that recess helps with all the vital functions of the brain that direct focus and retention, reducing behavioral issues, and aides in social development.

## 2. No Standardized Testing Until 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

- The K-12 experience has become dominated by standardized testing. And if there is one grade where it seems most detrimental and concerning, it is kindergarten.
- Students who are learning to read and adapting to the culture of schools do not need the added pressure that standardized summative assessments force on them. Rather, educators should use formative assessments which are authentic and can help teachers to individualize instruction for each student's needs. Students need access to rich curriculum that expands their background knowledge base so that they may recognize relationships between texts and their knowledge of the world. Pre-K-3rd grade should be a time of building this rich foundation of knowledge, not a time used to sit students in front of a computer to take yet another standardized test.
- K-3rd grade should be a time of building this rich foundation of knowledge, not a time used to sit students in front of a computer to take yet another standardized test.

- NM currently requires all K-5 plus sites must administer the Istation online adaptive assessment (ISIP and/or ISIP Español) to all K-2 students as the mandatory state assessment. Students in grades 3-5 must test with Interim New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (I-MSSA).

Teachers say:

- Seriously these young and developing minds do not benefit from the standardized testing. The stress that is put on students because of these tests is awful. No matter how many times we say "Don't stress, do your best" or all those cliché sayings, it doesn't help. It broke my heart this year when I had to make my students take the Istation and iReady and they came back to my meeting in tears, sad, and totally stressed out.
- I've never felt that Istation (or any other computer-based assessment) provided any additional benefit over my authentic interactions with students in the classroom. Too often I see my colleagues constrain the scope of their teaching to cover skills necessary for these assessments. This means that students spend less time interacting with deep, meaningful concepts and don't apply themselves with the same intensity.
- I teach first grade and the students take Istation in Spanish, it's not data that is useful to me it does not drive my instruction because first off it's a timed test. 6yr olds are learning to decode and blend sounds and many students place so much effort in to putting to work the skills and strategies we teach and the time runs out and they get no credit for it, secondly its developmentally inappropriate when students do read the reading passages they get are about three paragraphs long and it will give passage after passage until the student is so worn down that they are at that point guessing and clicking away. Not to mention as a teacher i don't get to hear them blend, decode or read or ask them questions. I prefer classroom formative assessments.

## **Priority 6: Early Childhood Education for Public Schools**

New Mexico Pre-K is a voluntary preschool program created by the Pre-Kindergarten Act of 2005. The Pre-K program is jointly administered by the Public Education Department and the Children, Youth, and Families Department. Children who have reached their 4th birthday by September 1st are eligible to attend a Pre-K program. The purpose of Pre-K is to ensure every child in New Mexico has the opportunity to attend a high-quality early childhood education program before kindergarten. The purpose of New Mexico Pre-K is to:

- Increase access to voluntary high-quality pre-kindergarten programs
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities for New Mexico children
- Expand early childhood community capacity
- Support linguistically and culturally appropriate curriculum
- Focus on school readiness

In 2016, the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership launched community meetings to address the Proposed Expansion of New Mexico Pre-K.

Teachers in public school Pre-K program are frustrated because the guidance for pre-k in centers is a mismatch for public school in many ways. For example:

- Pre-K children in APS are not allowed to attend "specials" classes. As Pre-K teachers they provide children with developmentally appropriate art, physical education, library, and music every day, because we consider these experiences as essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and creative growth and development of young children. The teachers would like to their students to participate in these specials with the expert teachers in their schools, but the Focus guidance does not allow for that.
- Public education Pre-k teachers have credentials in early childhood education, yet they do not have the same autonomy to create their own lesson plans and are required to use the identical Pre-K lesson plan template required by the state, with fidelity. They are given very little creative, professional freedoms to design learning experiences that reflect the interests and culture of their students.
- Many requirements in the NMPED FOCUS are at odds with Negotiated Agreements leaving public school Pre-k teachers with fewer rights than their peers.

## **Policies that support: Early Childhood Education for Public Schools**

1. Work closely with the Early Childhood Education and Care Department Secretary, Elizabeth Groginsky, and the PED Director, Early Childhood Bureau, Brenda Kofahl, to differentiate the Focus guidance for Pre-k 2 programs:
  - Public school Pre-K model
  - Private, center-based model
2. Continue to make it a priority to provide for universal early childhood education access for all 3- and 4-year-olds, in a mixed-model approach. Universal access to early childhood education is a smart investment, attracts business, and ensures a better chance for future success later in a student's educational journey.

