

## B i t e - S i z e

 New Mexico is among the least attractive states to teachers, the Learning Policy Institute, a national policy research group, reports. New Mexico falls in the lowest 20 percent for attractiveness, primarily because of testing-related job insecurity and a high number of inexperienced teachers. Although New Mexico teacher pay has improved since the report was compiled, LESC staff notes issues related to teacher experience and turnover might be more difficult to address.

 The Public Education Department has awarded \$45.1 million for prekindergarten programs this fiscal year to six charter schools and 73 of the state's 89 school districts. The funding will pay for 2,451 half-day slots and 4,597 extended day slots. PED and the Children, Youth and Families Department each received \$42.5 million for pre-kindergarten programs for FY20. PED has received a \$2.54 million budget increase for the difference between the appropriation and the total awards.

 The Public School Capital Outlay Council has authorized \$32.2 million for school security projects at 211 schools in 29 school districts. The state will cover \$8.5 million of the costs, with the school districts covering \$23.7 million. A 2018 law allows the council to spend up to \$10 million a year on security projects from FY19 through FY22. Three districts – Central, Grants, and Los Lunas schools – received more than half of the funding awarded this year.



# i n f o r m E D

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Representative Christine Trujillo, Chair / Senator Mimi Stewart, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / August 2019

### From the Chairwoman

#### Awareness

Even as student populations grow increasingly diverse, the teacher workforce stays primarily white and non-Hispanic. In New Mexico, three out of four New Mexico students are minorities, but just one in three teachers is a minority. Because minority students – and their non-minority peers – benefit from having culturally diverse teachers, New Mexico is among the many states working on recruiting more minorities to the classroom. But that will take time. And in the meantime, the future academic success of thousands of New Mexico children will suffer from the “implicit” bias identified by many studies of non-minority teachers.

However, researchers say schools can improve the classroom experience for minority students without waiting for a new crop of teachers. Teaching teachers about bias and stereotypes can lead to fairer treatment of all students and help non-minority teachers feel more confident in diverse classrooms.

One study found that simply informing teachers of the potential for stereotyping closed gaps in grading. An hour-long online tutorial for teachers has cut suspension rates among black students in half among schools where it was used. Another approach that has shown success is coaching teachers on using language that focuses on building success through hard work and the value of each student to the classroom.

Studies find multicultural sensitivity also benefits teachers. A survey by the University of North Carolina found education students felt ill-equipped to teach students from other backgrounds and feared being rejected by parents of minority students. But after a course on multicultural education, the students felt more aware of and had a greater appreciation for the cultures of minority students.

In the long run, all New Mexico students will benefit from efforts to diversify the workforce – study after study supports that conclusion. Fortunately, New Mexico doesn't have to wait for the long run. We can act now to develop the culturally sensitive classrooms that will help our schools succeed.



## Capital Outlay Equity Under Scrutiny

Fifteen years after creating a process aimed at fairly distributing building construction money to public schools, the lawsuit that triggered the process is still active and questions of equity linger.

While the condition of public school buildings has improved substantially since the so-called *Zuni* lawsuit prompted the creation of a needs-based system for distributing money for school construction, the Zuni and Gallup-McKinley County school districts have argued in court the system still favors districts with higher property valuations, which can use local property tax revenue to build above the standards used to distribute state dollars.

Those districts and others with large numbers of federally connected students are also fighting for legislation that would change the public school funding process that currently reduces state operational dollars for districts that receive federal Impact Aid grants intended to compensate schools for the impact of tribal members, military family members, and other similarly situated students.

LESC is scheduled to hold a hearing on the status of the *Zuni* lawsuit in Dulce at 9 a.m. on August 22,

along with hearings on the state's public school capital outlay system at 10:15 a.m., *Zuni* litigant concerns at 1:00 p.m., and the property tax impact of the closure of the San Juan Generating Station at 2:30 p.m.

Separately, New Mexico House leadership has scheduled four meetings for legislators and superintendents to discuss public school capital needs and equity. Meetings have been scheduled in August and September in Española, Albuquerque, Grants, and Roswell.

In addition, the 11th Judicial District judge who heard *Zuni* lawsuit arguments in May could issue a decision as early as September.

LESC analysis suggests, despite efforts to ensure all districts get a fair share of capital outlay, the disparate abilities of districts to raise money locally might create differences in revenues, with both property values and voter sentiment playing a role.

Until the adoption of the Public School Capital Outlay Act, enacted in response to the *Zuni* lawsuit, local school districts had primary responsibility for funding the construction and improvements of public school facilities, raising funds mostly through voter-

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# Juvenile Offenders Missed Intervention Options

Children who suffer from adverse childhood experiences are more likely to fall behind in school, to need special services, and to be expelled or suspended, but many do not get services, a New Mexico researcher says.

