



A Coalition of Professional Education Organizations

AFT New Mexico • Albuquerque Teachers Federation • NEA-New Mexico • New Mexico Coalition of Education Leaders
New Mexico PTA • New Mexico School Boards Association

Attracting, Retaining, and Supporting a Diverse Workforce

The NM Education Partners 2024 legislative platform is based on the following:

- Funding must be **bold, courageous, timely, and accurate** to recruit and retain the workforce our students deserve and as our Constitution mandates. Funding must address our unique district and community needs and goals.
- Reporting and accountability must be intentional, supportive, and in partnership with local districts to ensure all students are provided opportunities for the rich, modern, and quality education our students deserve and as demanded by the *Martinez/Yazzie* ruling.
- Staffing shortages, truancy, and chronic absenteeism are our biggest collective educational crises. We must focus on supportive educator and student systems; eliminating or reforming antiquated and obsolete systems.
- Efforts to retain and recruit educators must be differentiated, and both require sustained attention to stem the historic levels of vacancies in our schools. Stabilizing the economic future of educators and our public education system is the immediate challenge, and bold, stable investment is the long-term solution.

New Mexico Education Partners' Priorities for 2024

Funding the Schools New Mexico Deserves:

Adequate & Equitable: We support sufficient, stable, and recurring funding that meets the basic needs of opening our doors, meeting new mandates, and fully staffing the constitutionally mandated core education programs in New Mexico's large, small, rural, and urban districts. This funding must also include adequate funding to provide safe and reliable transportation.

Flexibility & Respect for Local Decision-making and Local Priorities: Funding must align with each community's identified and prioritized educational needs. Trust districts, local school boards, and the wider community to design and implement the instructional program that best meets the needs of the local community, including the school calendar and academic programs offered.

Physical, Specialized, and Mental Health Needs: Funding must be allocated and sustained to serve our student population's total well-being. Align dual-licensed instructional support providers and ancillary educators to the existing 3-Tier system of funding currently applied to Level I, II, or III teachers and Level III Counselors to empower any district to better fill these critical roles and provide a supported and sufficient education.

Recognize Transportation Inequity: Transportation plays a pivotal role within a well-operating educational framework. We emphasize the urgent requirement for a comprehensive review and overhaul of the existing transportation funding formula to address the financial obstacles some districts confront and ensure the uniform provision of reliable and effective transportation services to every student.

Affordable Healthcare: The legislature should fund healthcare coverage at a minimum of 80% for *all* public education employees, and ensure districts are given appropriate funding to meet this expense.

Honor Commitments to Educational Retirees: New Mexico must ensure retiree healthcare is sufficient and stable for current and future recipients. We support 2023's House Bill 150/Senate Bill 193, which would help to ensure the Retiree Healthcare Authority's ability to provide educators' career-long earned benefits. Without legislative action, New Mexico would begin deficit spending in 8-9 years.

New Mexico must continue to increase state contributions to the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board to reach a fully funded status on a quicker timeline as a tool to recruit and retain both new and veteran educators.

A Focus on Retention:

\$25,000 Minimum for Educators: Like 2023's House Bill 127, which instituted a \$25,000 minimum salary for Educational Assistants, there are still public school educators who make less than \$25,000/year, including some secretaries, clerks, bookkeepers, food service workers, attendants, and others who serve vital roles in our schools. We support legislation ensuring no worker in our public schools makes less than \$25,000/year when working full time.

Salary Increases: To maintain regional competitiveness, we support a salary increase for all public educators, including transportation, of an *average* of 6%. We strongly advocate for "average language" for salary increases to address compaction and retention at the local level.

Culturally/Linguistically Responsive Training, Curriculum, and Materials: Continue to fund and develop methods of reporting and accountability to ensure students are provided opportunities to engage in the work necessary to create change in our schools to address historic and persistent educational disparities.

Recognizing the Talents of Our Educators: The NM Legislature recognizes that additional credentialing, and providing a differential for educators holding those certifications, has value. Advocates for the groundbreaking *Martinez/Yazzie* lawsuit believe additional credentials such as TESOL, Bilingual, and Reading Endorsements are also worthy of such differentials.

Building on our 3-Tiered Licensure system with credential differentials communicates the value we place on a highly credentialed workforce and an acknowledgment for the educators who serve our districts, schools, and students. Importantly, credential differentials build the internal capacity of our schools and districts to positively impact student achievement.

Providing Safe Learning Environments:

Prioritizing the safety of our students and educators is critical for meaningful educational outcomes. We emphasize the increasing need for security funding, especially in rural school districts with extended police response times. In alignment with the shared concerns of students, staff, and parents, we advocate for an increased budget allocation dedicated to bolstering common-sense security measures across our schools.

Community Schools:

We support the following appropriations to continue to build upon the transformational work of New Mexico's community schools:

- \$15M recurring below-the-line appropriation to New Mexico Public Education Department to carry out the provisions of the NM Community Schools Act, including planning and implementation of the Community Schools strategy.
- \$2.7M recurring below-the-line appropriation to New Mexico Public Education Department to pilot a new, additional Community Schools Transformation Initiative to support continuous improvement of the Community Schools Strategy and codesign a validation of implementation process with the cohort of 18 schools that have completed planning and implementation.
- \$100M transfer to the Community Schools Fund to support the implementation of the Community Schools Act, robust technical support, and regional capacity building for implementing the community schools strategy for school transformation to improve well-being, attendance, achievement, and graduation rates.

Governance:

Local Control: We support local decision-making authority of school boards and oppose legislation and executive action/rulemaking restricting the ability of locally elected school boards to respond to the varied and ever-changing needs of their districts, students, and communities. We call on the legislature to affirm and expand the authority of locally elected school boards to independently develop and adopt educational policies reflecting the educational needs of the students and communities they serve.

School Flexibility: We recognize school planning decisions should not be a “one size fits all” proposition and support legislation that allows local school boards to make decisions about the length of school week, re-entry, and instruction based upon relevant scientific evidence and community needs and goals.

State Education Governance: The New Mexico Education Partners believe it is time to consider the benefits of a constitutional amendment to reinstate a statewide Board of Education.