## **Priority 7: Funding Our Future**

New Mexico must create an adequate per-student amount that is revisited and revised every 5 to 10 years. That number, the foundation of the SEG, must be the multiplicand and the students (times the weighted factor) must be the multiplier.

That promise of sufficient funding should be kept yearly. The NM legislature should institute a fail-safe (perhaps the state's school permanent fund) to be enacted only in order to maintain sufficient funding.

The state's overreliance on severance taxes from oil and natural gas creates revenue volatility that hampers the state's ability to provide consistent support for public services. We need to secure more stable sources of funding in order to serve our students and invest in our future.

New Mexico ranks 35th in tax fairness. This means the tax burden is disproportionately distributed to middle- and low-income residents. New Mexico needs diversified and consistent sources of revenue that are fair toward middle- and low-income residents.

Tax Policy and Racial Inequity:

- Historical and structural inequities e.g. supermajority requirements and caps on property tax.
- Regressive tax systems disproportionately impact People of Color.
- Revenue from taxes largely benefits People of Color e.g. schools, public transit, publicly funded healthcare.

### **Policies that support: Funding our Future**

**Personal income tax.** The 2003 personal income tax cuts have benefitted the wealthiest taxpayers, while the bottom 40 percent of taxpayers have received no advantage. A family earning \$22,000 a year pays a personal income tax rate of 4.9 percent, which is the same rate paid by a family making \$100,000 annually. Returning to the pre- 2003 income tax rates could generate as much as \$450 million per year.

**Capital gains tax.** Like the personal income tax, the capital gains tax was also reduced in 2003, with the cuts disproportionately benefitting the wealthy. An analysis by New Mexico Voices for Children showed that in 2011, 49 percent of the tax cut



went to those with incomes of more than \$1 million. Restoring the pre-2003 tax rates could generate \$28 to \$45 million in additional revenue per year.

**Gross receipts tax.** Over time, the state's gross receipts tax increased from 2 percent to more than 5 percent, and specific economic activities were excluded from the tax. Also, many new types of goods and services are now a larger part of New Mexico's economy but are not subject to the tax. The state's gross receipts tax should be extended to new activities. If the gross receipts tax is extended to groceries—disproportionally impacting the poor—there should be a substantial increase to the low-income comprehensive tax rebate.

**Combined reporting for all sectors.** Enacting combined reporting laws would prevent multistate corporations from sheltering income in U.S. tax havens. Comprehensive combined reporting laws could bring an additional \$19.4 million in annual revenue to New Mexico, according to a 2014 study by U.S. PIRG.

**Tax expenditures.** The Legislative Finance Committee's 2015 tax expenditure report indicated that New Mexico lost \$1.2 billion in revenue due to "carve outs" in the state's tax base. The state's healthcare industry is the largest beneficiary of tax expenditures, reportedly costing New Mexico \$344 in lost revenue.

**Land Grant Permanent Fund.** The Land Grant Permanent Fund is a resource that should be utilized to build a system of supports for New Mexico's children from early childhood education through college. The voters should be allowed to decide on a constitutional amendment that would allow the LGPF to restore K-12 school funding and provide additional payouts for early childhood education, with safeguards to maintain stability of the fund.

**Natural gas and oil severance taxes.** New Mexico has different severance tax rates for oil and natural gas. This inequity makes no sense. Equalizing tax rates on the extraction of natural gas and oil potentially could raise \$300 million each year in new revenue.

**Cigarette and liquor taxes.** Nationally, New Mexico has the 22nd-highest tax rate on cigarettes. A 1 percent increase in the tax could raise \$18 million a year and still keep the rate competitive with neighboring states. Similarly, New Mexico could raise taxes on liquor and continue to be competitive. Equalizing and indexing taxes on liquor, beer and wine could raise \$24 million in new revenue.

**Gasoline tax.** New Mexico has the 44th-lowest gas tax in the United States, at 18.88 cents per gallon. Raising the tax by 1 cent per gallon would keep New Mexico competitive with Utah (29.41 cents per gallon), Colorado (22 cents per gallon), Texas (20 cents per gallon) and Arizona (19 cents per gallon).

**Excise tax on automobiles.** Our 3 percent motor vehicle excise tax is one of the lowest in the region. Raising this tax by 1 percent would raise \$44 million and would maintain a lower rate than Denver (7.6 percent), Texas (6.3 percent) and Arizona (5.6 percent), according to a 2016 Legislative Finance Committee Hearing Brief.