Dr. George Davis, a child and ado-

lescent psychiatrist with the University Of New Mexico Health Sciences Center for Resilience, Health, and Justice, [testified to the committee](#) in July that only one in three adolescents in the New Mexico juvenile justice system who should have received

special services in school because of trauma were referred to services.

He said early childhood trauma changes a child's brain function and anatomy, making it difficult for a child to regulate behavior. Because the damage can result in poor impulse control, aggression, and hyperactivity, the condition is often misdiagnosed, sometimes as a learning disability, an attention or conduct disorder, or bipolar affective disorder.

Simple behavioral incentives, like rewards and consequences, are ineffective with traumatized children, Davis said. Instead, teachers need to adopt low-confrontation, non-authoritarian approaches, provide breaks and outlets, and work to eliminate bullying and conflicts.

These approaches benefit every student in the classroom, including those with learning disorders and developmental disabilities unconnected to trauma, he said.

(Davis's [report on adverse childhood experiences among juvenile offenders](#) is available online.)

## Equity Elusive in School Capital Outlay

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approved general obligation bonds.

Because general obligation bonds are repaid with proceeds from local property taxes, this gave districts with high property values an advantage.

The act created a system for distributing dollars based on need and local cost-sharing provisions that recognized a district's ability to raise property tax revenue. Companion legislation earmarked a portion of the bonding capacity from state severance tax revenue for public school construction, establishing a permanent state-level funding source specifically for public schools.

However, an LESC brief prepared for the hearings finds the mechanisms for ensuring equity could be improved. While limits apply, school districts can seek voter approval for property tax levies outside the Public School Capital Outlay Act process, a plus for districts with high property values and friendly voters.

In addition, two additional state laws on public-school-related property taxes – known colloquially as “SB9” and “HB33” – could contribute to capital outlay funding inequity among districts.

The Public School Capital Improvement Act – SB9 – includes a provision for a state “program guarantee” contribution but, in practice, the levy results in significantly different per-student and per-gross-foot revenue. While Jal Public Schools generates \$7,419 locally

per student and gets \$30 from the state, Farmington Municipal Schools generates \$269 locally and gets \$23 from the state, a nearly 2,452 percent difference. The revenue generated per allowable square foot, based on a state adequacy planning guide, results in a more than 2,534 percent difference between the highest and lowest funded schools.

While all school districts but Los Alamos impose the SB9 levy, few districts use the bonding authority provided by the similar Public School Buildings Act – HB33. Because most districts opt out and some are unable to win voter approval, HB33 might exacerbate funding disparities, the LESC brief says.

## Some Districts Lose Funds Under Proposal

Some school districts that receive federal Impact Aid, grants to districts and state-chartered charter schools impacted by federal activity, would benefit from a proposal to eliminate the practice of reducing state operational support for those districts, but some districts in the rest of the state would lose money.

The public school funding formula, which accounts for the specific needs of each school district, reduces the state distribution of operational dollars to districts that receive Impact Aid by an amount equal to 75 percent of the federal grant in an effort to ensure all school districts get a fair share of operational support.

However, those districts, which still get an Impact Aid bonus because the state does not take credit for 25 percent of the grant and other types of Impact Aid, have argued their state support should not be reduced by any amount because they need the money for facility construction beyond that funded by the state.

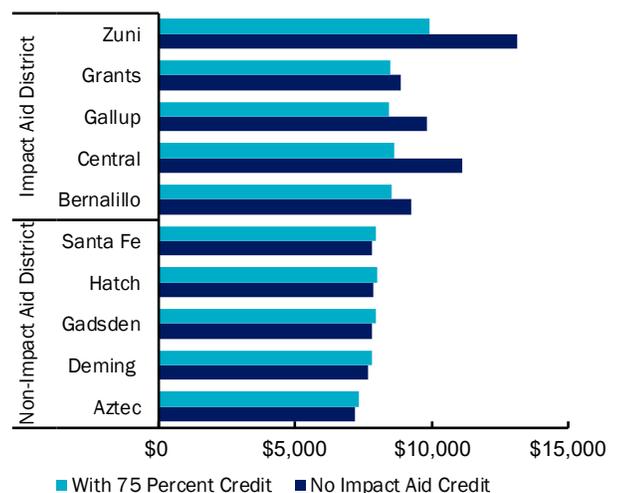
Federal Impact Aid is based on the assumption that schools generally get half their support from local sources, often property taxes. In New Mexico, most support comes from the state. Federal law allows states that equalize operational funding,

like New Mexico, to consider Impact Aid as local funding and adjust state aid.

Legislative analysts note eliminating the Impact Aid deduction would disequalize operational funding for schools, and the state has better options for increasing capital dollars for those districts.

The Legislature during this year's session appropriated \$34 million in additional capital dollars to districts receiving Impact Aid for federally connected students.

Operational Funding per Pupil



Source: Legislative Finance Committee

### informed

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