

# B i t e - S i z e

 The Annie E. Casey foundation [2022 Kids Count](#) report ranks New Mexico 50<sup>th</sup> of 50 states in overall child well-being and in education, despite improvements in many metrics. New Mexico's fourth grade reading proficiency rate increased from 20 percent to 24 percent between 2009 and 2019, but is still low compared with the national proficiency rate of 33 percent. New Mexico has made significant progress in increasing the number of high school students that graduate in four years, with the percentage increasing from 63 percent in 2011 to 75 percent in 2019.

 Under new guidance from the Department of Education, districts now have the flexibility to request up to 14 months of additional time in expending federal pandemic relief funds. Those extensions will be prioritized for school construction projects disrupted by extenuating circumstances, such as supply chain issues resulting from the pandemic. Districts must commit their funds from ESSER I to particular projects by September 2022.

 The Public Education Department (PED) awarded \$300,000 in grants to six schools and four school districts as part of its Outdoor Learning Program. The 10 grant recipients will receive an average award of \$30,000 to develop outdoor learning programs. This funding was supported by a \$500,000 appropriation to PED—included in the 2022 General Appropriations Act—to expand outdoor learning and classroom initiatives.



# i n f o r m E D

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Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Gwen Perea Warniment, Director / September 2022

## From the Chairman

### Striving for Excellence

Today's world demands students and workers have more than basic skills and competence in academic subjects to succeed.

More than two out of three jobs require students to have some post-secondary education, making a high school education, and its role as a prerequisite to post-secondary and job opportunities, far more important now than in generations past.

In New Mexico, schools like the Bond Wilson Technical Center in Kirtland are paving the way for career and technical education and work-based learning by providing alternative pathways for high school students to explore careers in local industries and get a running start on college.

Collaborating with nearby industries, the Bond Wilson Technical Center has developed an immersive curriculum, with course offerings that coincide with career experience that enables their students to be prepared to enter the workforce or take the next step towards higher education.

While not all students in New Mexico are college bound, ensuring we are creating a generation of globally competitive and skilled students is pivotal to boosting our local and national economies.

As a state, we must see value in working with local business to create work-based learning opportunities that shape the high school experience for students – our future colleagues, neighbors, and leaders. If schools work in partnership with local businesses, the way Central Consolidated Schools and the Bond Wilson Technical Center have, we can create a new generation of student who have the skills and confidence to strive towards academic and career excellence.

## Addressing the *Martinez* and *Yazzie* Lawsuit

When Judge Sarah Singleton found the state had failed to meet its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate, sufficient education to at-risk students, the Legislature made a myriad of investments totaling nearly \$1 billion in both discretionary funding to school districts and charter schools and Public Education Department initiatives meant to increase access to programming, teacher preparation, and training.

Despite these large investments, though, and in part because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is unclear whether New Mexico's students, particularly those named in the lawsuit, are any better off.

Recent assessment data shows students are making similar progress over the course of a year as they were prior to the pandemic. However, they are starting further behind, and gaps between student subgroups have persisted. Both metrics indicate increased funding and access to programs may not be having their intended impacts on

New Mexico's education system. At its September meeting in Kirtland, the Legislative Education Study Committee will discuss these issues and the need to revisit the legislature's efforts to increase funding and programmatic offerings to determine whether resources are being directed effectively and whether individual programs and initiatives are being used in a way that maximizes their impacts.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature invested in expanding academic opportunities in underserved communities identified in the Martinez-Yazzie lawsuit in effort to further address inequities listed in the lawsuit. Among those investments:

**Providing Salary Parity to Native American Language and Culture Certificate Holders.** The Native American Languages and Cultures Certificate (520 certificate) allows non-degreed members of tribes, pueblos, and nations to teach language courses in public schools. HB60 ensured certificate holders are paid at least as much as Level 1 teacher.