**State tax on online purchases.** In *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.*, the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 split, overturned its 1992 decision in *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota* that required physical presence in order for a state to collect sales taxes on an out-of-state seller. Before this decision, the customer was liable for remitting use taxes, but the online retailer did not have to collect them. As a result, a lot of taxes didn't get collected. This decision opens the door for states to require online out-of-state merchants to collect and remit sales taxes for online purchases even when the merchant does not have a physical presence in that state. Analysts conservatively estimated online sales taxes would bring in about \$20 million a year in new revenue.

*\*Thank you to NM Voices for Children, most of this information was taken from their well-researched documents.*

## **Priority 8: Continue and Expand Community Schools**

Community schools is not a program – it’s a strategy for doing schools differently. The community schools strategy organizes and engages a variety of stakeholders and resources to provide an array of opportunities and pathways to life success for students and their families alike. And, not least, community schools address equity, excellence, and engagement – all key to educational success.

**Danette Townsend**, Executive Director ABC Community School Partnership offered this view into community schools in Albuquerque.

Community schools share a set of guiding principles, the first being **PURSUE EQUITY**. Educational excellence and equity are inseparable in community schools. When done well, community schools work actively to identify and confront policies, practices and cultures that keep students of different backgrounds and races from achieving equitable outcomes. **Community schools proactively and intentionally empower those typically disempowered by barriers to participation** (National Standards for Community Schools, 2017. Coalition for Community Schools; Institute for Educational Leadership). This guiding principle, put simply, positioned community schools to swiftly respond to the needs of their communities when COVID-19 hit and will continue to do so in a post-COVID ecosystem.

As we know, the COVID crisis hit those living in poverty and communities of color the hardest and our community schools are at the center of these communities. Across our state, community schools reached out to families, teachers and community partners in order to identify student and family needs and then pivot to organizing and delivering resources to struggling families in a COVID-safe connected response.

There are 34 community schools throughout Albuquerque Public School District and during the COVID-19 pandemic, community school coordinators organized their community school councils (site based leadership teams) to expand drive-through food pantries, rental assistance for eviction prevention, virtual parent educational opportunities, virtual family focused connection events, and continued support for virtual health programs through online platforms such as telehealth. They are working closely with teachers and school leaders to distribute technology, working to ensure access to reliable internet and re-engage students and connect with families. In

addition, they are also working to ensure the teachers and staff also have the support they need. Last week I heard a community school coordinator remind her colleagues that school staff, who relied on extra money from now cancelled after school programs, are now struggling to make ends meet. The group of coordinators continued to discuss how they are working to take care of the teachers and staff. Maybe this happens at every school, but I am sure it doesn't happen with the level of dedication and care that community schools bring.

When we talk about how community schools impact equity, my question would be: how can they not? They focus on those members of the school community who are in the deepest struggle; work with those in the community to identify the barriers; and find the opportunities to remove these barriers through community self-determination. The result, co-creation of the conditions necessary for learning and thriving communities. This is Community Schools: pre COVID, mid-COVID, and post-COVID. This is the only equitable way to deliver education. As one of my colleagues often says, "when community schools do what they do, it is MAGIC."

The following is quoted directly from the **Learning Policy Institute's September 20<sup>th</sup> presentation to the LESC**, *Improving Education the New Mexico Way* Summary Report by **Jeannie Oakes**, Daniel Espinoza, Linda Darling-Hammond, Carmen Gonzales, Jennifer DePaoli, Tara Kini, Gary Hoachlander, Dion Burns, Michael Griffith, and Melanie Leung.

### **Integrated Supports for Students in High-Poverty Schools**

In New Mexico, poverty creates conditions that negatively impact school success and well-being for the majority of children. Although schools alone cannot "fix" poverty, evidence-based school interventions can provide supports and resources to mitigate these barriers to learning and create the opportunities and safety nets children need.

**Key goals for integrated supports.** Community schools, an evidence-based approach for increasing the school success of students living in communities of poverty, should become the norm in New Mexico schools with concentrated poverty.<sup>18</sup> Community schools vary and are flexible in their design to reflect local conditions. However, they are built with four key pillars that meet community needs and take advantage of community assets: integrated supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership. Community schools address the 2018 findings of the *Martinez/Yazzie* case about the need for and shortage of expanded learning time, including after-

school programs and tutoring, and the lack of social and health services available to all at-risk students. Community schools are also promising sites for developing culturally and linguistically responsive programs collaboratively with tribal governments, given their close connections with communities.

