




B i t e - S i z e

 Higher education and public school employee retirements hit an all-time high in FY21, with 1,271 people applying for retirement benefits from the Educational Retirement Board. Eighty-five percent were public school employees. The count beat the previous record of 1,238 set in FY15. Compared with FY20, FY21 retirements increased by 363, or 40 percent. Retirements averaged 1,024 annually between FY16 and FY20.

 The Public Schools Facilities Authority is recommending the Public School Capital Outlay Council create a separate nonprofit organization to operate a statewide education technology network and provide cybersecurity and other services to its members. State law requires the council to develop guidelines and fund a network but does not explicitly require the council to build and operate the network. However, it also does not explicitly allow the council to create an independent, nonprofit organization.

 The Public Education Department has amended regulations on educator preparation programs that will require teachers who supervise teacher candidates to complete a mentorship course. In addition, teacher candidates must participate in at least one student teaching experience in a diverse school setting working with Indigenous students, students with disabilities, or bilingual students, and programs must include instruction in culturally and linguistically relevant practices.



i n f o r m E D

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Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / August 2021

From the Chairman

Changed Forever

What a difference a year makes. This time last year, school administrators were looking at a remote learning experience with no end in sight. The mad scramble to get to the end of the 2019-2020 school year had become the new normal. And the new normal meant new everything—new technology, new classroom management approaches, new ways of learning, new ways of engaging students. Students and teachers, especially those in rural and tribal areas, spent day after day struggling with technology that worked badly, intermittently, or not at all. Everyone in the public schools—staff, students, and families—deserves a reward for getting through the last year.

As we start a new school year in-person, we recognize the Covid-19 pandemic is still with us, not just because we are still wearing masks and the news ripples with stories of the Delta variant surge but also because the pandemic, and our response to it, fundamentally changed schools and traditional education processes. Indeed, as with all challenges, the pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to make some much needed changes to our educational systems and expectations. When we talk about schools returning to normal, we need to remember that normal was not very good for many of our students.

With that opportunity in mind, now is the time for legislators to make personal connections with school boards and superintendents. School leadership is looking at this year's budgets with an eye toward supporting teachers and students. Committee members, even more than other legislators, need to listen to the needs of their local education leaders and be a resource for their schools. I'd like to see members volunteer to guest speak in high school government classes, meet directly with school boards on priorities for both policy and capital needs, work with local business, economic, and community leaders to bring them into support for our children and schools. Being citizen legislators means that we listen to and represent our communities. Being an education legislative leader means being a part of the local education community. It is the only way you can effectively advocate for the children of New Mexico.



Department Lags on Program Oversight

New Mexico relies heavily on site visits for ongoing oversight of its 21 approved educator preparation programs but the Public Education Department has completed only three since 2019.

A discussion of the state's accreditation process for teacher programs and how it compares with national accreditation processes is on the committee's agenda for 2:30 p.m. on August 30.

In a brief prepared for the hearing, staff reports new traditional and alternative educator preparation programs must submit a proposal to the Public Education Department's Professional Practices and Standards Commission, which makes a recommendation to the department secretary.

Ongoing approval then depends on reporting and site visits, added to the process in 2018 as part of a now-otherwise-abandoned scorecard system of assessing programs based partially on teacher performance after graduation.

The hearing brief says the department staff position assigned to the approval and site-visit process and to oversee preparation programs has been vacant for almost a year, and preparation program administrators have raised concerns about

the quality of the site visits.

They report site visits were conducted by different department staff members, who often asked questions aligned with their own work rather than with the approval metrics.

In addition, even though the terms of all the members of the standards council expired in June, the department has not announced new members yet, and while the department generally holds four meetings a year to approve programs it held just one during the 2020-2021 school year.

Further, programs fulfill their reporting requirements by providing data to the statutorily required Educator Accountability Report, but no EARs were produced by the department between 2016 and 2019.

New Mexico currently has eight traditional educator preparation programs, all with national accreditation, and 13 alternative license programs, with some colleges that provide traditional programs also providing alternative programs. Of the alternative programs, eight are hosted by four-year public institutions, four by two-year public institutions, and one by Coopera-

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Students Share Perspectives with Committee

Engaged teachers and relevant coursework are among the priorities of the students who made up the first of what is to be a series of panels intended to provide the committee with a student perspective.

