



GAME CHANGERS: THE NM LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Ellen Bernstein
ATF President

There is a point in every game where there's a move that dramatically changes things. Whether it's a board game, a team sport, or an individual competition against a record best, the momentum shifts one way or the other. You become a winner or a loser, even if just for that moment in the game.

There are some significant game changers for all of us in public education this session, some made possible by the unprecedented surplus of revenue: \$3.6 billion in “new money,” to be exact.

How to spend that money is up for debate during the 2023 legislative session — and depending on which way they go with some significant policy proposals, there could be positive public education game changers, possible negative impacts, or a bunch of legislation that just ends up being “sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

For this newsletter, I am going to focus on four game changers we all need to keep an eye on during the 2023 legislative session.

1. A seemingly unanimous move to increase the mandated instruction hours to a minimum of 1,140.
2. Funding 100% of insurance premiums for every education employee.

3. Changing high school course-taking requirements.
4. Funding the SEG for local priorities and programs.

1,140

The idea of extending the school year has been around for a few years. It is billed as the “solution” to the Yazzie/Martinez Lawsuit in which it was determined that New Mexico is not meeting its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate, sufficient education to at-risk students – i.e. socioeconomically disadvantaged children, English learners, Native American students, and children with disabilities. If you are like me, I’m sure you can think of much more effective ways to address the court’s ruling, but in this session, the one-size-fits-all concept of more instructional time is the reality we have.

The Executive/PED, LESC, and LFC juggernaut of 1,140 instructional hours means that 150 hours will be added to the current minimum of 990 in elementary and 60 instructional hours will be added to the current 1,080 for grades 7-12.

As of this writing, we think there will be three competing plans:

1. The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) includes 60 hours of adult time for planning and collaboration within the 1,140 hours. This exists as HB 130, introduced by Reps. Joy Garratt and G. Andrés Romero.
2. The NM PED/Executive plans to have a bill for 1,140 instructional hours/year plus 60 hours of professional development time.
3. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) plans to call for 1,140 instructional hours with no increase in PD or other adult time.

My go-to education expert is world-renowned researcher Linda Darling-Hammond. She has reiterated many times that, compared to every other country (with the exception of Chile which has implemented a universal school voucher program that has resulted in unimproved scores and greater achievement gaps between the rich and the poor), the United States is unique because American teachers:

- Spend many more hours directly instructing children each week.
- Work more hours in total each week than their global counterparts.
- Have much less time in their schedules for planning, collaboration, and professional development.

She emphasizes that our teaching conditions — a leftover of factory-model school designs of the early 1900s — make it harder for us to find time to work with our colleagues on creating great curricula and learning new methods, grading papers, working individually with students, and reaching out to parents.

We must ask New Mexico’s lawmakers to listen to Linda. It is imperative that any increase in time we spend with students be balanced with an increase to adult time.

A few more things to know:

- APS is postponing the calendar proposal for the 2023-24 school year until the district knows what passes into law. More than likely 1,140 instructional hours will necessitate a longer school year and day.
- It will be essential that, no matter which proposal passes, it is funded properly. To me, that means all additional time is funded at the appropriate rate for all personnel and all employees are included to make sure the additional time is full schooling.

It is imperative that you stay tuned to the debate over these changes to your work conditions and take action during the session. Your union will be keeping you informed every step of the way.

Why it’s a game changer: Increasing the number of hours will, obviously, impact students and employees. It’s a big change no matter how it’s handled. So, it must be handled well.

Health Insurance Premiums

Governor Lujan Grisham has announced that she has set aside \$100 million in her budget to cover the cost of health

care premiums for all education employees.

Currently, for most of us, the state funds our employer to cover 60% of our insurance premiums while we pay 40%. Although we are fortunate to have that much of our health care covered, the constant premium increases from insurance companies every year irritate us all and chip away at our typically modest raises.

If this bill passes ([HB 102](#), Rep. Lara), it would mean an average APS teacher earning about 60K would increase their take home pay by approximately \$2,900 (single plan), \$5,800 (double plan), and about \$7,800 (family plan). You can read the full text to HB 102 by scanning this QR code (right).

That's a bold proposal and a big deal.

My guess is that, as the bill goes through committees, there will be debate about the cost of the proposal. If the fiscal impact report indicates and whether a change like this will have a ripple effect on other issues like future raises.

