

B i t e - S i z e

🍏 Preliminary FY25 allocations for the federal Title I program show New Mexico may receive \$125.9 million in federal funds. Projected FY24 Title I carryover totals \$33.2 million; local education agencies may carry over 15 percent of their Title I award if it is greater than \$50 thousand.

🍏 Recent research found inequities in the federal formula for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), which makes up 85 percent of special education federal funding to states. Inequities increase in states with high poverty, for example. In FY23, New Mexico received \$109 million in IDEA-B funds.

🍏 The 2024 Kids Count Data Book, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, found New Mexico trails much of the nation in key indicators, ranking the state 50th for child wellbeing. One key data points is that 50 percent of New Mexico children experience at least one adverse childhood experience.



i n f o r m E D

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Representative G. Andrés Romero, Chair / Senator William P. Soules, Vice Chair / Gwen Perea Warniment, Director / June 2024

From the Chair

Summer is an exciting time for students, families, and educators. The weather is improving, summer vacation is here, and student celebrations are many. The summer break allows educators to reset and reflect. For the LESC, summer signals the beginning of the interim. The session has passed, and we can focus on not just what's been done, but in what direction we need to head. I think this happy coincidence could help foster a renewed engagement from all involved in public education. It is in this spirit that I offer a wish list this interim:

Collaboration. The LESC is a bicameral, bipartisan committee with a devoted staff tasked with reviewing, studying, and improving our public schools. Despite our respective chambers and political affiliations, we work well together on behalf of New Mexico. As we travel the state, we talk with educators, parents, and administrators who help us find solutions. I sincerely hope this partnership continues and includes the Public Education Department. The funding and laws of the Legislature can only be as effective as their implementation.

Comprehensiveness. With the sheer number of districts and schools across the state, we have found blanket solutions are rarely a solution for all. The proposals we work on need to be whole solutions. "Whole solutions" means we are considering things like the impact on different districts and communities, staffing capacities, roles, and responsibilities. We also have been asking and answering questions like: What is the whole health of our communities? What are parents' aspirations for their children? Do children have equal access to resources and tools to succeed? Are educational workers taken care of?

Stamina. As mentioned, the end of the school year and the beginning of the interim session is a welcome coincidence. However, as fall sets in, all the testimony, school visits, reports, evaluations, meetings and discussion groups end in a memorial, piece of legislation, or budget proposal. My hope is that all stakeholders continue to stay engaged throughout the whole process, from interim to session.

We have significant issues to work on this interim. Let's continue this work in partnership.

Building a World-Class Teaching Profession

Improving student outcomes in New Mexico is deeply intertwined with the state's ability to recruit and retain effective teachers. Research underscores teachers are the most crucial school-related factor influencing performance on reading and math assessments, the likelihood of on-time high school graduation, and even more distal outcomes like college completion and future earnings. The *Martinez-Yazzie* education lawsuit highlighted the need for effective teachers, noting inadequate teaching quality in New Mexico is a significant issue.

Despite substantial funding increases—the Legislature has increased recurring funding for public schools to \$4.4 billion, a 58 percent increase since 2019 with \$984 million of this going to educator compensation—teacher vacancies and high turnover rates remain a stubborn challenge. As of 2023, only 38 percent of students demonstrated proficiency in reading, and 24 percent in math. In 2023, the state also reported 751 teacher vacancies and 1,471 licensed school personnel vacancies. High attrition rates, with about 1,500 level 1 teachers leaving the profession

annually, and the potentially inadequate preparation of alternatively licensed teachers (60 percent of new teachers) may also exacerbate the problem.

A joint hearing brief by staff from both LESC and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) underscores the necessity of comprehensive support systems that support teachers' entire career trajectories.

For example, teacher residency programs, offering extensive clinical preparation under experienced mentors, have shown promise. The state has invested significantly in these programs, bolstered by federal grants. Strengthening mentorship programs is another critical step, providing structured training and evaluation to new teachers, reducing turnover. Effective professional development, emphasizing job-embedded learning and collaboration, is also essential. Redesigning school schedules to facilitate professional learning communities, peer coaching, and data-driven instruction is crucial. Innovative staffing models like Opportunity Culture, piloted in Carlsbad Municipal Schools, show potential, with early results indicating significant improvements in student growth.

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LESC Unveils a School District Data Dashboard

At a May 2024 hearing, LESc staff unveiled a school district data dashboard. Accessible online at <https://newmexicolesc.shinyapps.io/District-Dashboard/>, this tool aims to aggregate key data points and information about school districts statewide and, ultimately, help track crucial indicators to support progress toward student success in New Mexico schools.