**Context of community schools and integrated supports in New Mexico.** To address the harms of poverty on learning, Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe have created more than three dozen community schools. Community schools have also been created on tribal lands, including Kha’p’o Community School, Nenahnezad Community School and Haak’u Community Academy. Although some have been quite successful, consistent quality and sustainability require a stable infrastructure supported by public resources.

**Progress toward community schools and integrated supports.** In 2019, the New Mexico Legislature made funding available for every high-poverty elementary school to participate in the state’s K-5 Plus initiative, which adds 25 days to the school year. It also allocated enough funding for a third of all schools to provide an equivalent of 10 additional days in extended learning through enrichment activities and after-school programs. Although the expanded K-5 Plus program faced initial implementation challenges, evidence from the state’s earlier experience with the K-3 Plus program makes clear that well-implemented programs have a positive impact on student learning. Specifically, an independent scientific evaluation found that students enrolled in K-3 Plus the summer prior to kindergarten were more ready for school and outperformed their peers. They continued to have higher levels of achievement four years later. In response to COVID-19, however, NMPED canceled the K-5 Plus program for 2020 and the legislature eliminated its funding from the state budget.

The 2019 legislature also amended the unfunded Community Schools Act to establish a stronger implementation framework, provide \$2 million for community school grants, and require NMPED to appoint a statewide Coalition for Community Schools to support implementation. Districts and schools responded enthusiastically, but the \$2 million was sufficient to support only a fraction of the more than 100 applicants. The 2020 legislature doubled the community school allocation, which was then reduced to \$3.3 million after COVID-19 budget cuts, severely limiting the program’s expansion to additional schools.

The Community Schools Act encourages federal, state, local, and tribal governments to work with community-based organizations to improve the coordination, delivery,

effectiveness, and efficiency of services provided to students and families. The grants program has also begun supporting some schools to develop integrated supports, culturally and linguistically responsive practices and collaborations with tribal governments (Cuba Independent School District's schools, for example).

**Next steps for community schools and integrated supports.** We recommend that the state create the capacity and infrastructure required to scale, over time, the community school strategy (including expanded learning time) to all schools in which at least 80% of students come from low-income families.

Immediate, low-cost steps that could be taken during the COVID-19 recovery period include the following:

- Support districts, tribally controlled schools, and BIE schools to blend and braid funds to support community schools, including state funding for at-risk students, expanded learning time, and state grants through the Indian Education Act, as well as federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants and school improvement funding. This would include permitting combined applications, budgets, and reporting.
- Position community schools to become hubs for aligned and coordinated programs across agencies by providing leadership and guidance from a cross-agency body, such as the governor's Children's Cabinet and the Department of Indian Affairs. This approach would increase access, as well as create funding efficiencies by avoiding duplication of essential supports for children and families.
- Develop targeted educator professional development programs that teach the competencies required for managing successful community schools and expanded learning time, planning and implementing services and strategies in collaboration with communities and tribes, and blending and braiding funding.
- Require sufficient data to enable oversight of community schools and to inform ongoing school improvement. In addition to the comprehensive data required of all schools, the state should collect leading indicators and process data to better understand the degree to which the community school framework is being implemented.

In the longer term, the state can adopt policies and make new investments that enable all of New Mexico's highest-poverty schools to become comprehensive community schools:

- Reinststate funding for K-5 Plus and expanded learning time programs and increase investments in community schools. These funds can be combined and supplemented with related state and federal funding (e.g., funds from the at-risk index in the state formula and federal Title 1 allocations) to ensure that every school in which at least 80% of students come from low-income families has a sustainable community schools infrastructure, including a full-time coordinator and funding for expanded learning.
- Establish regional capacity to offer technical assistance and professional development to help districts implement community schools and expanded learning effectively, including tribal collaboration where appropriate. This could be part of a larger state effort to increase the regional capacity of NMPED.

**Policies that support: Community Schools** (ATF and ABC combined goals)

1. Restore the 2 million cut from Community Schools in the special session.
2. Commit to support Community Schools over time with 1 year for planning and 3 years of implementation with a Community School Coordinator in the 5<sup>th</sup> year.
3. Create a community school state designation.