

B i t e s i z e

 The Public Education Department failed to submit the FY20 budget request for public school appropriations to the Legislature as required. State law requires PED to submit the request to the Department of Finance and Administration by November 30 and provide a copy to the Legislative Finance Committee at the same time. LFC received the proposal on December 3 only after asking PED for a copy.

 Twenty-six schools have better school grades for the 2017-2018 school year after challenging the original findings of the Public Education Department. The revisions decreased the statewide total of D and F grades and increased the number of A grades. Nineteen of the schools received additional bonus points, awarded for reducing truancy, increasing participation in activities, encouraging students to plan ahead, and participating in online testing.

 Advocates for the Farm to School program, which provides fresh fruits and vegetables for school lunches, are asking for increased funding for FY20. Proponents say the 17 percent of the school lunch budget spent on locally grown produce helps meet children's nutritional needs, promotes agricultural education, and aids in the creation of school gardens.



i n f o r m E D

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Senator Mimi Stewart, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / December 2018

From the Chairwoman

Respectful Dialogue

Education reform has been a high priority in policy and legislative circles for decades. In just the last 15 years, governance was restructured through a constitutional amendment, money was temporarily siphoned off an investment fund to cover the costs of innovation, school and teacher evaluation systems were created, charter schools took off, full-day kindergarten became available statewide, public prekindergarten was launched, and funding increased by almost 50 percent.

But this scattershot approach has done little to help our children succeed. A result that would not surprise the authors of an international study of the best school systems that found state's efforts at reform have often been a fruitless attempt to find the magic bullet.

Now, New Mexico is faced with a court order to get something done, especially for the kids most at risk of failing.

Nothing like a deadline to focus the mind.

But an equally important side effect of the outside pressure should be better collaboration among the many well-meaning but not always cooperative policymakers and advocates in education. For the last eight years, the administration has been intent on moving on its version of reform with little input from the people's representatives or the educators in the trenches. This ruling is New Mexico's opportunity for legislators, the executive, educators, students, families and advocates to work together on a comprehensive solution.

If we want to take the best care of our children, we need all branches of government, all viewpoints on the political spectrum, and all perspectives on education to talk to each, to listen to each other and to respect each other.

We all want the same thing. We all want to build an education system that takes care of all our children. We all want a better future for our children and for our state.

Senator Mimi Stewart

Students Need More than the Basics

Education today must provide all students with the ability to tackle problems with critical and creative thinking, but while high schools offer ambitious classes to their top students, lower track students and those in high-poverty schools are left behind, a Harvard professor says.

Jal Mehta, Ph.D., a professor with the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a senior research fellow at the Learning Policy Institute, will discuss engaged learning during a committee hearing scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on December 13.

Mehta and his co-author argue in a [paper](#) on deeper learning prepared for the organization Jobs for the Future, that the demands of the changing job market and society require schools to provide students with skills beyond basic knowledge.

"Given today's economic, technological, and cultural realities, it is no longer an option to provide most – or any – students with low-level instruction in reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic," the authors say.

The authors define deep learning as the ability to apply existing knowledge to new problems and solve new problems with creativ-

ity and collaboration.

In the classroom, deep learning requires teachers to demand much more cognitive thinking from students, particularly those in high-poverty schools.

However, a review of public high schools that had adopted deep learning for all students showed the practice was not uniformly offered.

"At school after school, there were startling gaps between aspirations and realities," the authors write. "In most classrooms, students still sat passively and listened. Most academic work involved tasks that asked students to recall or minimally apply what they'd been told."

Nevertheless, while observations indicate deeper learning opportunities were not offered schoolwide, individual classrooms were engaging and intellectually rich.

The schools were challenged by a lack of structures and supports for teachers, the report says. Teachers were often isolated and have little opportunity to learn from each other and collaborate on the practices and lessons that would allow them to increase the

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Efforts to Address Teacher Shortage Hit Obstacles

Faced with a growing shortage of teachers, New Mexico educational agencies have launched programs to recruit and retain instructors, but efforts are hampered by funding and the capacity of the programs, LESC analysis indicates.

An LESC staff [brief](#) presented to the committee in November notes a shortage of teachers forces schools to depend on long-term substitutes, who often do not have teaching credentials.

In 2018, New Mexico had 740 teacher vacancies, over 260 more than a year earlier, and had few new teachers in the pipeline, with enrollment and graduation numbers dropping at colleges of education.

In addition, half of new teachers leave the profession within five years, citing dissatisfaction with class sizes, school

or district administration, student discipline, lack of autonomy, testing-related job insecurity, complicated licensing requirements, and compensation.

To encourage more students to consider education careers, the national Educators Rising program, launched in New Mexico by the Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning at New Mexico State University, provides high school students interested in becoming teachers with special coursework and teaching internships. More than 600 New Mexico high school students are enrolled in 35 high school and college chapters of Educators Rising.

However, while high school career and technical education teachers have been enthusiastic about the program, low enrollment has forced many schools to treat the program as an

extracurricular activity, which translates to fewer students with less buy-in.

The Higher Education Department offers two financial aid programs for college of education students to lower the high student loan debt that sometimes discourages careers in the relatively low-paying teaching field.

The loan for service program covers a student's college costs then forgives the loan if the student becomes a teacher in a shortage area. The loan repayment program pays off the student loans of licensed teachers who work at least two years at a school with a D or F grade. Funding for both programs falls short of demand; only 49 of 626 requests for loan repayment were funded between 2014 and 2018.

The University of New Mexico is implementing a teacher residency program to pull college graduates with degrees outside of education into teaching careers. The graduates spend a year in the classroom with a high-quality teacher and receive a \$20,000 stipend. However, the program is limited to 24 students.

Students Need Deeper Learning

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rigor or depth of their lessons.

Unlike elementary school teachers, high school teachers have many students they see for a few hours a day, making it difficult to build the relationships and create the opportunities needed for deeper learning.

Teachers reported being constrained by the pressure to prepare students for the content measured by state tests, college entrance exams, and Advanced Placement assessments.

The paper concludes with recommendations that school systems rethink curricula, shift the way credits are earned from a certain number of instructional hours to integrated problem- and project-based work, rethink

teacher and school administrator education, and redesign student testing and school accountability approaches.

Pre-K, K-3 Plus Might Help Close Gap

Prekindergarten and the K-3 Plus extended school year program might help low-income students close the achievement gap with their more affluent peers.

While math and English language arts proficiency rates on the PARCC tests have improved steadily for both groups, the gap between the two groups has persisted.

However, legislative staff analysis found a group of low-income prekindergarteners who

attended K-3 Plus outperformed other low-income classmates on a 2016 kindergarten assessment, with the rate of proficiency 20 points higher for the students who attended prekindergarten and K-3 Plus.

The researchers caution, however, that the analysis relied on DIBELS testing no longer in use, looked at a small sample, and did not control for factors that could bias the result, such as increased parental engagement.

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