




B i t e s i z e

 A new website launched by the Public Education Department allows users to look up enrollment, demographics, academic achievement data, and school grades for any New Mexico school. NMSchoolGrades.com also includes information on student proficiency rates in comparison with school district and state averages. A tab on the website indicates the department intends to add teacher quality data.

 The two agencies that manage pension funds for public school and state and local government employees have reached a tentative agreement with employee unions that challenged the state's right to increase employee contributions to the funds, Educational Retirement Board staff report. Under the proposed settlement, ERB and the Public Employee Retirement Association would submit and support a request to the Legislature for more money, likely to be hundreds of millions of dollars.

 Texas is suing the U.S. Department of Education over how it calculates the level of state spending on special education needed to draw federal dollars. The dispute, the result of Texas falling short of its "maintenance of effort" in FY12, argues the calculation should account for spending reduced by fewer students or the decreased need of students, an argument New Mexico unsuccessfully made when it had a shortfall. An administrative law judge ruled in favor of the USDE but Texas has appealed.



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 / November 2018

From the Chairwoman

The Works

It's time to go all in on public education.

With a court-ordered deadline "to take immediate steps" by April to reform school management and financing, New Mexico has little choice but to significantly change a public education system found constitutionally inadequate.

But while the court and the plaintiffs might accept a menu of changes that includes things like more money for textbooks or incentives to get good teachers in struggling schools, now is the time for New Mexico to tackle a thoughtfully constructed systemwide solution based on approaches proven to be effective.

So far, like many states, New Mexico has taken a piecemeal approach to public school improvements, investing heavily in specific programs. New Mexico has more than tripled its spending on prekindergarten and the K-3 Plus extended school year program over the last seven years and this year started a three-year phase-in of a funding formula tweak that could increase funds for at-risk students by more than 40 percent. We have increased teacher pay and put colleges of education under the microscope. But it's an approach that falls short – both in its breadth and its depth. Despite prekindergarten expansion, about 35 percent to 40 percent of New Mexico 4-year-olds are unserved; despite a K-3 Plus program that keeps growing, tens of thousands of the low-income children who could benefit have no access.

No Time to Lose, an international study of the most successful school systems conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures, identified a comprehensive, aligned education system as among the key elements of the best systems, along with strong early childhood programs with extra supports for children at risk of failing; highly skilled, well-compensated teachers and rigorous teacher education programs; and robust career and technical education options.

No Time to Lose provides New Mexico with a road map to high-quality public schools. It is possible we could stop short and still meet the demands of the court. But if we want to truly serve our children, to meet not just the letter of the court ruling but the spirit of the state constitution, our policymakers should commit to pushing through to create a world-class education system that serves all children.

Senator Mimi Stewart

No Magic Bullet for Good School Systems

While a sound child safety net, adequate funding, and good teachers are all critical elements of a good school system, it is the integration of many important elements that is key to success, a leading education researcher says.

Linda Darling-Hammond, Ed.D., president of the Learning Policy Institute and a Stanford University education professor emeritus, is scheduled to speak to the committee at 9 a.m. on November 15 on how New Mexico can build a highly effective public education system.

The panel is also scheduled to include Jeannie Oakes, Ph.D., of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Allan Oliver, executive director of the Thornburg Foundation.

In a recent [interview on Stanford Radio](#), Hammond, part of a National Conference of State Legislatures international study of world-class school systems, named what she sees as the top five factors needed for high-quality schools, but she emphasized good systems are needed for good schools.

"I don't believe in the 'what's the one thing.' It has to be a system. ... It has to be integrated," she told the interviewers.

She said quality care for children is one of the more important factors.

Countries with high-quality schools strongly support ensuring all children have access to housing, food, and high-quality early learning opportunities.

In the United States, which has gone from having "hands down" the top education system in the 1970s to one that lags other countries, one in four children lives in poverty, homelessness has increased dramatically, and more children live with food insecurity, Hammond said.

High-quality teachers and the high-quality education they can provide are also on Hammond's "top five" list.

Hammond, who led a team focused on teacher recruitment, selection, and compensation for the international study, said countries with successful schools have selective, intensive teacher education programs that include collaborative, ongoing professional development.