Speaking to the committee during its June meeting in Hobbs, Abigail Slater, Emily Hervol, Kierra Gallegos, and Sara Rados, local high school students, said their strongest teachers were excited to be with students every day and had a deep knowledge of their

content. Weak teachers were those who did not seem to care about student well-being and seemed unhappy to be in the classroom.

The students defined a positive high school environment as one that includes sports and club activities outside of academics, positive interaction with the staff, and a focus on making students feel like they belong.

Asked by Senator Bill Soules, chairman, about graduation requirements, the students said the least beneficial

classes have subject matter that is no longer relevant – like typing – or those taught by ineffective teachers.

Gallegos emphasized the importance of student mental health and the need for social and emotional learning.

Slater noted the value of in-person learning, which was suspended when schools closed their buildings during the pandemic.

Gallegos said the pandemic taught her to push through really difficult situations, and Slater said she learned she could rely on the people she trusts to help her.

Slater said many of her friends enrolled in schools in Texas and were able to access in-person learning, which improved their grades. Hervol said she knew students who were able to take on jobs to support their families because of online school.

Asked to identify what makes a successful high school graduate, Rados said graduates should be prepared for college and clear on what they want to pursue after high school. Slater added students should have access to college- and career-focused high school courses.

Department Lags on Program Oversight

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tive Education Services, a purchasing cooperative for the state's 89 school districts.

LESC staff reports some New Mexico programs seek national accreditation because licenses from nationally accredited programs are more likely to be accepted by other states.

Although two organizations provide national accreditation—the Council for Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP)—the more dominant CAEP does not accredit alternative programs.

New Mexico's approval process overlaps significantly with that of CAEP, although CAEP, which has accredited five New Mexico programs, includes the impact of program graduates on student performance in its assessments.

New Mexico has not formally assessed teacher performance for several years.

AAQEP, which has provided national accreditation to three New Mexico

programs and accredits alternative programs as well as traditional programs, also includes the performance of program graduates in its standards.

Because of the alignment of the New Mexico and CAEP processes, New Mexico preparation programs likely are required to submit duplicate information, LESC staff concludes.

However, CAEP is willing to partner with states to allow programs to submit information once for both state and national accreditation, staff says.

Funding Grows Faster Than Enrollment

While student participation in extended learning programs has increased significantly in the past four years, growth has fallen far short of increases in funding.

Across all three extended learning programs—K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time, which add days to the school year and are funded through the funding formula, and a pilot that adds hours—the Legislature appropriated \$298.7 million for extended learning in FY22, but only \$97.3 million is expected to be spent serving students. The other \$201 million will go to the public education reform fund for use starting in FY23.

The number of students in the three extended learning programs grew from about 18.2 thousand in FY19 to an estimated 158.3 thousand in FY22, but that represents less than half the number funded.

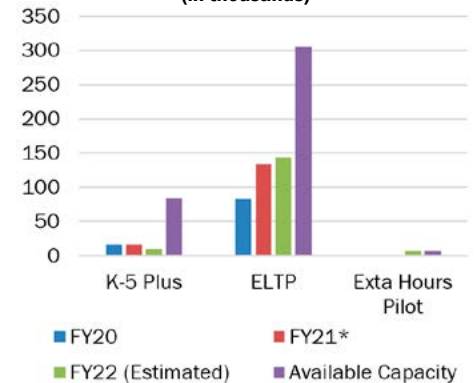
Participation in Extended Learning Time (ELTP), which generally adds 10 days to the school year, has doubled in its three years, while appropriations have more than doubled, growing from \$62.5 million to \$160.2 million. In FY22, 141 thousand students are expected to use the 305 thousand ELTP slots available to local schools.

Participation in K-5 Plus, an approach with demonstrated effectiveness in improving student performance that adds 25 days to the

school year under more restrictive conditions, has shrunk over the last three years, while funding almost quadrupled from \$30.2 million to almost \$120 million. In FY22, local schools are expected to use 8,700 of the 84 thousand funded K-5 Plus slots.

In contrast, the Public Education Department reports local schools are expected to use almost all of the 7,000 funded slots for a pilot project that allows schools to add 140 hours to the school year.

Participation in Extended Learning (in thousands)



*End of year reversions totaled \$69.7 million.

Source: LFC and LESC Files

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