




## B i t e - S i z e

 PED released a long-anticipated update to the New Mexico Vistas school support and accountability dashboard. The previous dashboard, formerly located at NewMexicoSchools.com, had not been updated since 2019. The new dashboard, located at NMVistas.org, represents the first-time schools have been ranked since the original cohort of traditional support and improvement (TSI) and comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) schools identified in 2019.

 In FY22 PED awarded 288 scholarships to individuals seeking certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, according to a report released by PED on June 15. Recipients include 148 Level II educators and 140 level III educators and ranged across various school levels and endorsement types. To receive full certification, applicants must complete four components, done either simultaneously or in stages.

 PED has identified eight structured literacy model schools and 64 structured literacy support schools through a competitive grant application process. PED's Literacy and Humanities Bureau conducted site visits and interviews. Schools were chosen based on observed, evidence-based structured literacy practices in the classroom. PED will provide \$50 thousand in state grant funding for structured literacy model schools and up to \$40 thousand for structured literacy support schools.



# 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 2023

### From the Chairman

#### Making Strides Towards Education Success

As incoming chair of the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), I, along with my colleagues, am committed to improving New Mexico's education system and ensuring every student gets a high-quality education. As a member of the legislature and LESG for 8 years, I am appreciative of the remarkable work we at the LESG have done to advocate for increased funding for public education.

Now we are following the framework set by the No Time To Lose report, challenging assumptions about changing assessment data, and striving to uphold standards and high expectations for students and educators, while also recognizing our cultural assets are part of this standard.

We have made notable progress in New Mexico. Our educators are being paid competitively for the first time. Our districts and schools have access to state dollars that support career technical education. Our investments in Native education have increased significantly. We now have state statute and funding to support community schools. We are funding an educator pipeline through residencies and paid student teaching. We have made investments in educator benefits and retirement.

We have invested in targeted funding for at-risk students and advocated for the expansion of pre-kindergarten. We have committed to understanding and implementing significant policy levers that bring the science of reading to all teachers across the state. Last, but not least, we have found consensus on increasing instructional hours and incentivizing increased days for students and teachers.

All of this and yet, as we all know, there is significant work to do. We must begin to identify expected outcomes and better define realistic, meaningful impact with the programs we choose to fund and the policies we hope to establish. We must hold ourselves and our schools accountable for providing high quality education. Consequently, with strong resolve, the work plan for this committee is ambitious. As a leader in education policy and research in our state that collectively brings decades of experience together, the LESG hopes to help guide the path our state needs to navigate towards transformation and excellence.

We invite you along for the journey.

  
Representative G. Andrés Romero  
Chairman

## Report Rates Teacher Prep on Science of Reading

A recent report by the National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ) identifies which undergraduate educator preparation programs actually train pre-service teachers about the five core elements of scientifically based reading instruction. This is important information as the Legislative Education Study Committee explores ways to improve reading proficiency rates in reading, which currently stands at 34 percent.

The core elements of scientifically based reading instruction include phonemic awareness (spoken words), phonics (matching sounds with letters), fluency (reading without much effort), vocabulary and comprehension. The approach is based on a vast body of research, most recently confirmed in a [2019 federal report](#) by the What Works Clearing House.

Of eight programs in New Mexico, three were rated A or A+ and two were rated a B. To earn an A, programs demonstrated they adequately employed all five components with strong focus through sufficient dedicated hours and opportunities for practice.

Among 173 programs in the nation that addressed all five components of reading instruction, only 48 programs exceeded the

targets of the research and did not employ contrary practices. Western New Mexico University was recognized for two of the 48 programs, with both its undergraduate and graduate programs earning A+.

Eastern New Mexico University also earned an A, and New Mexico Highlands and New Mexico State University each earned a B. Reviewing the data from the research, it appears that lower scores were related to a lack of opportunities for teacher candidates to practice instruction related to each of the five components, particularly with struggling readers or English learners. Northern New Mexico University received a D, and the University of New Mexico received a D for its undergraduate program and F for its graduate program.

The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) work plan for the 2023 interim session includes a focus on teacher preparation program accountability. A major concern of members is whether institutions of higher education in New Mexico are preparing educators for day-one readiness as they enter the classroom.

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# LESC to Study Impact of Special Education Executive Order

As state and local officials continue to grapple with the findings in the Martinez and Yazzie consolidated lawsuit, including a call for improving special education, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham recently issued an [executive order](#) creating an office of special education within the Public Education Department (PED). The newly created office will be run by a governor-appointed director and will spearhead a number of initiatives aimed at improving services for students with disabilities. Among the goals is to provide professional development for a wider range of education professionals, better coordinate special education tasks within PED, promote recruitment and retention of special educators, and provide technical assistance to school districts and schools.