HS Course Taking Requirements

During the 2021 legislative session, Rep. G. Andrés Romero, chair of the House Education Committee and teacher at Atrisco Heritage Academy, worked with ATF on a bill to change the high school graduation requirements. HB 83 was an opportunity to rethink and modernize our current high school credit requirements so that future students would have the ability to choose a personalized pathway through school. It supported the notion that high school students deserve more options, especially when it comes to electives and Career and Technical Ed (CTE) programs. If the bill had passed, college and career success for New Mexico's high schools would be based on a course-taking plan grounded in equity, student choice, and diverse pathways to graduation.

The bill was tabled in the Senate Education Committee because the chair wanted the LESC to study the idea during the interim.

Now, [HB 126](#) (sponsored by Reps .G. Andrés Romero and T. Ryan Lane) has been fully discussed and is up for debate. HB 126 can be read by scanning this QR code (right).

Overall, our current 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 four credits in Language Arts. However, they might benefit much more from taking a technical writing and reading course.

As we send out updates on HB 126, our focus will be on ensuring that the change supports student choice, more electives, and growing our CTE programs.

Why it's a game changer: This can help better prepare students to live and work in the modern world. There are diverse career pathways for students to consider. We want all students to have an authentic opportunity to explore their interests so that they can travel down the path that they believe is best.

Funding the SEG



In case you are new to public education in our state, uniquely, the NM State Legislature is solely responsible for funding the operation of our school districts. This reliance on the Legislature for the money we need to run our schools has been in place for over 50 years. The Public School Finance Act created the State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) as the mechanism to distribute state funding equitably to all districts.

If you are not new to New Mexico, you know that over the years we have narrowed our state's revenue sources, becoming over reliant on oil and gas. That has made our school funding very unstable.

And, whether you have been an educator here for a day or a lifetime, what's important about this year is that we have more than \$3.6 billion in new revenue.

Let's go back to the decision to make local school funding state-determined. That was a good decision. In many parts of the country, schools are funded by local taxes, such as property taxes. That can create a significant difference in school districts that are geographically close to each other. Think inner-city schools versus suburban schools in big cities like Detroit. While the schools in the suburbs are enjoying clean campuses, safe buildings, roofs that don't leak, and low teacher turnover, the inner-city schools deal with crumbling buildings, old textbooks, and a revolving door of teachers. The pay for teachers also varies significantly, making it even harder to staff schools in lower socioeconomic areas.

Since its inception, the SEG has funded state mandates, like class sizes, and the operational money needed for local programs and priorities. It has been a roller coaster ride of boom and bust. When oil and gas revenue was high, we had money for raises and programs. When it was low, we flatlined funding for both.

Then in 2008, during the Great Recession, our state started cutting — drastically. When the recession ended in 2009, it took the United States five years to regain lost jobs. Recovery in NM took twice that long. The state had barely surpassed its pre-recession employment levels just before the COVID-19 pandemic brought the economy to a halt in 2020. We rank 45th among states for economic recovery since the pandemic started. Over the years, student enrollment has decreased and expenses have increased.

Over the past few years, even though state funding has been increasing, money for local priorities and programs has remained very low. Why? State mandates. Most of the additional dollars that have been invested in public education are already earmarked for particular programs or wage increases with little or no money left over for local priorities like increasing salary differentials to educators who are band directors, coaches, speech and debate team leaders, department chairs, orchestra teachers, and many more. These are long-standing priorities for our union.

Each district should have discretionary funding through the SEG and the flexibility to fund local priorities and services that are essential to our students. With a record revenue surplus, our goal is to make sure a sizeable portion of that money makes its way to the classroom and the people who make our schools function through the SEG.

We will be asking for your help to collectively advocate for enough State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) funding to pay for discretionary local priorities. Districts are still coping with decades of disinvestment in their schools. We know that the SEG must support each district to invest in local priorities.

Why it's a game changer: Allowing local districts to make funding decisions will tailor how dollars are spent. In the case of APS, it will allow your union to fight for our members' unique needs.

HOW TO STAY UPDATED DURING THE 60-DAY SESSION

This 60-day session will move quickly. It is imperative that you stay tuned to email updates from your union.

For updates about legislative priorities visit our website: atfunion.org

To stay abreast of what's happening in Santa Fe, subscribe to our social media outlets:

- Facebook: ATF-Albuquerque Teachers Federation
- Twitter: @atfunion
- Instagram: atfteachersunion
- YouTube: ATF Union

We cannot send overtly political messages from our APS email addresses. Be sure to use a non-APS email address when contacting legislators.

ATF PRESIDENT TALKS TEACHER RESIDENCIES AT U.S. DEPT. OF ED. SUMMIT

On January 12, our ATF president spoke at a national event put on by the U.S. Department of Education. Her topic was the effectiveness of teacher residencies for recruiting new highly qualified teachers. You can read the website story at atfunion.org.

