




B i t e - S i z e

 Total teacher contract hours among 12 of the largest school districts vary from a low of 1,196 in Albuquerque to a high of 1,432 in Los Lunas, resulting in hourly rates of \$47.18 and \$39.79, respectively, despite similar average annual salaries. Data from most of the largest districts—Santa Fe Schools' figures were missing—shows Carlsbad, with the highest salary at \$63,919 but low contract hours, pays the highest hourly rate—\$49.36. Hobbs, with both high salaries and contract hours, pays \$44.34 an hour on average.

 New Mexico charter school enrollment increased by 6.7 percent between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, from 27,147 to 28,968 students. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, New Mexico was among 39 states that saw an increase, and charter school enrollment increased nationally by 240 thousand students, or 7 percent.

 A study of schools with four-day school weeks in New Mexico and three other states found slower student achievement growth than in five-days-a-week schools and comparable absentee rates. The finding of the study by the Rand Corporation, a policy think-tank, aligned with earlier studies. Schools that switch to a shorter week can save up to 3 percent of their budgets. For the current school year, 54 New Mexico school districts and charter schools follow a four-days-a-week calendar.



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Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Vanessa K. Hawker, Acting Director / November 2021

From the Chairman

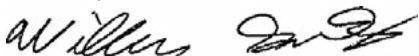
Extraordinary

Even if it doesn't feel like it some days, we will eventually emerge from these difficult times. When we do, even as masks and social distancing slip back in our collective memory, we will be different. Our children will be different. Our world will be different. But these extraordinary times, coupled with unusually strong state revenues and an exceptional influx of federal funds, offer an equally extraordinary opportunity to transform our educational systems. We can take these difficult days and turn them into a new, brighter future for our children.

In the most recent revenue forecasts, executive and legislative economists estimate the state will have \$1.4 billion in "new money" for the budget year that starts July 1, 2022. That amount, the difference between what the state expects to spend this year and predicts it will earn next year, is available for expanded spending, whether it's additional state police or supports for struggling students. In addition, the state has received billions in federal stimulus funds, with \$1.6 billion specifically for public schools and another \$435 million for childcare and early childhood education. Some of that has been spent—and, of course, it is likely one-time money—but hundreds of millions remain available for investment.

Long before the pandemic, we had good information on school transformation from both an international study conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the findings in the educational adequacy *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit. We only lacked the commitment, financial and political, to change. Now, with change forced on us, with the new perspective of schools turned upside down, and with the means to make unprecedented investment, we can look at the system as a whole, with the recognition that quality education starts at birth, and create the educational environment that will help our kids succeed.

This generation of children will be the Covid generation, a demographic like no other. With thoughtful, bold planning, it can also be the generation that succeeds because we saw the opportunity and acted.



Behavioral Staff Levels Short of School Need

New Mexico has one quarter the number of school psychologists as the national standard, less than half of the recommended number of school social workers, and only 60 percent of the number of school counselors, LESC analysis shows.

In a brief prepared for a hearing scheduled for 1:30 p.m. November 17, staff reports the state relies heavily on school counselors and social workers for student behavioral health and is short on both compared with national recommendations, even as schools report higher need because of the pandemic.

A survey of school districts conducted by the Health Department Office of School and Adolescent Health and Public Education Department found half of the 56 school districts that responded—of 89 school districts statewide—reported they have implemented a comprehensive behavioral health program with multi-tiered supports and a designated coordinator, the brief says.

Thirty-seven of the school districts responding reported using telehealth delivery of school-based behavioral health services and eight indicated an interest in launching telehealth services.

The hearing brief finds New Mexico, like education departments in other states, requires districts to develop wellness plans that include mental health and promoted collaboration between school districts and charter schools and state agencies that support mental health services.

Staff reports:

- All but eight states include mental and emotional health as part of its school health curricula.
- Twenty-six states statutorily require school districts to adopt suicide prevention strategies.
- More than half of states require staff training in student mental health.

In addition, some states screen for mental health conditions and behaviors, some promote the recruitment and retention of mental health staff, and some are partnering with outside programs.

The brief concludes New Mexico could improve its school-based mental health services by recruiting more staff and shifting from crisis intervention to prevention by ensuring more universal supports are in place.

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Existing System Thwarts Native Student Success

Public schools must be language and culture inclusive, and Native American instructors, already underrepresented in the classroom, need greater support if Native American students are to succeed, speakers told the committee during a series of discussions on Native American education in October.

