



ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Albuquerque Public Schools

Response to the New Mexico Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

March 31, 2017

1.) Please indicate in which New Mexico County you reside:

[Bernalillo County](#)

2.) Please select the description below that BEST describes your relationship to New Mexico schools:

[District Administrator](#)

3.) Indicate the section(s) of New Mexico's Proposed ESSA State Plan that you would like to provide feedback on:

All Sections

Section 1: Goals

Section 2: Consultation and Performance Management

Section 3: Academic Assessments

Section 4: Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools

Section 5: Supporting Excellent Educators

Section 6: Supporting All Students

Other Feedback

In addition to the release of New Mexico's State Plan, the PED released New Mexico Rising – Together; a document that captures key feedback and the initial response of the PED. *Please review this document and share your feedback below:*

*Letter Response Submission: If you have a letter response to submit, please email to ESSA.NMRISING@state.nm.us

Section 1: Goals

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) agrees that high expectations and goals are important for students, but concerned that currently there will not be the resources necessary to meet these goals. APS works tirelessly to increase student performance but is concerned that cut scores will change without consideration for a transition period.

Changing the cut scores for graduation competency the year in which districts are required to meet 80% graduation rates may make it incredibly difficult for districts to meet this goal, not due to progress of students but due to new cut scores.

With the high stakes nature of the outlined goals we believe they are similar to those under NCLB and we will eventually have all schools in CSI and TSI.

Section 2: Consultation and Performance Management

APS appreciates the opportunity given to include stakeholder participation in the NM First tour. APS also participated in the NM Learning Alliance focus groups and gathered a wealth of information related to the real changes Albuquerque stakeholders hope to see in the NM ESSA plan. APS notes that there are significant differences between the outcomes of the NM First report and the NM Learning Alliance. APS believes the NM Learning Alliance report and the APS feedback form submitted to NM Learning Alliance is more closely aligned with the



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experiences of our stakeholders. Most noticeably is the disconnect between the two reports regarding social and emotional wellbeing of students and the need for more individualized learning experiences for both teachers and students in the NM First report and the ESSA draft plan. APS believes the ESSA plan should highlight these themes and seize the opportunity to work on new innovative models to shift the paradigm in our schools.

APS supports the consolidated application for Title I, Title II and Title III dollars as we believe it will provide an opportunity for districts to streamline services and leverage dollars for common goals.

Nightly submissions for data may be problematic as additional resources may be necessary to support the implementation of this plan.

Section 3: Academic Assessments

APS stakeholders agreed, as a whole, that assessment and progress monitoring are a necessity in our schools and do not believe that testing should not occur. APS stakeholders agreed, as a whole, that bubble tests and annual tests are the least helpful for parents to understand how their student is performing in school and for teachers to design methods to support struggling students. APS stakeholders overwhelmingly believed that pre- and post-testing was a method of assessment the schools should use when monitoring what students learned. Stakeholders also agreed that interim assessments were valuable for teachers and parents to engage in different strategies to help struggling students improve.

However, APS stakeholders were incredibly strong in their belief that assessments should look and feel drastically different than they currently do. APS stakeholders in every single response group, regardless of the makeup of the group, demanded that assessment be personalized to meet the unique learning styles of students. Portfolios, project based learning, presentations and role reversal were discussed by every single response group. It is clear that assessment is valuable for teachers, parents and students. It is tailoring those assessments to be reflective of real life and personalized that participants want policy makers to develop.

Therefore, APS is disappointed at the continued focus of the ESSA draft plan to utilize the PARCC test as its main measure of student performance and overarching tool for accountability. APS would urge the PED to reconsider its focus on the PARCC and would encourage PED to allow teacher created assessments and interim assessments created at district discretion be trusted as the main measure for student performance.

Section 4: Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools

APS appreciates the work in the ESSA plan to move the point structure of the school grading system to be one that is more aligned with the values expressed by stakeholders – but APS does not believe those points go far enough to out due the burden placed on proficiency and standardized test scores of students. APS is concerned that proficiency rates, or status scores, generally punish high-poverty schools and would encourage PED to continue to look to other school quality indicators and measures of growth to offset the damaging impact proficiency rates may have as a stand-alone indicator.

APS appreciates the focus in the ESSA plan on English Language Learners (ELL) and looks forward to learning more about the ELL performance indicators.

APS stakeholders shared a common theme, throughout most of the response groups, that they believed the current accountability for schools missed the mark on key indicators for school



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performance. Schools who are performing well are those who foster environments that respect individual students, their experiences and their families. They are also schools who have high expectations of students and make a focused effort to connect the standards taught in classrooms to the world outside of the school.

APS stakeholders agreed that attendance, community involvement, school climate, facilities, communication with families and the school's ability to care for the social and emotional needs of students should all be considered in school accountability measures. Stakeholders agreed that academics were important and that they had to be measured, but that academics were not the entire picture.