Under President Ellen Bernstein's leadership, the Albuquerque Teachers Federation has been a constant advocate for teacher residencies. In 2018, the Albuquerque Teacher Residency Partnership (ATRP) was launched. The program is a collaboration between the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, the University of New Mexico College of Education and Human Sciences, and Albuquerque Public Schools. Dr. Bernstein has also been instrumental in the creation of the Special Education Teacher Training (SETT) program in partnership with APS and Central New Mexico Community College.



MLSS CONVERSATION BETWEEN ATF MEMBERS AND APS

If you want to know how to fix a broken system, ask the workers who do the job. ATF members Kimber Duvall (Kennedy MS), Michael Klein (School Psychologist), Katherine Stearns (Double Eagle), Corrine Johnson (Reginald Chavez ES), Kaitlin Wood (SR Marmon ES), and Laura Williams (Desert Ridge MS) joined ATF officers Angela Reynolds (Diagnostician, E&RSE VP), Sarah Hager (Cleveland MS, Middle School VP), and Celeste Hernandez (Lew Wallace ES, ATF Treasurer) to speak with representatives from APS Curriculum & Instruction and Student Information Systems about the ongoing problems educators are having with the MLSS process.

The ATF members steered the discussion to focus on the need for training and increasing user friendliness of the system.

As usual, the ATF members shined. They suggested making the MLSS goal be the primary category before checking the implementation tool or curriculum to be used. They pointed out that double-assessing the students is very time consuming and asked that educators be allowed to just use i-Ready diagnostics. They addressed the need to auto-populate the MET document and the creation of a flowchart document to help educators have a clear understanding of the path they must take to complete the process. They suggested that past MLSS forms need to be more accessible. Finally, the educators expressed the need to receive SAT training at the beginning of the school year.

We hope the suggestions of these outstanding practitioners will be implemented. Your union will continue to advocate that the district and the PED consult with the educators who do the work as they roll out or suggest new programs and processes.

MLSS CONVERSATION BETWEEN ATF MEMBERS AND APS

Hundreds of APS educators responded to our survey asking for input on the NM PED's proposed licensure advancement rule changes. ATF President Dr. Ellen Bernstein summarized the comments and presented them to the NM PED as a letter. You can read her letter at atfunion.org.

Overwhelmingly, respondents expressed concern about the lack of clarity in the proposed rule changes. Many educators wondered whether they should suspend work on the dossier and begin working on the micro-credential classes. Others expressed concern that the 18-month duration it takes to complete the micro-credentials for licensure advancement will delay their ability to move up the tier system and receive the pay they have earned.

Ellen noted all of this in her letter. She is personally disappointed that the state is shifting away from a "what do you know and do as a professional" system to "an assumption that we all have deficits that need to be filled" kind of

system. Your union will continue to advocate with the PED for clarity and parity of the licensure advancement process.

SPRING 2023 ELECTION FOR ATF CONSTITUENT VPS

ATF members in good standing are eligible to run for a constituent vice president seat at the level and/or role group they are currently working.

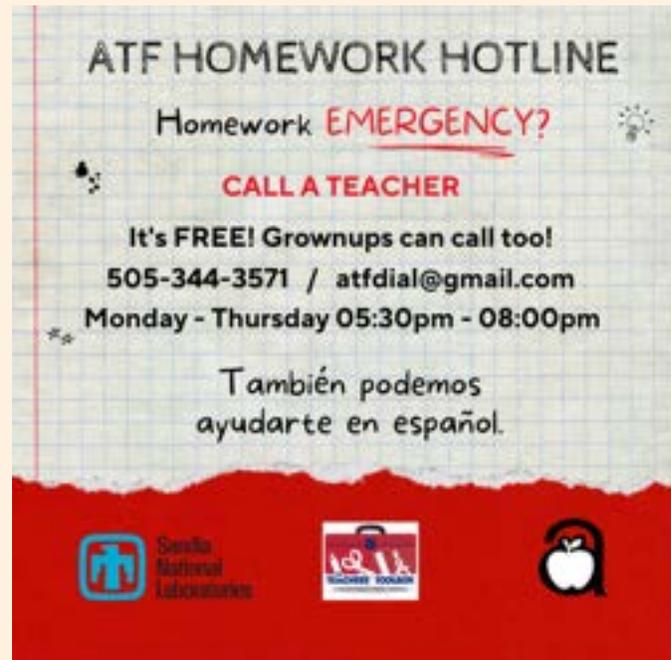
The following offices are up for election:

- 2 Elementary VPs
- 1 Middle School VP
- 1 High School VP
- 1 Essential & Related Service Educators VP

The ATF Constitution states the following: The five (5) constituent vice presidents shall be elected by their respective constituencies as defined in the bylaws. They shall be elected for a two (2)-year term every odd numbered year by secret ballot on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May. The rules of conduct of the election shall not be amended in the six (6) months prior to the election.

