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**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>SB343</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Soules</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.230049.2</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Teacher Salary Rate Changes</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Armatage</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/15/2025</u>
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**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 343 (SB343) would amend the School Personnel Act to repeal language exempting local education agencies (LEAs) from paying teachers with vocational education licenses state minimum teacher salaries. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This bill does not include an appropriation.

SB343 would apply state mandated minimum teaching salaries to New Mexico teachers with vocational education licenses. Legislated minimum teaching salaries in New Mexico are:

- Level 1: \$50 thousand;
- Level 2: \$60 thousand; and
- Level 3: \$70 thousand.

The estimated average salary for vocational teachers FY25 was close to \$10 thousand above the minimum salary at each license level. See **Table 1: Vocational Teachers in New Mexico**.

LESC analysis of 2022-2023 school year (SY23) Public Education Department (PED) teacher workforce data, adjusted for school personnel raises appropriated by the Legislature in SY24 and SY25, estimate all vocational teachers in the state will be compensated above the minimum teacher salary for their license level in FY26. This would be the case whether the Legislature approved the LESC and executive proposed 3 percent school personnel salary increase, or the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) proposed 4 percent school personnel salary increase for FY26.

Also introduced this legislative session, House Bill 156 (HB156) proposes to increase minimum teacher salaries in New Mexico by \$5 thousand at each licensure level to \$55 thousand for a level 1 teacher, \$65 thousand for a level 2 teacher, and \$75 thousand for a level 3 teacher. Even if HB156 is passed, LESC staff estimate vocational teacher salaries are high enough that LEAs would not

incur additional costs. Based on these analyses, LESC staff would not expect the passage of SB343 to result in increased costs for LEAs.

**Table 1: Vocational Teachers in New Mexico**

	Average Salary, Estimated SY25	Number of Teachers, SY23
Level 1 License	\$61,010	219
Level 2 License	\$68,987	84
Level 3 License	\$78,992	21
<b>All Vocational Teachers</b>	<b>\$64,535</b>	<b>324</b>

Note: LESC staff estimated SY25 teacher salaries from SY23 salaries, factoring school personnel raises in SY24 and SY25.

Source: PED SY23 Data

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

**New Mexico Secondary Vocational-Technical Licenses.** [Laws 2023, Chapter 128 \(SB417\)](#) amended the School Personnel Act to create additional statutory pathways for vocational educators to receive a level 1 license and progress to level 2 and level 3 licenses. The same bill also exempted all levels of vocational licensure teachers from minimum teacher salary requirements. Laws 2023, Chapter 128 was intended to create more pathways into teaching for teachers of vocational and career and technical education (CTE) subjects and allow school districts and charter schools to set salary schedules that may differ from other teachers as past work experience and educational requirements can differ for vocational and CTE teachers. Without longitudinal salary data, however, it is unclear what specific effect these changes have had for vocational teachers.

PED currently offers [four pathways](#) to an initial secondary vocational technical license, which authorizes a teacher to help prepare students for a variety of careers, technical skills, or trades. The pathways include options for individuals with a variety of levels of educational attainment and work experience. See **Table 2: New Mexico Pathways to Initial Secondary Vocational-Technical Licensure.**

Within three years of teaching on their initial license, secondary vocational technical teachers must successfully demonstrate competencies as approved by PED through:

- Completing 15 semester hours of professional education from a regionally accredited institution that addresses PED’s secondary vocational-technical competencies; and
- Completing a supervised internship; or
- Completing a professional development plan as developed by a school district or private school and approved by PED.

**Table 2: New Mexico Pathways to Initial Secondary Vocational-Technical Licensure**

	Education	Work Experience
<b>Pathway 1</b>	Bachelor’s degree with 32 credit hours of vocational training	None
<b>Pathway 2</b>	Associate degree	Two years of verified related work
<b>Pathway 3</b>	Professional Certificate	Three years verified related work
<b>Pathway 4</b>	High School Diploma/GED	Five years verified related work

Source: NMAC 6.61.7.8

To advance to a level 2 license, secondary vocational teachers must meet the same requirements as all other teachers in the three-tiered licensure system.