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# LESC Preliminary Budget Considerations Conversation

LESC staff presented [13 budget considerations](#) to the committee at its July hearing in Alamogordo, which focused on themes of sustainability, capacity building, flexibility and responsiveness.

The preliminary budget considerations, presented to the committee earlier than in previous years, framed the primary goals and vision LESC committee members have for public education in New Mexico.

One consideration presented to members is to increase school personnel compensation at an average rate that preserves New Mexico's regional competitiveness. This includes potentially

providing an "average" percent salary increase for all school personnel, as well targeting new funds to offset compaction in school personnel compensation.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature increased minimum teacher salaries. Additionally, the Legislature appropriated \$19.2 million for a 3 percent increase for all public school employees and \$101 million for an average 4 percent increase for all school personnel.

Members raised concerns about ensuring instructional support providers receive adequate salaries. Senator Gay Kernan and Representative Liz Thomson both noted the need to

increase compensation for hard-to-fill positions, such as ancillary staff. Other budget considerations include increasing the minimum number of instructional hours for students in all school-directed programs and funding professional work hours for all educators, sustaining funding for career technical education, increasing the At-Risk index factor and reauthorizing the Public School Capital Outlay Council School Security Program.

The committee will continue to refine its budget proposals throughout the interim before putting forth its final recommendations later this year.

## Legislative Investments Expand Academic Opportunity for All Students

(continued from front)

**Indian Education Fund Appropriation.** The Legislature appropriated \$15 million to the Indian Education Fund.

Of note, the general appropriations act requires the Public Education Department to devise a formula that distributes the Indian education fund appropriations directly to tribal education departments, tribal libraries, Native American language programs, school districts, and charter schools based on operational needs and student enrollment.

K-12 Plus and an additional \$13.3 million appropriation from the public education reform fund for tribal and rural community-based extended learning programs.

**General Appropriations Act (GAA).** Through the GAA, the Legislature approved increasing the state equalization guarantee (SEG) by 11.8 percent. Within the SEG the Legislature designated \$8 million from the general fund to fully fund elementary physical education, as well as

\$8 million for instructional materials and educational technology.

In addition to reviewing past and current efforts to address the findings of the lawsuit, the committee is also scheduled to hear from Public Education Department officials. They will discuss the department's action plan to address the lawsuit, as well as its response to feedback solicited earlier this year.

**Extending Time for Academics and Learning.** During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature allocated \$258 million to fund programs extending time for academics and learning.

This included K-5 Plus, Extended Learning Time,

## FY24 General Fund Revenue Estimates

On August 17, the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) released the preliminary consensus revenue estimates for FY24. In its preliminary estimates, CREG is projecting \$2.455 billion in "new money" for the upcoming fiscal year, with recurring revenue estimates for

FY23 being revised up by \$1.002 billion. Distributions to the Tax Stabilization Reserve and Early Childhood Education and Care Fund will total approximately \$7 billion between FY22 and FY23, which is up from the \$3.2 billion consensus estimate in December 2021.

August 2022 Consensus General Fund Recurring Revenue Estimate			
(in millions)			
	FY22	FY23	FY24
December 2021 Consensus*	\$8,163.1	\$8,845.4	\$9,235.0
August 2022 Adjustments	\$1,053.5	\$1,001.7	\$1,624.0
<b>August 2022 Consensus</b>	<b>\$9,216.6</b>	<b>\$9,847.1</b>	<b>\$10,859.0</b>
Annual amount change	\$1,131.5	\$630.5	\$1,011.9
Annual percent change	14.0%	6.8%	10.3%
Distributions to Tax Stabilization Reserve or Early Childhood Trust Fund**			
December 2021 Consensus	\$1,508.4	\$1,073.5	\$575.8
<b>August 2022 Consensus</b>	<b>\$2,801.8</b>	<b>\$2,593.2</b>	<b>\$1,583.6</b>
Adjustment from Prior	\$1,293.6	\$1,519.7	\$1,008.0

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