Participation falling below 95% resulting in the loss of a letter grade continues to be a source of consternation in Albuquerque. APS strongly believes that parents should have the right to make educational decisions about their children.

Page 57 – the breakdown of Q1 growth shows that schools are at a specific disadvantage if schools have more American Indian, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and English learners. APS believes this should be opposite.

Additionally, APS believes that graduation at 5 years and 6 years should be given more weight or equal consideration to the 4-year graduation rate.

Additionally, the complete removal of VAM on student proficiency will damage schools in the sense that they no longer gain credit for the growth they have had in those areas and makes it more high stakes for simple status scores.

The majority of school staff believed that schools struggle because programs and their implementation change too quickly and the “turnover” rate in school programming left teachers unable to implement any strategy with fidelity.

APS stakeholders agreed, as a whole, that struggling schools needed additional supports from the State and the district. Increased mentorship and collaboration opportunities for staff, more poverty awareness training, and additional staff to intervene when a student struggles with issues outside the classroom. Other ideas for supporting struggling schools centered on the idea that all school improvement must be personalized to the individual needs of a school and its community and that it must respect the cultural differences at each school. There was a strong desire from community participants to allow them to take more ownership of their school and that if this ownership was granted the schools would perform at a higher level.

APS is particularly concerned about provisions of the ESSA plan that would allow charter school management to reconstitute failing schools. Seven APS schools fall under these provisions as outlined in the ESSA plan. APS hopes to have the opportunity to offer these schools comprehensive support prior to discussions of closure or reconstitution. The ideas for reconstitution of schools is similar strategies under No Child Left Behind and APS does not believe those strategies were successful. APS also questions the wisdom of closing or reconstituting schools that have had different levels of support from the PED over the last 5 years. For example, Los Padillas is a school that falls under the provisions for immediate closure or reconstitution but that school is not currently part of tri-annual visits.

APS is concerned that requirements for SIG applications for a commitment to PED programs does not encourage local districts to create local partnerships for school improvement and turnaround models. APS would like to continue partnerships with UNM and other universities



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and not be required to participate in programs that detract from that mission. PED should not list specific programs but rather should allow districts to choose from evidence-based programs that may not be on the PED list – for example programs with Stanford University and others.

APS is concerned about PED capacity to support the provisions of the NM DASH program.

PED should provide measured support to all schools, not just those that successfully compete for grant dollars.

Section 5: Supporting Excellent Educators

Overwhelmingly, participants agreed that teachers should be evaluated in our schools and that their performance should be taken seriously when considering their responsibilities as teachers. The majority of response groups believed that basing teacher evaluations on student test scores was inappropriate. Response groups felt strongly that accountability of teachers should be a collaborative process where teachers, supervisors and peers all play a role in not only observing teachers to rank their performance, and to support teachers who struggle. A significant portion of participants believed peer observations needed to occur in schools, not just observations from supervisors. Participants also believed more individual reflection was necessary as part of the conversation teachers have with supervisors. Participants believe respectful environments must be created so the school is viewed as a positive place to work and interact.

The majority of response groups felt strongly that students and/or parents should have a voice in their teacher's evaluations. These groups included parents, teachers and students.

Support for struggling teachers mainly focused on personalization for struggling teachers through meaningful mentorship, peer review and individual support plans from supervisors.

There is a clear desire for teachers to be able to talk to each other more and help each other when they struggle. Struggling teachers need appropriate resources to support them, additional EAs, more professional development and true communication with their principals to work on skills they lack.

APS believes the teacher evaluation system should be maximum 35% student achievement - 35% observations and 30% other measures. APS believes we have conflicting systems between employee contracts with determined sick leave v. when a teacher is punished for taking sick leave under the current evaluation system.

Section 6: Supporting All Students

APS believes the ESSA draft plan falls short in its contemplation of support for students.

Though the plan does a good job at outlining the initiatives PED has pursued since 2010, it does little push the envelope for a new focus on student social and emotional wellbeing.

Overwhelmingly, APS stakeholders believed the content standards and skills taught in our schools should be reflective of the real life skills students require when they leave our doors and enter the workforce or college. These standards should focus on creating critical thinkers who have the ability to be resilient when they leave the schools and enter life.

The stakeholders were clear that academic performance is contingent upon fostering students who have positive social, collaboration and communication skills that borrow from each child's unique experiences and home and in their communities. Participants believed that focusing solely on academics was irresponsible for the schools. Children have drastic social and emotional needs and the schools must determine a way to integrate more meaningful services into the school day so the students have the foundation for learning.



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The participants believed that schools must evolve to understand that not every child is going to go to college so more vocational education was essential.

Technology is a concrete component of learning that will help prepare our children for a world current teachers and administrators cannot imagine.

As PED changes the current structure of education in the State, APS requests that the specific changes be highlighted so districts understand what they need to do differently. If there is not specific guidance about changes, APS expects education policy to be more of the same unless New Mexico seizes the opportunity for dramatic change to education.

Other Feedback