To advance to a level 3 license, secondary vocational teachers may meet the same requirements as other teachers in the three-tiered licensure system or an alternative pathway created in 2023 intended to meet the needs of vocational teachers without a bachelor's degree. Vocational teachers are eligible to advance to a level 3 license if they:

1. Have been a level two teacher for at least three years; and
2. Provide documentation from an accredited higher education institution of eligibility to teach dual credit courses at the postsecondary level; or
3. Complete a department-approved CTE training certificate course of study that is a minimum of 16 hours at an accredited higher education institution.

**Vocational Teacher Supply and Demand.** New Mexico State University's Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center's [Educator Vacancy Report](#) continues to be the primary source of educator vacancy data for policymakers in the state. This report has not reported vocational teacher vacancies in recent years. Until PED begins collecting and publishing educator workforce vacancy data, it will remain uncertain how many vocational teacher vacancies the state faces each year. However, school districts report having difficulty hiring vocational teachers because qualified individuals would be required to leave higher paying jobs to begin teaching.

According to [national studies](#), administrators around the United States report having difficulty filling positions in CTE subjects 57 percent of the time, compared with 39 percent of academic subject positions. Shortages [appear](#) to be particularly concentrated in high-demand, high-wage subjects where teachers may face a higher wage penalty, including manufacturing; information technology; health sciences; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); and CTE.

A recent [study](#) of CTE teacher turnover in Tennessee found CTE teachers in high-growth, hard-to-staff CTE areas are:

- More likely to leave teaching;
- Difficult to replace, creating net reductions in the number of students served; and
- Earn the most money in their post-teaching employment compared to other high school teachers who leave the teaching profession.

The study found CTE teachers in high-growth areas earned nearly 20 percent more in private industry than they did teaching.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

**Career and Technical Education.** LESC staff presented the brief [A Review of CTE Programs, Pathways, and Funding](#) at the committee's July 2024 LESC committee meeting. Modern CTE is an educational pathway designed to equip students with practical skills, technical knowledge, and applied learning experiences. While encompassing traditional academic subjects, CTE contextualizes academic content by employing hands-on learning, enabling students to gain both foundational knowledge and specialized skills. While sometimes still referred to as "vocational" education, modern CTE is substantially different. CTE now spans a wide range of industries including healthcare, technology, engineering, education, and business, alongside more

traditionally thought of industries such as construction or auto mechanics. Modern CTE is a critical evolution in education, potentially bridging the gap between classroom learning and future career success to prepare students for lifelong achievement.

**Research on CTE Education.** National [research](#) of CTE programs has found numerous benefits to students, educators, and communities. Students involved in CTE, for example, have been shown to graduate from high school at higher rates and in a timelier manner, as well as being more likely to enroll in postsecondary education. Anecdotally, students also report being more engaged in school when involved in CTE programs.

A systematic [review](#) recently published in April 2024 by the CTE Research Network, a national community of researchers funded by the Institute of Education Sciences to fill the needed gap in causal research studies on CTE, shows CTE has statistically significant positive impacts on outcomes including academic achievement, employability skills, completion of high school, and readiness for college environments. Researchers also found evidence that students involved in CTE programs are more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than students who do not participate in CTE programs. The review also found, however, no statistically significant impact on student discipline or attendance, and no impact on enrollment in four-year college programs.

**CTE Education in New Mexico.** In SY23, there were 69.9 thousand secondary CTE participants in New Mexico. Of these, 22.4 thousand students enrolled as CTE concentrators (meaning students who take at least two courses in a single career cluster) across 119 local education agencies. For FY23, the largest number of concentrators were in the agriculture, food, and natural resources career cluster (4,794 students), followed by arts, audio-visual, and communications (2,721 students), hospitality and tourism (2,136 students), health science (1,985 students), and law, public safety, and security (1,319 students).

## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS**

Given vocational teachers in New Mexico already appear to be compensated at substantially higher levels than minimum teacher salaries, could tying vocational salaries to teacher salary minimums inadvertently result in school districts choosing to pay vocational teachers less?

What other mechanisms could reduce barriers to entry into the teaching profession and increase compensation for vocational teachers in New Mexico?

## **RELATED BILLS**

Relates to HB156, Increase Educational Salaries, which would increase minimum teacher salaries in New Mexico by \$5 thousand at each licensure level to \$55 thousand for a level 1 teacher, \$65 thousand for a level 2 teacher, and \$75 thousand for a level 3 teacher.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- New Mexico Regional Cooperatives (NMRECA)

**AA/mca/jkh**