DIFFERENTIATED PD FOR PRINCIPALS

The majority responsibilities of the constituent vice presidents shall be to: Communicate the needs and desires of the members in their constituency to the Executive Council. Attend all meetings of the Executive Council and the Federation Representative Council. Nominations must be mailed by CERTIFIED LETTER and postmarked no later than April 4, 2023, to “Albuquerque Teachers Federation, ATTN: ATF Secretary, 530 Jefferson Street NE, Albuquerque, NM 87108.”



SPRING 2023 ELECTION FOR ATF CONSTITUENT VPS

Any ATF member in good standing for at least one year may run for any office, with the exception of President. In order to run for ATF President, one must have been a member in good standing for a minimum of two years, prior to running for this office. If you meet the qualifications and would like to run for a union leadership position, please submit a letter declaring your candidacy via Certified Mail, postmarked no later than April 4, 2023.

If you have questions about the at-large positions or declaring a candidacy, contact the ATF office at 505-262-2657 or email act@atfunion.org.

AN EXCITING STUDENT-CENTERED ELECTIVE

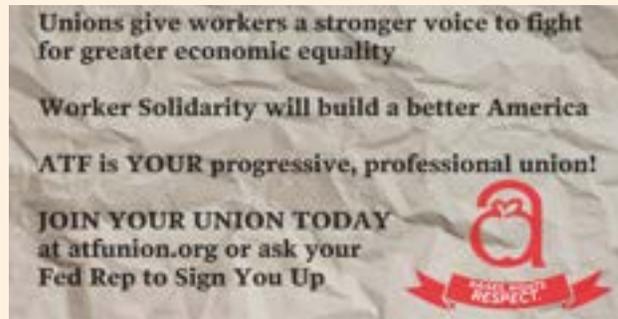
A few years ago, APS and ATF co-created the opportunity for High Schools to offer a Capstone class, a new effort to engage students in a student-centered elective that promotes relevance in their education..

A few years ago, APS and ATF co-created the opportunity for High Schools to offer a The Capstone elective course was approved for all high schools in APS to begin in the 2023-24 school year. This is a great way to engage students! A Capstone is a months-long project rooted in authentic contexts and building on local assets and culture.

Students engage in active, self-directed, and community-based learning experiences to produce a body of work that teachers periodically assess for evidence of competence. Students are able to choose how they demonstrate their learning for a capstone project.

Capstones result in public exhibitions of learning to school, family, and community. Teachers may work with their site administrators to recruit for and offer Capstone electives for next school year. A curricular framework with a plethora of resources is available, but individual sites should tailor the curriculum to their community needs and student interests.

Interested? Contact: Tanya Kuhnee, Teacher Support Specialist, kuhnee@aps.edu.



ATF EVENT CALENDAR

Date	Event	Time	Cost
Tues., 1/17	Opening Day of the Legislature	Noon	Tune In! Get Active!
Tues., 1/24	Educator Focused Conversations: Trauma Informed Restorative Practices	4:30-5:30pm	Free
Thurs., 2/2	Breathe for Change	4:30-5:30pm	\$5 members; \$10 nonmembers
Thurs., 2/2	ATF Labor Chorus Rehearsal	4:30-5:30pm	All ATF members welcome!
Sat., 2/4	National Board Writer's Workshop	9:00am-11:00am	\$125 members; \$150 nonmembers
Thurs., 2/9	PDD Overview	4:30-7:00pm	\$10 members; \$65 nonmembers
Sat., 2/11	ATF/AFT NM Union Leadership Program	9:00am-4:00pm	Applicants only
Thurs., 2/16	Breathe for Change	4:30-5:30pm	\$5 members; \$10 nonmembers
Thurs., 2/16	ATF Labor Chorus Rehearsal	4:30-5:30pm	All ATF members welcome!
Thurs., 2/16	Educator Focused Conversations: SEL Make-and-Takes	4:30-5:30pm	Free
Mon., 2/20	Presidents' Day	No classes!	Be ready for action in Santa Fe!
Thurs., 2/23	Relational Classroom Management	4:30-6:00pm	\$15 members; \$25 nonmembers
Tues., 2/28	Educator Focused Conversations: My classroom is in chaos and I just want to teach	4:30-5:3pm	Free



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