## Western earns top score

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A number of questions include: whether prep programs sufficiently explore classroom management and positive discipline, whether prep programs ensure teachers understand how to employ differentiated learning and adequately support English learners, whether prep programs include exposure to strong mathematics instructional practice, whether prep programs ensure teachers understand how to support students with disabilities in their classrooms, and finally, whether programs ensure teachers understand how to teach students to read according to the science of reading among other concerns.

Learning from Western and Eastern New Mexico universities will be pivotal for future consideration of legislation and budget to support educator preparation programs across the state.

The order comes after House Bill 285 (HB285), a bill that would have created a special education office, stalled during the committee process during the 2023 legislative session. Opponents of the bill expressed concerns that it did not include feedback from enough stakeholder groups and that legislation was not necessary to accomplish many of the provisions of the legislation.

Prior to the governor's order, LESG staff included a review of special education services in its work plan for the interim. Staff and PED officials are scheduled to present to the committee on the state of special education during its June meeting. Simultaneously, LESG staff will begin a round of listening sessions centered on special education. The sessions will be held throughout the summer, with a por-

tion being in-person and others being held virtually. The goal is to hear from stakeholders with varying experiences with special education in New Mexico, from parents of students with disabilities, to special educators, districts officials, as well as other special education advocates. Staff also plans to evaluate ongoing efforts to improve the special education system, including the role of the state special education ombud, which was created by the legislature during the 2021 legislative session and is tasked with providing support and advocacy on behalf of parents of students with disabilities.

The process will culminate a staff-led working group that will review feedback from the listening sessions and provide budget and policy proposals for the 2024 legislative session and beyond.

## Construction Costs Higher Than Expected

Rising construction costs have become an issue of concern for members of the Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC), especially as the council anticipates a large number of applications for construction projects later this year. While PSCOC expected some cost increases due to economic conditions this year, actual costs and bids for public school construction projects have been significantly higher than expected.

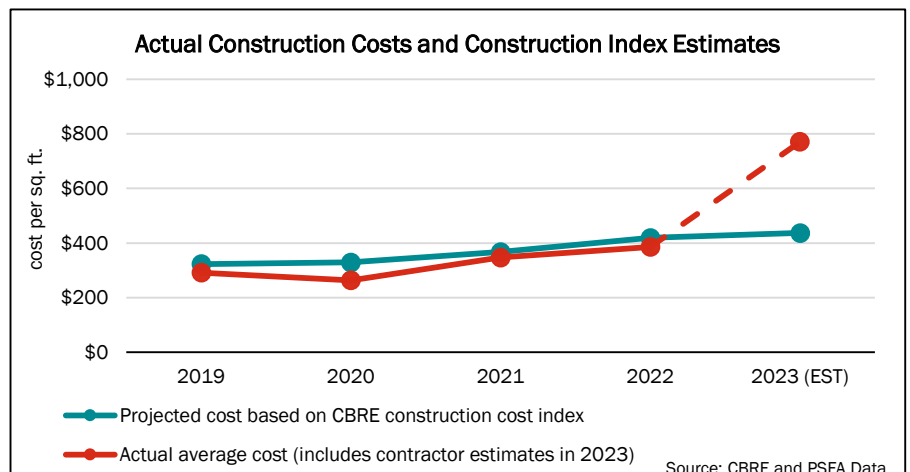
A national commercial real estate investment firm, Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis (CBRE), published a report in 2022 attempting to quantify how construction costs may increase in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. CBRE designed a "construction cost index" to summarize the net effect of changes across multiple dimensions of the construction market, including:

- Increased demand for construction projects;
- A shortage in qualified laborers;
- Supply chain disruptions; and
- Increased cost of materials.

As a result of these changes, CBRE estimated construction costs would increase by 11.5 percent in 2021 and another 14.1 percent in 2022. CBRE expected that growth in costs would somewhat flatten-out in 2023, with a projected increase of only 4.3 percent this year.

Based on actual construction cost data obtained from the Public School Facilities Authority, in 2019 through 2022, New Mexico's costs were closely aligned to the CBRE index. However, current construction costs and contractor bids for public school projects significantly outpaced CBRE's estimates for 2023.

Using the CBRE construction cost index, LESG staff estimates that construction costs should be approximately \$437 per square foot this year. However, actual costs and contractor bids on four 2023 school projects have averaged \$771 per sq. ft. The Public School Capital Outlay Oversight Task Force is set to hear from national and local experts about rising construction costs during its July 2023 meeting.



## informed

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