In turn, high-quality teachers are needed for the more demanding teaching approaches needed for

continued on back

New Science Standards Snagged on Books, Training

Inadequate training for teachers and too little money for textbooks are hampering efforts to implement new science education standards this year, according to testimony and analysis provided to the committee in October.

The Legislature this year appropriated \$500,000 to the Public Education Department specifically to begin implementation of the New Mexico STEM-Ready Science Standards, adopted in October 2017. Lawmakers also increased department appropriations for STEM – science, technology, engineering, and math – initiatives by \$1.1 million to a total of \$3 million.

However, the department has not budgeted the earmarked half million dollars intended to prepare teachers to begin teaching the new standards and has set aside less than a third of the STEM initiative funding, an [LESC hearing brief](#) says.

While the department held symposiums during the summers of 2017 and 2018 on the new standards, which included sample lessons, the department did not respond to LESC staff requests for the number of attendees or school districts represented, and Debra Thrall, a New Mexico Science Teachers Association board member, said little professional development is available beyond association-sponsored workshops.

Although the department plans to align testing to the new standards next year, teachers are working with 2003 standards and 2012 textbooks and materials, she said.

“Teachers are scared, especially elementary school teachers who have never taught science,” she said.

Science teachers are concerned because the department gave schools

little time to implement the new curriculum, did not provide schools with suitable materials, and did not provide adequate training.

In particular, Thrall said, the new standards change the way science is taught, with science concepts built into reading and math lessons as well.

The LESC brief notes the standards also call for “phenomena-driven” lessons in which students use science and engineering practices to explore natural phenomena.

Although school districts and charter schools were scheduled to buy new science materials this school year – New Mexico funds instructional materials in a six-year cycle – the Public Education Department delayed implementation until next year because of budget concerns and because the standards had not been adopted.

When science materials were last funded in FY13, schools received \$28.5 million, but instructional material funding has declined since then.

The Science Teachers Association estimates instructional materials aligned with the new standards will cost \$28 million and proper training will cost about \$5 million.

Integration Needed for Good Schools

continued from front

curricula and assessments that focus on critical thinking instead of recitation, she said.

“If what you’ve done is memorize information and spit it back on a test, you will be utterly unprepared for our world,” she said in the interview. “Our kids are going to have to work with knowledge that hasn’t been discovered yet, to solve big problems that we haven’t been able to solve.”

To provide students with the education they need, teachers must have a “wide and deep basket of knowledge” that includes a strong understanding of child development, Hammond said.

Adequate and fair funding for schools, with extra funding to support students with the greatest need,

and schools redesigned to support teachers and accommodate student collaboration and other changes to teaching approaches round out Hammond’s top five list.

Educators Discourage Teaching Career

A survey of New Mexico educators conducted in spring 2017 found just one in five would encourage a career in education, [a report on teacher vacancies](#) says.

New Mexico State University’s Southwest Outreach Academic Research Lab says in its 2018 report that the lack of interest in teaching jobs adds to concerns about existing teacher shortages and a decline in college students pursuing education degrees.

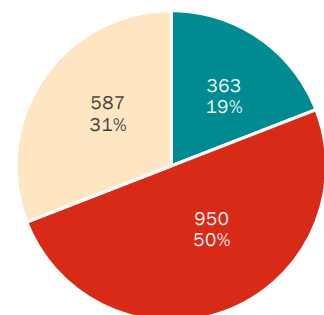
In October, New Mexico schools reported 740 teacher vacancies, 264 more than last year.

A review of the number of students graduating from teacher education programs found a 14 percent drop between the 1,318 graduates in 2009 and the 1,130 graduates in 2015.

The report says a Learning Policy Institute review of the “attractiveness” of teaching careers found New Mexico teachers are paid less than the national average and worry more about the impact of student test scores on their job security.

Nationally, 12 percent of teachers in the institute’s survey said they strongly agree that they worry about the impact of student scores on their job security. For New Mexico teachers, that figure was 32 percent.

Question: Would You Encourage a Career in Education?
(1,900 responses)



■ Yes ■ No ■ Maybe

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325 Don Gaspar, Suite 200
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(505) 986-4591 www.nmlegis.gov/lesc

Marit Rogne, Staff Editor | Helen Gaussoin, Editor