The current dashboard functionalities focus on school district-level data, including student enrollment and demographics, proficiency and achievement gaps over time, district budget and expenditures by category, school district cash balances, teacher workforce indicators, and facility conditions. Future updates will expand the dashboard's capabilities to include state-level data, school-level data (including charter schools), and the ability to cross-cut data by legislative

districts. These updates will also reflect the LESc research agenda, incorporating additional measures of student growth, program impacts on student outcomes, school calendar and learning time information, class load data across the state, and expanded metrics for student success.

During the hearing, LESc staff emphasized the dashboard's purpose is not merely to compile statistics, but to aid in answering critical questions and facilitate informed decisions. Notably, LESc staff acknowledged legislators "need data to evaluate the impact of their investments and understand progress toward long-term goals." Through this dashboard, and additional research initiatives, LESc staff plan to use student outcome data to monitor the impact of specific legislative investments that are due for evaluation including the family income index, teacher residences and

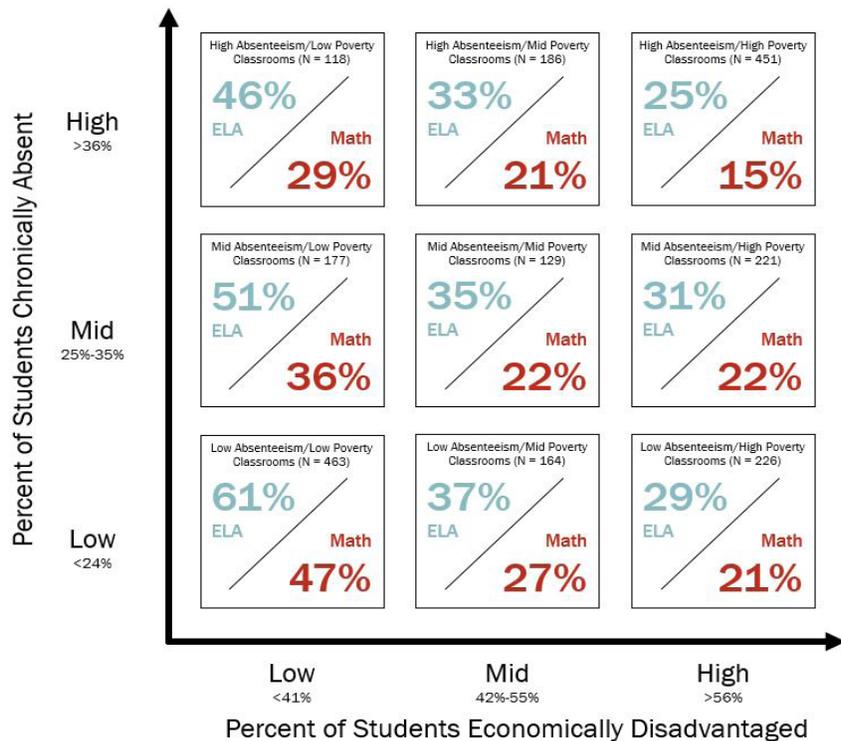
mentorship, career and technical education, structured literacy, community schools, and extended learning time.

LESc staff also highlighted the importance of reducing data siloing and enhancing data integration across state agencies. Currently, New Mexico has a wealth of data knowledge across its state agencies, but too often, these data systems are developed in isolation and lack a formal structure to meet the state's comprehensive needs. Establishing a data governance structure could streamline outstanding data projects, build shared goals, and create a formal cross-agency decision-making process. This structure could define roles and responsibilities of individual agencies and provide a clear path to completing critical projects, including Project Nova, the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and the Early Childhood Integrated Data System.

World-Class Teaching Profession

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As the brief cautions, "however tempting it may be to hope for silver bullet approaches, relying too heavily on a single strategy may create unintended consequences or lackluster results." Building a world-class teaching profession in New Mexico requires an outcome-focused approach that employs connected and strategic support systems. This topic will be discussed in detail at the upcoming LESc hearing in Chama on Thursday, June 27.



Absenteeism, Poverty, and Academic Achievement Intersect

Recent LESc staff review of attendance data shows there are compounding relationships between student poverty, chronic absenteeism, and academic achievement.

As shown in the figure above, increasing levels of poverty decrease student achievement and, similarly, increasing levels of absenteeism also decrease achievement. Notably, however, poverty has a stronger effect on student achievement than absenteeism.

At the extremes, high poverty and high absenteeism result in the lowest proficiency rates in the state.

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