Speaking during a [presentation](#) on the history of the education of Native American students, Regis Pecos, Cochiti Pueblo, co-director of the Santa Fe Indian School and co-chair of the Tribal Education Alliance, said Indigenous students have not had an opportunity to thrive because public education systems are built on a racist foundation.

Presenters for hearings on [culturally relevant early learning programs](#) and efforts to [preserve Native American languages](#) suggested programs that successfully educate Native American students already exist as models for educating Indigenous students.

Staff Short

continued from front

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) found poor mental health is a growing problem for adolescents nationwide, with more than one in three high school students reporting they experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019—a 40 percent increase since 2009.

In the same report, approximately one in six youth reported making a suicide plan in the past year—a 44 percent increase since 2009.

The CDC says children who are mentally healthy have an improved quality of life, can function well at home, in school, and their communities, and learn healthy social skills that enable them to cope with challenges.

Kimberly Kee, Diné, coordinator of the Navajo Nation [I-LAUNCH program](#), said key elements of a culturally relevant early learning program for Native American children are understanding the tribal kinship system and cultural values, providing professional development on culturally relevant teaching practices, and building relationships with other early learning programs, families, and communities.

She said programs are challenged by historical trauma and a western approach that is insensitive to cultural differences, but the children benefit from improved learning styles and stronger self-esteem and resiliency.

The [presentation](#) on the NACA-Inspired Schools Network noted students at the Native American Community Academy, a charter school in Albuquerque, graduate at higher rates than the state average.

The presentation suggested a strong Native languages component is important, and presenters promoted the development of “language nests,” language immersion programs for young children that include interaction with elders.

[Speakers](#) from the Public Education

Department said, while the revitalization of Native languages is in state rules, colleges need to award credit to Native language speakers, as they do with speakers of Spanish and other languages, and Native language teachers need to be paid the same as other teachers, while now many receive lower educational assistant pay.

Other speakers also emphasized the need for consistent, expanded funding for Native American education programs and culturally inclusive teacher preparation programs.

The history presentation noted New Mexico created an Indian Education Division in 1975 but did not fund it. The New Mexico Indian Education Act was adopted in 2003, but PED staff in their presentation said funding still falls short.

In 2004, according to the history presentation, in an update to a 1975 civil rights report that found Farmington High School boys routinely harassed Navajo men and women for sport, the authors found Navajo youth were being denied their right to a bilingual education and Navajo language teachers faced abuse, low pay, and barriers to advancement.

Pandemic a “Mega ACE” for Children

A national survey of parents that show increased reports of mental health symptoms and behaviors indicates children have suffered a “mega ACE”—adverse childhood experience—as a result of the pandemic, the Department of Health concludes.

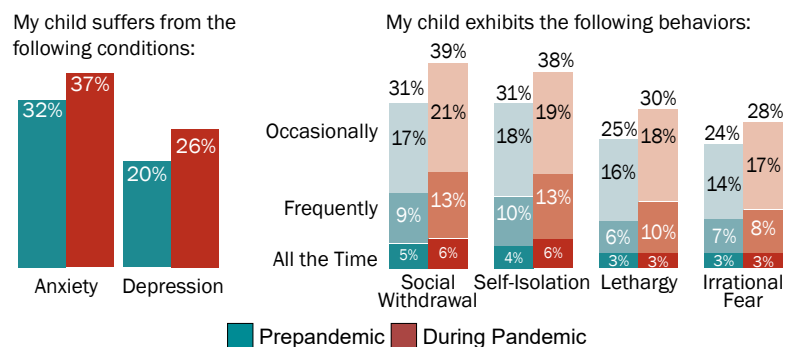
In a [presentation](#) to the committee in October, Dr. Thomas Massaro, DOH chief medical officer, reported the long-term mental health consequences of the pandemic will be significant for children.

LESC staff explained in [bullet points](#) prepared for the hearing that ACEs—defined by the

federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as experiencing abuse or neglect, witnessing violence or suicide, living with poverty, or experiencing other specific traumatic events in childhood—can undermine a child’s physical and mental health and increase the child’s risk of failing at school, abusing alcohol and drugs, and becoming involved in crime.

In New Mexico, as many as one in seven children have experienced three or more ACEs, compared with the national average of one in 10, and fewer children have experienced no ACEs than the national average.

Parental Reports of Mental Health Conditions and Concerning Behaviors
Survey of 16,370 Parents Across 50 States



Source: Covid-19 and Education: The Lingering Effect of Unfinished Learning. McKinsey and Company, July 2021

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325 Don Gaspar, Suite 200
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 986-4591
<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LESC/Default>

Emily Hoxie Helen Gaussoin
Staff Editor Contributing Editor